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The Development of Church Architecture in Syria and its Modern Implications

The Greek Orthodox Churches in Damascus

Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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DECLARATION

This thesis was submitted towards the fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a PhD degree in history and archaeology from Pázmány Péter Catholic University. It is the product of my own original work, unless otherwise mentioned through references, notes, or other statements.

SIGNATURE

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I am honored and delighted to dedicate my PhD dissertation to the beloved Greek Orthodox Church. Finally, I want to dedicate my dissertation to my beloved homeland Syria and the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums.

TRANSCRIPTION

أ	a	ط	t̤
ب	b	ظ	z̤
ت	t	ع	ʕ
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dz	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	هـ	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ	ء	ʾ
ض	ḍ	ة	a

Long vowels are indicated with a dash line.

Introduction to Research

Given the civilization roots of Christian Eastern culture, art, and architecture, Syria has played a conspicuous part in the formation of unique masterpieces since the inception of Early Christianity captures the attention of every researcher. On this land, the Christian religion began to spread through the fathers and apostles. Monasteries and churches are found in droves in each city, filled with theological and liturgical symbolism.


Keeping in mind that Syrian wealth of church architecture had taken center stage all over the world that demonstrated creativity and regeneration from different aspects, through its various ecclesiastical buildings: catacombs, house-churches, and several basilica forms, such as rectangular, cruciform, and centralized, in addition to its unique characteristics, like western twin towers, rectangular or semi-circular apses and decorative frames. All these components were constructed immaculately and placed in aesthetic, artistic forms and molds of church architecture. Hence, several factors contribute to creating this unique cultural fabric such as location, the nature of the patrimony environment, and historical events.

Church construction is one of the significant cultural and religious principles in the twenty-first century, especially in the history and development of local architecture having properties and features which are added to the historic recordings of church architecture. Hereunder are two main reasons leading to opting for this topic:

➤ Today in Syria, according to their religious affiliations and equality among the citizens, the government has the commitment to granting a plot of land in each new residential project for building both a mosque and a church. In the same vein, many Christian benefactors have the desire to donate money or even land as a contribution to building a church. At times, their home is offered to function as a church.

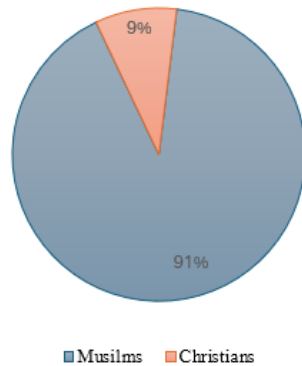
➤ Unfortunately, many Christians were displaced and fled from their country due to the unending war in Syria; from the countryside to the city, or even from one governorate to another. This exodus per se led to the re-classification and demographic distribution of the Christian structure. Despite the exodus, it should be noted that several Christian denominations currently exist in Syria to the present day.

Noteworthy, the estimated population in Syria in the year **2011** was:

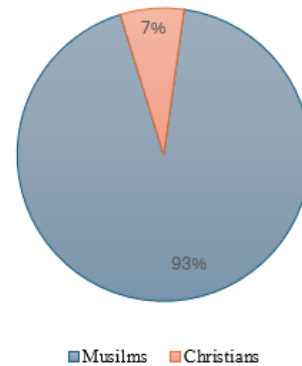
22,000000  1,900000; about **9%** Christian population.

On the other hand, in **2019**, the presence of Christians decreased to around **7%** in the wake of the Syrian crisis.

Percentage of Christians in Syria in 2011



Percentage of Christians in Syria in 2019



A chart showing the percentage of Christians and Muslims in Syria in 2011 and 2019, by the author after (Fayyāḍ, 2019)

Based on these two reasons, whether available land or the Christian community's demographic distribution, Christians need to build or rebuild new churches. Building or reconstructing a church is an essential symbolic affair that attracts and takes part in creating a definition of the community and its implications. In addition, because of the lack of previous studies, the liturgy and symbolic approaches of churches' structure should be taken into consideration, thus, it is one of the essential issues in this research.

Hence, it is imperative to study and comprehend the architectural development of churches in Syria. The ability to recognize what is the correlation between space, structure, and liturgy. The connection between the past and present in particular Greek Orthodox churches in Damascus, whether is it a complete reflection, are these churches compliant with liturgy and tradition and whether have they maintained or changed today. Despite the fact that Damascus is well-known for its great number of churches that belong to various Christian denominations, the Greek Orthodox churches in Damascus are taken as a case study in the research.

The selection of Damascus city and Greek Orthodox churches is based on several key reasons, outlined as follows:

- The seat of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East is situated in Damascus (Mariamite Cathedral of Damascus).

- Damascus is considered a comprehensive city that embraces a significant presence of Christian denominations. Furthermore, in the past, the presence of the Greek Orthodox denomination was concentrated in major cities such as Damascus, also still today the significant attendance of this Christian denomination has a clear impact on the city compared to other cities.
- Damascus features a considerable number and variety of churches belonging to the Greek Orthodox denomination, dating back to various historical periods such as model churches, Damascene churches, house churches and modern ones.
- By and large, the Greek Orthodox denomination represents a great presence compared to Christian denominations. The architectural style of their church preserves its theological identity as a Byzantine church, notwithstanding geographical, cultural, and social diversity. Thus, the Byzantine church has a distinct image that may be recognized in many countries such as Cyprus, Greece, and Syria especially the city of Antioch. Over time, however, some influences emerged in several churches that would be dealt with later in Damascus.

In the end, this research endeavours to achieve such a balanced formula that helps architects to build new churches and create a space full of the knowledge of the Greek Orthodox churches.

Importance of Research

Church architecture is a series of interrelated and well-connected episodes. Each episode unravels the previous one and represents a base for the next episode. Which is all based on the principle of theological doctrine, symbolism, faith and liturgical rite. Thus, it is essential to shed light on our Christian Ecclesiastical heritage in Syria. This is rich historically and culturally and has produced a unique intellectual and scientific architecture. The importance of this research is demonstrated by the underlying two main aspects:

- **The architectural aspect:**

All in all, ecclesiastical architecture is closely related to the spiritual and liturgical theology in addition to the connection of form to content. Every detail or part of the Church has taken the meaning and symbol of Christianity with its liturgical and architectural dimension, not like any rigid residential building.

Accordingly, the significance of the research lies in the importance of the essence of the Church that is embodied in the form and how the architect understands such concepts. The close connection lies between the architects and their concept of the church, its form, how to link the elements of the church according to historical origin and preservation. Hence, this research will help any architect to create an area of knowledge and awareness of their commitment to patterns of liturgical and architectural meanings. Additionally, it aims to foster, raise awareness, and educate architects in the design of church construction, while maintaining and keeping the form of Ecclesiastical art during renovation. This methodology is meant for those architects who want to design a new church of the Greek Orthodox respecting theology, liturgy, and symbolism to understand the idea and basic elements of church design.

- **The Christian community aspect:**

Christianity represents an essential part of the history and the social composition of the Eastern community. Over the centuries, it has impacted intellectually, spiritually and socially wise. Christian art gives a symbol to thought and simultaneously a meaning. This research bears in its awareness, academic, sociocultural, religious, and scientific dimensions, the importance of the role of the Church in the Christian community. In addition, the importance of research lies in preserving the oriental tradition and maintaining the historical Christian identity in Syria.

Objective of Research

- At its core, this research aims to find a clear and specific strategy based on the Church's thought and the Orthodox theology to build a model church away from any personal opinions or deviations that do not serve the spiritual or theological dimension or the identity of the Greek Orthodox denomination.

The intention is to reach a formula compatible, balanced and satisfactory in terms of a clear sequence of requirements of the foundations of the past and the present, and the extent of association and reflection of the past and the present in church architecture. In other words, it suggests creating a balance between modernization and the authenticity of ancient churches, through structures closer to tradition. Moreover, this may assist architects in

creating contemporary church architecture that is theologically connected and has historical and cultural extension.

- Additionally, through the methodology of the research, it should be a reference in the form of a booklet or a simple reference in the Diocese or the Patriarchate about how to build or design a contemporary Greek Orthodox church in a manner compatible with the liturgy and preserve the ancient design in the construction of churches.
- Above all, in the wake of the Syrian crisis, this research could form a general microcosm of ancient church heritage and present ones as a simple tiny part of the documentation.

Research Questions

- What would be the most important elements that should be respected and linked to the traditions; Syrian sanctuary, western towers, iconostasis? Is there a continuity between these elements over the centuries? Are they relevant today? Can we define rules, tools, guidelines, stylistic criteria, or strategies, when designing a contemporary church of the Greek Orthodox based on those examples?
- Why and how were the Greek Orthodox churches built in Damascus in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? What are the reasons for the decline in church architectural heritage?
- How is the ideal model of the church building of the Greek Orthodox shown today?
- What are the factors to assess in this model?
- Does the architectural design have a significant and fundamental impact on how the Christian community perceives churches?

Problem of Research

Today, church architecture's flourishing has ceased and declined after taking center stage in Syria's Christian history.

There is a lack of guidelines during the construction of a church and has not been taken into account, leading to the loss of part of our cultural identity, architectural and symbolic aspects. In other words, the traditional forms are not adhered to in many churches in the modern era as in Damascus. In Greek Orthodox churches, the traditions (Παράδοση

Paradosi) is a matter that equals the theological and dogmatic commitments and has spiritual, symbolic, and functional meanings. Hence, the problem lies in comprehending these meanings and the substantial issues of designing the church in the present day.

An apparent negligence of authenticity and preservation in many churches belonging to the Greek Orthodox denomination is shown in Damascus. However, there are several attempts to retain traditions and heritage by creating a bridge between the ancient and modern churches in many cities in Syria such as Latakia.

Difficulties and challenges

One of the key challenges the researcher has experienced is the difficulty of obtaining and collecting information and documents for churches, especially in the case of the Greek Orthodox community in Damascus, whether through the engineering offices or the real estate office in the Patriarchate. Another daunting challenge one must endure is the lack of interest in engineering archives, including architectural and construction plans. This is reflected negatively on any research processes needed (conservation, restoration) for the church. Although such plans and documentation are accessible at times, they are merely prior to modification (revamping, restoration, and so on).

Methodology

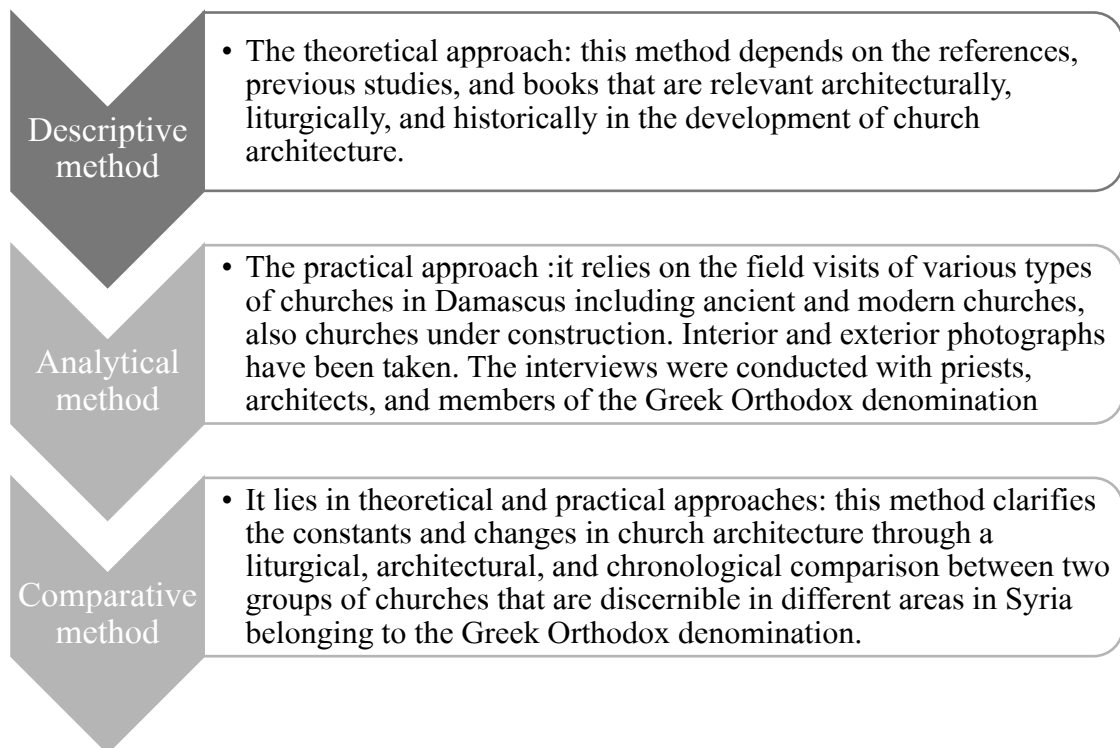
In gaining access to the objective of the research, the approach of research is divided into:

- Descriptive method: It represents the theoretical side.
 - This method depends on the references, previous studies, and books that are relevant architecturally, liturgically, and historically in the development of church architecture starting from the early Christian period of Syrian churches.
 - This also covers the Byzantine period from the fourth to the sixth centuries, besides the Crusader period between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.
 - Moreover, it exhibits the church architecture of Christian denominations in old Damascus and the contemporary ones of the Greek Orthodox denomination in Damascus. Needless to mention, there is a lack of sources.
- Analytical method: It lies in the practical side.
 - It shows the analytics and justifications for the emergence of ancient and modern church models, as well as their liturgical and architectural aspects.

- In addition, it relies on the field visits of various types of churches in Damascus including ancient and modern churches, also churches under construction. Interior and exterior photographs have been taken. The interviews were conducted with priests, architects, and members of the Greek Orthodox denomination who pray in the churches, how they feel during practicing rituals, and their point of view about churches as a structure.

➤ Comparative method:

This method clarifies the constants and changes in church architecture through a liturgical, architectural, and chronological comparison between two groups of churches that are discernible in different areas in Syria belonging to the Greek Orthodox denomination. Damascus, Lattakia, and Daraa cities were selected for studying church architecture dating back to different historical periods from the ancient and early modern ages until nowadays.



A graphic illustration depicting three types of methodologies, by the author

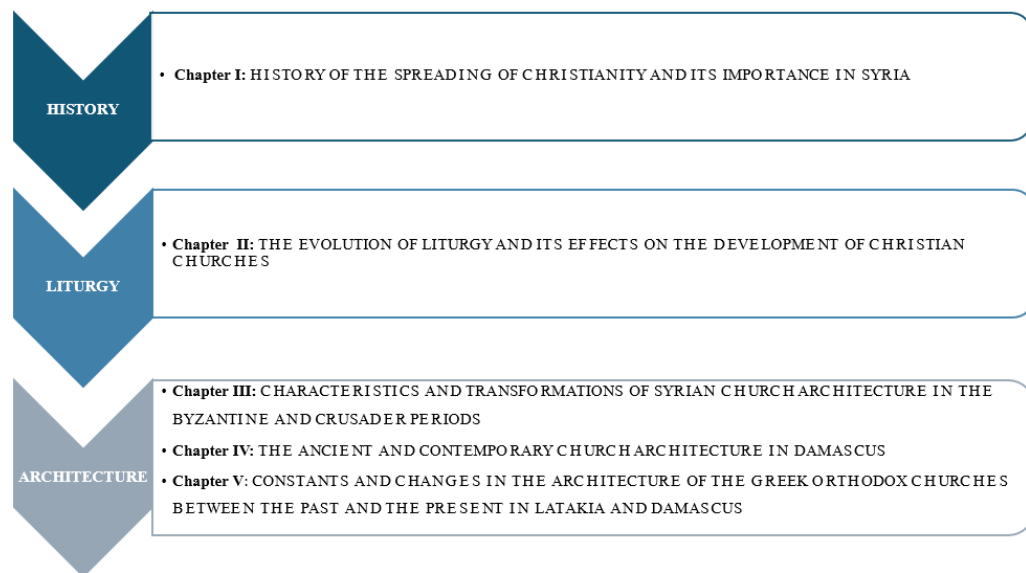
Contribution to Knowledge

Most of the studies that were carried out despite their small number included the study of modern churches with their denominations or a study of the architectural developments of the churches during a certain time frame of the Byzantine period (comparisons between the north and the south of Syria), or the selection of one church with restoration and

rehabilitation or regeneration. Parts of these studies discuss liturgy alone, while others investigate art independently, or architecture in isolation from the liturgical and symbolic dimensions.

This research focuses on examining the architectural development of church architecture over time, up to the present day, by highlighting key architectural models, with a particular emphasis on Greek Orthodox churches. This study provides an in-depth examination of Greek Orthodox church architecture, tracing its historical origins in Syria to the present day. It prioritizes the scientific and academic dimensions of the architectural topic, focusing on detailed description, analysis, and comparative analysis.

The culmination of this work, presented as an academic summary, elucidates the interrelationship among all elements, highlighting and affirming the strong link between the symbolism of ecclesiastical liturgy and its architectural dimension.



A graphic illustration that outlines the study chapters, highlighting the historical, liturgical, and architectural aspects, and demonstrating the connections between them

Literature Review:

The research is based on numerous historical, liturgical and architectural references. Below are the most essential sources used for the current study.

The research offers a perspective of the subject through its analysis of church architecture in relation to its liturgical functions. The book "Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture" by Richard Krautheimer presents an extensive historical and architectural analysis of early Christian and Byzantine buildings across various regions. The book examines the design and application of these architectural forms in relation to liturgical practices and theological symbolism. The research aims to explore more specifically how architecture serves to express theology and support liturgical practice. Krautheimer's book is a valuable source for this research, especially for the first three chapters which are dedicated to the historical, liturgical, and architectural analysis in the early Christian and the Byzantine periods.

The two-volume book "Kanīsat madīnat Allah 'Anṭākya al-ʿuḏmā" by 'Assad Rustum serves as a fundamental work for studying Christian history and the Greek Orthodox Church and its Patriarchate. These books offer a great opportunity for this study regarding the development of Christian history later, how churches adapted to these developments especially in the first two chapters of the study.

Moreover, the book "Tārīkh Kanīsat 'Anṭākya" by Bābābūlus Khrīsūsutums examines the historical divisions within Christianity and their effects on theological doctrines. The book enriches a broader view of ecclesial and cultural developments. It provides a comprehensive historical framework with an attempt to understand the history and development of Christian theology through an examination of the ecumenical councils within Christianity. It is considered one of the important references to expand the range of knowledge on the history of Christianity and the development of Christian theology, especially in the first chapter of the research.

The book "History of Eastern Christianity" by Aziz Atiya gives a detailed account of the first major schism in Christianity that took place in the East during the Christological debates of the fifth through seventh centuries, and the division between Byzantium and Rome in the eleventh century. The Eastern "non-Chalcedonian" churches received little attention from English scholars before the book's release. The book examines Eastern

Christianity through its examination of both the "Monophysite" group, consisting of Copts, Ethiopians, Syrian Jacobites, Armenians, and St. Thomas Christians of India and the Nestorians and Maronites. It offers a valuable resource for academic study.

Pasquale Castellana Romualdo Fernandez wrote the book "Syrian Churches of the Fourth Century," which explores early Christian architecture alongside church buildings and church history expansion in Antioch and Syria, and primitive and early churches. The book contains more than 35 churches in northern Syria, as well as theological institutions and Christian literature. These elements work together to create a comprehensive resource that explains the evolution and importance of early Syrian church architecture. This reference provides valuable information for this study particularly during the initial chapters which focus on historical, liturgical and architectural aspects.

In addition, the book "al-Masīhiyya 'abr tārīkhīhā fī al-Mashriq" offers an engaging exploration and examination of Eastern Christianity's historical development. Its value is enhanced by the diverse perspectives provided by multiple contributing authors. Although the book deals with Syria and Damascus, as shown in the historical chapter of this study, it would be interesting to expand the narrative to other regions in the East, such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, to give more historical aspects of Eastern Christianity.

Besides, the book "The Eastern Christian Churches: A Brief Survey" by Ronald G. Roberson aims to provide a concise yet informative guide to Eastern Christian Churches. His work serves as an accessible entry point for students and researchers by documenting the history and practices of these churches. This serves as an excellent resource for this study, particularly in the first chapter, where it provides a detailed description of the history of Christian denominations. Furthermore, the book "al-Masīhiyūn al-Sūriyūn khilāl 'alfay 'ām" written by Samīr 'Abda offers an in-depth look at Eastern Christian denominations, detailing the Christian population's development through several key historical phases which is an important source for this study.

Thomas F. Mathews' book "The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy" provides a detailed examination of the liturgy and architectural history of early Byzantine churches by combining archaeological evidence with liturgical sources. This book offers a comprehensive understanding of church planning.

The book "al-Maṣādr al-Litrūjiyya" by Yūḥannā Yāzjī shows a liturgical analysis practice by following their historical development throughout the ages. This help to gain a deep understanding of how religious traditions have been formed by liturgy. This book establishes a fundamental resource for scholars.

The book "Madkhal ʿila al-litrūjyā wa al-ṭaqs al-kanasī" written by ʾIbrāhīm al-Qamṣ ʿĀzar is another reference for the liturgy serves as a significant reference in the field of liturgical studies. This comprehensive treatise elucidates the concept of liturgy, exploring its multifaceted dimensions, symbolic representations, and underlying objectives.

In addition, the book "Early Church Architectural Forms: A Theologically Contextual Typology for the Eastern Churches of the 4th-6th Centuries" written by Susan Balderstone which offers a comprehensive analysis of ecclesiastical architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Late Antique period. This scholarly treatise examines a wide array of churches dating from the fourth to the sixth centuries, providing valuable insights into the architectural landscape of early Christianity in the region. It also investigates the correlation between theological debates and architectural forms.

The book "Early Christian Art and Architecture" written by Robert Milburn, provides a comprehensive description of art and architecture in the Christian world up until the sixth century. Additionally, it connects church architecture with liturgical requirements. It covers several topics, including the earliest Christian art found in Roman catacombs and basilicas. It explores the development of Christian iconography and symbolism, which is considered an important source for the second chapter.

The book "Monuments of the Early Church," written by Walter Lowrie, provides illustrations and examines the evolution of early Christian art and architecture.

The book "Early Christian, Byzantine and Romanesque Architecture (Simpson's History of Architectural Development Vol. II)" written by Cecil Stewart and Simpson, Frederick, offers a detailed chronological analysis that connects early Christian spaces like catacombs and house churches with later monumental styles such as Byzantine and Romanesque architecture. This broad scope provides a valuable foundation for understanding the historical and stylistic transitions in Christian architecture.

The book "*Byzantine Architecture*" written by Mango, is considered an important reference as part of the literature review to establish a scholarly framework for their study through

Byzantine architecture and churches, as well as their materials and construction mechanisms. Hence, this resource demonstrates its importance in tracing architectural history and uses its detailed illustrations and analyses to support their exploration of Christian architectural evolution.

The book “Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries and Architecture and Other Arts” by Howard Crosby Butler is considered the basic reference for this study. These works document a great number of Byzantine churches in northern and southern Syria and provide a wealth of information on inscriptions and decorations, as well as the historical and geographical context of these sites. This research is heavily based on Butler's illustrations and detailed descriptions of the churches, especially in the third chapter.

The book “Eglises de Village de la Syrie du Nord” by Georges Tchalenko is another crucial reference, featuring a substantial collection of illustrations that detail churches in northern Syria. These illustrations include plans, sections, facades, and a rebuilding model. The research lies in the use of Tchalenko's documentation of churches in northern Syria. The study incorporates these detailed illustrations to provide a richly textured analysis of architectural features and historical reconstructions, which offer the structural and evolution of these churches, especially in the third chapter.

The books “The Christian Art of Byzantine Syria” and “The Amazing Life of the Syrian Monks in the 4th - 6th Centuries” by Ignacio Pena are vital references for this study. The first book provides a detailed account of churches, baptisteries, monasteries, pilgrimage destinations, relics, and liturgical elements in the Dead Cities during the Byzantine era. It is enriched with numerous photographs and concludes with a discussion on the influence of Byzantine art on Islamic and European art, as well as the declining population of the Dead Cities. The second book delves deeply into the monastic movement and its evolution during this period.

Equally important, the five-volume set “Mawsū‘at baṭraḳiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya” written by Mithrath Haj Athanasiyus is equally significant, serving as a crucial source for understanding the history, liturgy, and architecture of Christianity in Syria. It introduces a new perspective by incorporating Athanasiyus's comprehensive work, which gives a historical, liturgical and architectural account of Christianity in Syria. This is new because it provides a detailed and authoritative source that links historical side with architectural

and liturgical practices and thus enhances the understanding of Christian heritage in the region.

The book “*Ādyira wa Kanā'iṣ Dimashq wa rīfihā*” written by Qutayba al-Shihābī and Mithrāth Hāj Athanāsiyūs is a pivotal survey that covers both ancient and contemporary churches and monasteries in Damascus across all Christian denominations. It provides detailed descriptions of historical and architectural aspects, accompanied by a variety of photos. This work serves as a foundational and significant reference for the fourth chapter, which focuses on churches in Damascus.

I. HISTORY OF THE SPREADING OF CHRISTIANITY AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN SYRIA

Overview:

This chapter offers a brief overview of the historical development of Christianity and its various denominations in Syria. By establishing this historical context, this chapter aims to serve as a bridge to the subsequent chapters and illustrate how the historical events reflected on church architecture and liturgical arrangements of Christianity over the centuries in Syria.

This chapter is organized into three primary subsections. The first subsection focuses on the geographical context and provides a historical overview of Syria, with a particular emphasis on Damascus. It outlines the key historical phases and the development of Christianity in Damascus.

The second subsection examines the main stages in the history of Christianity and the most important features of Christianity in Syria. It also discusses Christianity in Antioch and Syria, the distribution of Christian denominations, church architecture and saints and the monastic movement. The third subsection clarifies the definition of Uniate churches and their new contact with Rome and non-Uniate churches.

Thus, the purpose of the present chapter is to briefly draw a clear picture of the historical phases and how these different historical phases influenced Christianity. Moreover, to give answers to these questions:

- Why is Christianity exceedingly important in Syria?
- Why are there several Christian denominations?

I.1. A Brief Overview of the Geographical and Historical Frame of Syria

I.1.1. Geography

The foundation of Christian history is the geographical area that stretches from Mesopotamia to the Nile Valley to Constantinople on the Bosphorus.¹

In the fifth century BC, the Greeks used the term 'Syria' to refer to what is now called Bilad al-Sham. This stretches from the Taurus Mountains of Anatolia to the Sinai Peninsula and the Arabian Desert, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River. It includes areas such as Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan. After the first century of Arab Muslim rule, the term 'Syria' was out of the region for nearly a thousand years.²

Antioch was the Syrian capital in the east of the Roman Empire characterized by its richness due to the importance of Antioch's location as an administrative and political center where different cultures met.³ Antioch was ideally located on the southwestern side of the Amuk Plain, near the source of the Orontes River, which is a major thoroughfare connecting the Amuk Plain to the sea. Amuk Plain is situated on the northwestern part of Syria, making it militarily and economically strategic. All of the ways between southern Anatolia and the Syrian coast pass through there, so it is a critical location. This strategic position allowed Antioch to flourish as a trade center and it established a successful military control in Syria.⁴ Today, Antioch is part of Turkey and situated in Hatay province of southern Syria (Fig. 1).⁵

The modern state of Syria is bounded to the north by Turkey, to the east by Iraq, and the west by the Mediterranean Sea. Toward the south, the great Arabian Desert and Jordan are situated, and Palestine is to the southwest (Fig. 2).⁶

It is essential to highlight the geographical location of Damascus, as it provides the setting for the most significant churches that will be mentioned in subsequent chapters. Damascus is the Syrian capital and one of the oldest inhabited cities around the globe. It is situated in the southwestern part of Syria. This city lies on the southeast plain of Anti-Lebanon

¹ 'abū Nahrā, 2013, p. 1

² Shchadeh, 1994, p. 15

³ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 18

⁴ Kondoleon, 2000, p. 3

⁵ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Antākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. I), 1997, p. 227

⁶ Pena, 1997, p. 7

Mountain, on the western edge of the Syrian desert. Barada is the main river in Damascus and (Ain al-Fijah) 'In al-Fijah (Ain al-Fijah).⁷ In addition, the groundwater and watery streams originate from eastern Lebanon Mountain (Fig. 2).⁸



Fig. 1 A map showing Syria in its Roman Near Eastern context and Antioch, (Bryce, 2014, p. 222).

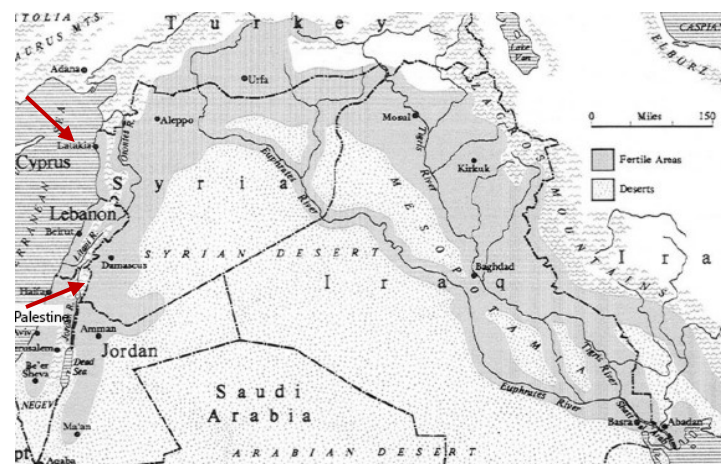


Fig. 2 A map showing Syria and surrounding countries, (Bryce, 2014, p. 6).

⁷ DeGeorge, 2005, p. 7

⁸ Shilshr, 1998, p. 17

As for northern Syria, it is important to shed light on this region due to the importance of church architecture which will be presented in the following chapters. Northern Syria is commonly referred to by three distinct terms: the 'Dead Cities', the 'Limestone Massif', or the 'Forgotten Cities'. Geographically, this area extends from the northern Syrian border to Apamea in the south and spans from the Afrin and Assai valleys in the west to the Aleppo and Qansrin plain in the east. The region is distinguished by its distinctive landscape, characterized by the prominent white limestone formations that dominate the terrain.⁹

The Limestone Massif of northwestern Syria consists of three separate areas. To the north is Jabal Simon; in the middle, there is a group of mountains, amongst them Jabal Barisha, Jabal al-Ala, Jabal Dueili, and Jabal Wastani. Jabal al-Zawiyye is highlighted as the southern part (Fig. 3). This extensive region is notable for having approximately 820 villages and towns, which date back to the period between the second and seventh centuries. These archaeological sites of churches and monasteries are important for understanding the architectural development of the region in the Byzantine period.¹⁰



Fig. 3 A map showing the limestone massif with; Jabal Simon, Jabal Barisha, Jabal al-Ala
Jabal Dueili, Jabal Wastani and Jabal al- Zawiyye, (Peña, 1997, p. 15).

⁹ Makhūl, 2000, p. 9

¹⁰ Pena, 1997, p. 12

Moreover, it is imperative to provide a clear understanding of the geographical context of southern Syria, as it encompasses a rich array of ecclesiastical exemplars that will be examined in subsequent chapters. Hauran region in southern and southeastern Syria is characterized by a large basalt rock massif situated south of Damascus. In geographical terms, it occupies a strategic position at the intersection of three distinct zones: it is connected in the north with the fertile oasis of Damascus; to the south and east it is continued by the desert; and to the west, it stretches towards the Jordan Valley. The topography of Hauran is diverse and includes both mountain and plain areas. To the east is Jabal Hauran, and in the northeastern part is Lajat, a rocky region. Hauran plain is al-Nuqra, which is located between Jabal Hauran to the east and Jabal Ajloun (ʿAjlūn) to the west. Several important urban centers are present in the Hauran region, including Izraa, Qanawāt, Shahba, Bosra, and al-Suwayda (Fig. 4). These cities are significant from the cultural and historical point of view of the Hauran as it is situated at the crossroads of different geographical zones.¹¹ Most striking is that the Christian faith experienced great acceptance and popularity in southern Syria in the fourth century.

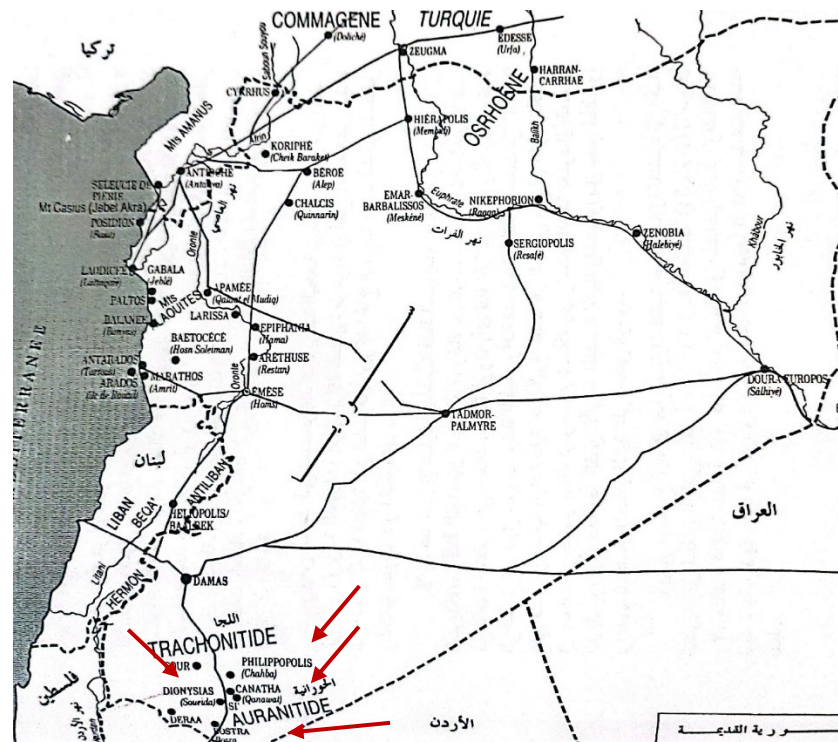


Fig. 4 A map showing urban centers in southern Syria, *Athanāsiyū*, 1997

¹¹ Trabulsje, 2010, pp. 43-44

The geographical location of Latakia is significant, particularly in the context of its notable church architecture, which will be discussed in the final chapter. Latakia is located in northwestern Syria, bordering Tartus to the south, Hama to the east, and Idlib to the northeast, sharing an international border with Turkey to the north and a coastline on the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Latakia is a significant port city and manufacturing center, known historically as Laodicea in Syria or Laodicea ad Mare. Latakia is also notable for its cultural diversity and its role as a major urban center in Syria (Fig. 2). ¹²

¹² Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. III), 1997, p. 320

I.1.2. History

Syria was an important eastern part of the Roman Empire in 64 B.C. During that period, it enjoyed peace and flourished, and the people sought to maintain inherited religions and cultures.¹³

Thereafter, under Theodosius' rule (395-387), Christianity became the official religion of the Empire, and its frame was clearly constituted in 395. Syria was part of the Eastern territories of the Byzantine Empire, with Constantinople serving as the capital of the Empire.¹⁴ In this period, Syria experienced a period of relative tranquillity.¹⁵ Furthermore, from the fourth century until the seventh, the region enjoyed powerful activities in economics, agriculture, and architecture.¹⁶

In 635, a new historical stage started in Syria after the arrival of Islam. Bosra was the first city under Islamic rule, then Damascus in 636, and Antioch in 638.¹⁷ Going through different phases, it began with the Umayyad reign in 660, the Abbasid in 750, the Fatimid in 974, the Seljuk in 1070, the Zingid in 1154, the Ayyubid in 1174, and the Mamluk in 1260, and ended with the Ottoman between 1516-1918 as a consequence of Battle of Marj Dabiq (Marj Dābīq battle). Between 1922-1946, it was the period of the French mandate. Then Syria became independent in 1946.¹⁸

Damascus, being part of Syria, has been linked to the early Christian period since the Holy Annunciation and the expansion of Christianity. The presence of Jewish congregations in Damascus was the main reason for linking this city with Christianity's inception.¹⁹ Following Jesus Christ's appearance to Saul on the outskirts of Damascus, he preached the Christian religion. He was converted from a persecutor (Saul) to a Christian, Paul, and was baptized by St. Ananias.²⁰

¹³ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 15

¹⁴ Layla, 2010, pp. 40-41

¹⁵ al-Bunī, 1996, p. 115

¹⁶ Pīniyā, Kāstlyānā , & Firnān, 2002, p. 33

¹⁷ Sārtr, 2008, p. 35

¹⁸ al-Bunī, 1996, pp. 117-118

¹⁹ Sārtr, 2008, p. 29

²⁰ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 17

Damascus was an episcopal center with fifteen dioceses in 323 when Christianity began to spread rapidly.²¹ Many structures were reused as churches and new churches and monasteries were built.²² A well-known example is the temple of Jupiter which was turned into a church (St. John the Baptist) by Theodosius I in 379.²³

Subsequently, the Chalcedon Council of 451 led to the establishment of the Jacobite Church in Damascus, and their numbers increased dramatically in the western region of Badiyat al-Sham (alongside the Ghassanids).²⁴

Towards the middle of the fifth century, the Nestorians appeared in Damascus and certain Syrian Arabic tribes followed it.²⁵ Keep in mind that Damascus was a central diocese of Phoenicia Lebanese (the second or internal one)²⁶ ascribed to the Melkites Greek denomination, knowing 13 bishoprics existed in 570. Notably Damascus Metropolitan was independent and subject to the Antioch Church.²⁷ It is believed that the Greek Melkite diocese located in Damascus to the north of the big church (St. John the Baptist or Umayyad Mosque), or to the east of the main church on the southern side. The Greek Orthodox was the dominant denomination in Damascus.²⁸

A new phase began with the arrival of Muslim armies (636) accompanied by new religion, thoughts, and influences.²⁹ Hence, the relationship between the new Muslim authority and Christians oscillated between indulgence and ill-treatment.³⁰

At the outset of this phase, the cathedral of John Baptist was used by Muslims and Christians, eastern and western parts respectively,³¹ besides ordering that half of all churches to be converted into mosques. The number of churches where Christians could

²¹ Spiers, 2016, p. 215

²² al-ʿAqīlī, 2015, pp. 23-24-25

²³ Spiers, 2016, p. 215

²⁴ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 18

²⁵ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 255

²⁶ Rustum, *Kanīsat madīnat Allah ʿAntākiya al-ʿuzmā* 34-634, 1958, pp.255

²⁷ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 114

²⁸ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 18

²⁹ Spiers, 2016, p. 216

³⁰ Geffert & Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity Supplemental Text*, 2016, p. 72

³¹ Spiers, 2016, p. 216

conduct their rites was reduced from forty-two to fourteen.³² So, the prominence of Christianity began to dwindle. In general, the Muslims used the term ‘People of the Book’ for non-Muslims. The promises to the ‘People of the Book’ appeared to be a broad framework of legal system that defined the rights and conditions. Determined rights entailed conserving properties, upholding doctrine by protecting churches and monasteries, and allowing for repairs, but not building new ones. However, the obligations in exchange for these privileges were to be submitted to the caliph's authority.³³

During the Umayyad period, which extended from 661 to 750, Damascus became the capital of the reign.³⁴ In 705, al-Walīd ibn Abd al-Malik (al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik) caliph seized St. John Cathedral and converted it into a mosque.³⁵ Between 717 and 720, the situation for Christians grew difficult as exorbitant levies were imposed, several churches were demolished, bell ringing was prohibited, and even public celebrations.³⁶ The Arabic language started to be used commonly by Melkite as an ecclesiastical language instead of the Greek language.³⁷

The iconoclastic controversy period started in Damascus with the prohibition of icons and crosses in churches. So, the development of churches or even drawing icons ceased due to the prohibition on drawing and sacred subjects.³⁸ Several Christian symbols were removed, like icons and crosses, especially under the ruler ‘Abd al-Malik (Abd al-Malik) and his son al-Walīd (al-Walid).³⁹ This attitude culminated with the decree issued by Yazid (721-724), which mandated the destruction of images in churches, shops, and houses.⁴⁰ Notably, his proclamation referred to these icons as "images" rather than "holy icons."⁴¹

Throughout the Fatimid caliphate between 974 and 1070, the condition of Christians alternated between tolerance of Christianity and persecution.⁴²

³² Jenkins, 2009, p. 181

³³ Hazīm, 2001, pp. 477-478

³⁴ Atiya, 2010, p. 329

³⁵ Spiers, 2016, p. 216

³⁶ Bābādūbūlus, 1984, pp. 551-552

³⁷ Griffith, 2010, p. 210

³⁸ Codoñer, 2013, p. 139

³⁹ Griffith, 2010, p. 210

⁴⁰ Thomas, 2001, p. 27

⁴¹ Codoñer, 2013, p. 139

⁴² Farzli, 2001, p. 580

There was a recurrence of the persecution of Christians during the Seljuk (1070-1154) and the Ayyubid (1174-1260) periods.⁴³ Overall, the period of the Ayyubid was characterized by doctrinal conflict and religious intolerance due to conflicts with the Crusaders. As a result, levies were considered a punishment, not dignity to 'People of the Book'. Christians were permitted to pray and perform rituals in churches designated as sacred sites. It was allowed to have Christian celebrations in Christian cities and villages, as well as in their churches, but not to gather in Muslim areas.⁴⁴

Before the rise of the Zengid (1154-1174) and Ayyubid (1174-1260) dynasties, some Eastern Christians aligned themselves with the Crusaders, while others remained discreet.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the Crusaders launched five unsuccessful attempts to capture Damascus between 1126 and 1158.⁴⁶

When the Mongols attacked Damascus and visited churches in 1258, the Christians succeeded in getting a Farman mentioning recommendations for caring Christians.⁴⁷ Hence, Christians raised their prayers in some mosques and rang bells. It is also said that one mosque turned into a church. Thus, the reaction of Muslims after defeating the Mongols was to kill many Christians, plunder, and burn the monasteries. Besides the destruction of the Mariamite Church.⁴⁸

The conditions remained unchanged during the Mamluk period (1260-1516). Nonetheless, the Mamluk were more stringent and forceful in preserving the legal status of churches and priest arrangements. The administration of the Mamluk seems to impose two primary concerns on the patriarchs. The first was to urge their communities to maintain the status of the current situation. Hence, the government and churches shared a common objective to preserve traditions, while suppressing any attempts at renovation. Secondly, the Mamluk viewed both Melkite and Jacobite as potential sources of discord. Thence, the Mamluk was aware of the relationship between the Melkite and Constantinople. Even

⁴³ Rustum, *Kanīsat madīnat Allah 'Anṭākiya al-ʿuẓmā* 634-1453 A.D, 1958, p. 317

⁴⁴ Farzli, 2001, pp. 590-591

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 580

⁴⁶ al-ʿAqīlī, 2015, pp. 23-24-25

⁴⁷ Farzli, 2001, pp. 590-591

⁴⁸ Rustum, *Kanīsat madīnat Allah 'Anṭākiya al-ʿuẓmā* 634-1453 A.D, 1958, p. 317

though the danger of this relationship decreased due to the degeneration of Byzantine power and Crusaders.⁴⁹

By the early sixteenth century, the Ottomans had gained dominance of the Middle East after their victory against the Mamluk in 1516. As a result, Christian holy territories, including the patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Alexandria, fell under Ottoman control (1516-1918).⁵⁰ Damascus became a significant center of the Ottoman Empire.⁵¹ Although Eastern churches were respected and patriarchates were accorded privileges, Christians did not have the same rights as Muslims since the Ottomans regarded Christians to be 'People of the Book'. They were subject to certain restrictions such as Christian congregations intended to build or restore their churches; had to follow specific rules.

The Ottomans accepted three millets in the middle of the nineteenth century: first, Greek Orthodox and Armenian; second, all Syriac faiths; Jacobite, Nestorians, and Maronite; and third, Jewish.⁵² Because of the Maronites' strong ties to Rome (Roman Catholic), the Maronites were unconcerned by the Ottoman designation.⁵³ Unlike any other church, this connection provided cultural and spiritual support for the Maronites.

Hence, the Ottoman Farman has not been imposed on the Maronite presidency.⁵⁴ Melkites, on the other hand, were dissatisfied with the Ottoman rule. The Ottoman ruler granted the patriarch of Constantinople authority over the churches of the Melkite patriarchs in Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. This infuriated the Melkites, especially when Constantinople patriarchs abused their Melkite leadership by assigning many Greek bishops to Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria.⁵⁵

It is remarkable that Abbasid (750-974) and Mamluk periods, the number of Christians decreased by around 8-10% (Fig. 5). On the other hand, it rose by around 40% throughout the Ottoman period, mainly in coastal regions and the Lebanon highlands, and by about 12-15% in Damascus and Aleppo.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Nīlsūn, 2001, p. 601

⁵⁰ ʿabū Nahrā, 2013, p. 6

⁵¹ Shīlshr, 1998, p. 18

⁵² Ibid, p.16

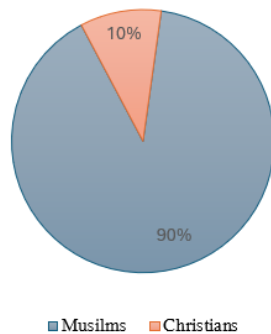
⁵³ Talal, 1995, pp. 108-109

⁵⁴ ʿArjiryū, 2001, p. 608

⁵⁵ Talal, 1995, pp. 108-109

⁵⁶ Badr, Salīm, & ʿabū Nahrā, 2001, pp. 35-40

Percentage of Christians in the Abbasid period (750-974)



Percentage of Christians in the Ottoman period (1516-1918)

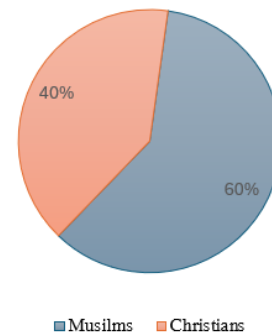


Fig. 5 A chart illustrating the percentage of Christians during the Abbasid and Ottoman periods, by the author.

A split between the Catholic and Orthodox churches occurred in 1724 and was a crucial event in Christian history.⁵⁷ The Greek Catholics established their church, western missionaries grew influential and supportive, and many churches shifted their stance to follow Rome. On the other hand, it is worth noting that as a result of the establishment of Uniate churches, Ottoman sultans began to recognize the church as a private entity under intense pressure from Europeans, by getting Farman to recognize more millets such as the Armenian Catholic (1830), Protestant (1850), Chaldean (1860), Syriac Catholic (1866), and Greek Catholic (1848) denominations.⁵⁸

With the acceptance of the Ottomans, Latin denomination resumed supporting the Western missionaries. The nineteenth century is regarded as the peak of the Western missionaries in the East.⁵⁹ The major goal of these missionaries was to teach foreign languages, create schools, and establish relationships with the West.⁶⁰ The presence of the Latin, Maronite, and Armenian churches grew in importance. While France was interested in the Maronites, Russia was an effective sponsor of the Greek Orthodox Church, particularly after 1860.⁶¹ Thus, religious activity and cultural contacts between the

⁵⁷ Abda, 2000, p. 44

⁵⁸ Jāwīn, 2001, pp. 753-754

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 756

⁶⁰ Naṣūr A. , 2013, p. 87

⁶¹ Fawaz, 1995, p. 23

Patriarchate of Antioch and Moscow increased significantly, particularly from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.⁶²

The conflict peaked in 1860 when a minority, the Druze of Mount Lebanon and Mount Hermon, massacred Christians with the Ottomans not intervening at first. Not long after that, a revolt broke out in Damascus. Notwithstanding the admonitions issued by the Muslim dignitaries and European consuls, Governor Ahmed Pasha did not intervene to impede the entry of the Druze into the city, nor did he permit Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi, the exiled leader of the Algerian Revolution, to undertake the rescue of the beleaguered Christians. Conversely, he allocated soldiers renowned for their animosity toward Christians to "protect" them. It appears that the plan was for the defenders of Christians to unite with their attackers.⁶³

However, the war was not a religious conflict but rather one in social, economic, and political factors, as confirmed by researcher Shatkovsky-Schelcher. Not only was one group of Christians persecuted more than the other. The Christians of al-Midan neighbourhood were not attacked at all. Moreover, while some Muslims called for attacks on Christians, many Muslim dignitaries, led by Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi, rushed to their aid and hosted the displaced among them.

Although the Sublime Porte had sent an army commanded by the Foreign Minister himself, Fuad Pasha, one of the authors of the new Ottoman regulations, he did not take part in the events in his private capacity. In other words, Fuad Pasha had not taken an official stance on this event but regarded it as a local affair. By the time Fuad Pasha arrived, the riots were over, but they had left their mark.⁶⁴

It is said that more than 15000 Christians of Bab Touma were killed in three days, while the Christians in al-Midan district were safe.⁶⁵ In addition, this crisis was followed by architectural destruction, including a large part of the Christian quarter between Bab Touma and Bab al-Sharqi, as well as houses, churches, convents, icons, and schools. Besides, many homes were abandoned after their owners fled to find safety.⁶⁶ Thus, there

⁶² al-Hilū , Samīn, Qasāṭlī , & O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 42

⁶³ Zak, 2005, pp. 55-56

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 55-56

⁶⁵ Fayyād, Churches in Damascus, 2019

⁶⁶ Zak, 2005, p. 55

was a need for the reconstruction and renovation of every church in old Damascus, and the same was with icons.

It is interesting to note that the extent of the warfare that took place at that time can still be observed today. This is evidenced by houses that still retain parts of older structures, and by field research that shows that buildings along the two internal streets in the Bab Touma neighbourhood, running from north to south, suffered the most damage.⁶⁷

When these buildings were rebuilt, a modern urban design was adopted which is evident in their straight layout. About 80 houses facing the street were built after 1860, and some of the smaller houses were built in front of the larger ones. But the part overlooking the city wall, near the chapel of St. Ananias, seems to have been spared from the destruction. This is indicated by the preservation of pathways and blind alleys in this area, which is characterized by simpler houses.⁶⁸

It is noteworthy that there are no extant remains of neighbourhood gates in the Christian quarters of Old Damascus, in contrast to other parts of the city. The precise timing and circumstances surrounding the removal of these gates remain uncertain. It is thought that the gates may have been dismantled during a subsequent renovation or street realignment within the neighbourhood. However, such gates are thought to have shut the neighbourhood's southern and eastern entrances from Straight Street to Bab Touma Street. If they were taken away after the events of 1860, the reasons were not only urban and infrastructural but also political. As Fuad Pasha viewed restoring internal security and establishing and asserting full control over the city as one of his primary responsibilities.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Zak, 2005, pp. 55-56

⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 55-56

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 55-56

I.2. Christian History in Syria:

According to the Gospel of Matthew (28:19) and Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians (13:13), Christianity believes in God as an undivided "Holy Trinity". As the three divine hypostases of the "Holy Trinity" are united: "*substance, nature, essence*". In other words, these three hypostases are: '*the "Father", who is God in transcendence; the "Son", who is God as the Christ; and the "Holy Spirit", which is God as the divine agency in the universe*'.⁷⁰

Hereunder is a brief outline of the historical phases that Christianity passed through:

- The Apostolic Era: This era represents the period when the disciples of Jesus started to preach and spread Christianity worldwide in the first century.⁷¹
- The Spreading Era: This period covers the second century as well as the first half of the third century. Christianity expanded gradually and became widely accepted in Asia Minor and Rome itself.⁷² In 100 A.D., the spread of the Christian religion was not only limited to the large cities but also to villages and small towns in the East. Over this phase, Christian congregations became more powerful and organized.⁷³ The framework of priests and bishops emerged, and categories of religious tasks and specific administrative functions were formed. Moreover, the didactic courses were set up in order to teach the new Christians.⁷⁴ According to historian Eusebius, nearly 7 million were Christians and 1 million Jewish in Syria by the first century and Antioch had about 800000 Christians and about 45000- 60000 Jewish.⁷⁵ In 250, the number of Christians rose considerably about 60% in Asia Minor, besides 30000 to 50000 in Rome, and hundreds in Africa (Fig. 6).⁷⁶
- The Persecution Era: This phase represents degeneration. From time to time, several harassment incidents arose that affected Christians' presence. For instance: Rome events in 63 (Nero Emperor), Izmir in 117, and Lyons in the year 177.⁷⁷ In addition, the name

⁷⁰ Talal, 1995, p. 3

⁷¹ 'Amīn, 2015, p. 11

⁷² Ibid, p.11

⁷³ Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, 1986, p. 23

⁷⁴ 'Amīn, 2015, p. 11

⁷⁵ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 38

⁷⁶ Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, 1986, p. 24

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.25

Diocletian had been associated with severe persecution (284-305). In the wake of these incidents, Christians experienced tribulations, several churches were demolished, and the Holy Scriptures were burnt.⁷⁸ According to Eusebius, the fourth century witnessed a great number of Christian martyrs.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, many churches were built by Christians with a desire to express the new faith reflecting the spreading of Christianity by the third century.⁸⁰ There is also a testimony by the Christian historian Eusebius mentions about Christians before the serious persecution by the end of the third century “*Christians, not content with their old buildings, erected from the ground up spacious churches in all cities*”.⁸¹ Besides, the number of Christians increased significantly in general, and in Antioch reached 100000.⁸²

- The Reconciliation with Rome State: A new phase had been initiated in the history of Christianity when Constantine the Great undertook matters in the Western Empire. Especially, after the proclamation of the Edict of Milan in 313 which granted Christianity a legal position and released it from persecution.⁸³

- Christianity is the official religion of the state: The importance of this phase lies in two major matters, which are: the coronation of Constantine as emperor in 323, who adopted Christianity in the entire Roman Empire,⁸⁴ and the city of Constantinople was chosen by Constantine representing as ‘new Christian capital of the Roman Empire, as ‘New Rome’ and the ‘Queen of Cities’.⁸⁵

Constantine advocated constructing and adorning huge churches in the West and East with the aid of his mother, St. Helena. For example: five churches in Rome; the church of the Apostles in Constantinople; the church of the Anastasis (Resurrection) and the basilica of Eleona on the Mount of Olives, the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in Nazareth, the church-cathedral in Tyre. His desire was to build a splendorous church in Antioch representing the greatest Christian city in the East. Due to its golden dome, the church is

⁷⁸ Rustum Kanīsat madīnat Allah ʿAnṭākya al-ʿuzmā 34-634 A.D, 1958, p. 171

⁷⁹ Mārḩāl, 2001, p. 76

⁸⁰ Rustum, Kanīsat madīnat Allah ʿAnṭākya al-ʿuzmā 34-634 A.D, 1958, p. 169

⁸¹ Mango, Byzantine Architecture, 1985, p. 35

⁸² Rustum, Kanīsat madīnat Allah ʿAnṭākya al-ʿuzmā 34-634 A.D, 1958, pp. 117-118

⁸³ ʿAmīn, 2015, p. 13

⁸⁴ Mango, Byzantine Architecture, 1985, p. 35

⁸⁵ Cormack, 2000, p. 6

known as the "Golden Church".⁸⁶ Later, Theodosius I (379-395) declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 391⁸⁷ and made repression of pagan worship in 392.⁸⁸ By this phase, the number of churches had risen above the ground, pagan temples were transformed into churches, and pagan symbols were replaced with Christian ones.⁸⁹ In 395, the Roman Empire was separated into two; the Eastern and Western Empires.⁹⁰ The Levant belonged to the Eastern Empire and Constantinople became its capital.⁹¹ By the fifth century, there were five patriarchates (Five episcopal sees) as follows: Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, Jerusalem and Antioch (one in Europe, one in Africa and three in Asia respectively) (Fig. 6).⁹²



Fig. 6 A. A map showing the spread of Christianity, (Jenkins, 2009, p. 21). B. A map displaying the Five patriarchates in the fifth century, (Geffert & G. Stavrou, 2016, p. 229).

I.2.1. Antioch

Syria and Antioch are recognized as key center for the early spread of Christianity and the Gospel throughout the Eastern world. After the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70 A.D, Antioch emerged as the second capital of Christianity, as many Christians relocated

⁸⁶ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 47

⁸⁷ Geffert & Stavrou, Eastern Orthodox Christianity Supplemental Text, 2016, p. 47

⁸⁸ Schaff, 2017, p. 63

⁸⁹ Amīn, 2015, p. 15

⁹⁰ Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, 1986, p. 93

⁹¹ Klinkl, 1985, p. 123

⁹² Schaff, 2017, p. 7

there from Jerusalem.⁹³ Furthermore, Antioch was named “Mother of all Churches”. Besides, it was the third city of the Roman Empire and the major base of the emperors in the East.⁹⁴ The apostles and followers of Jesus were named “Christians” for the first time in Antioch. The pagan Antiochene heard the name Jesus Christ when the apostles and disciples prayed and preached for Jesus Christ.⁹⁵ Antioch was a great center for Christianity, the glory of affiliation to their founders, saints apostles Peter and Paul.⁹⁶ Hence, this city was a starting point for apostolic work and a base for Paul's missionary journeys.⁹⁷ The church of Antioch is also known as “*the church of Antioch was first missionary church*”. The journey of Saul, Barnabas, and John Mark represented the first Christian missionary journey, starting from Antioch and heading to Pamphylia and Anatolia. This granted such a privilege to the Church of Syria (Fig. 7).⁹⁸

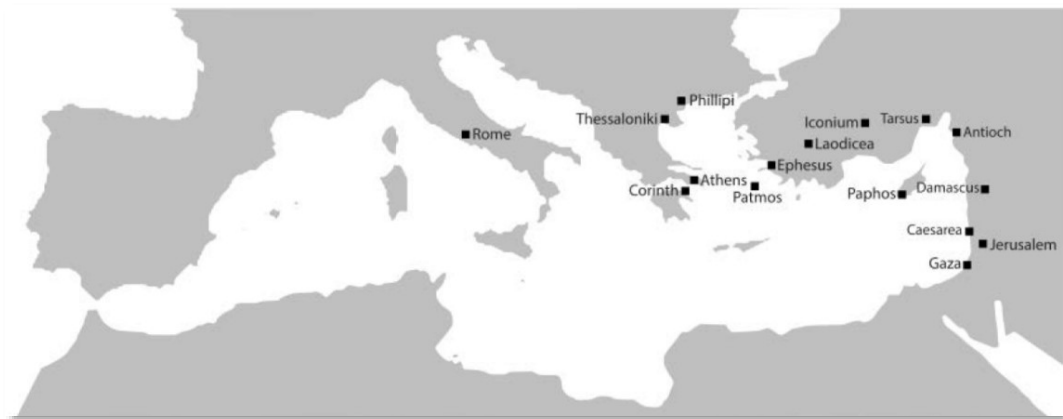


Fig. 7 A map showing significant cities on Apostle Paul's journeys, (*Theofanis G. Stavrou Bryn Geffert, 2016, p. 29*).

Equally important, St. Peter was the first bishop of the Church of Antioch. In addition, St. Paul made several visits to Antioch and considered it the basic platform of his apostolic journeys (the last one he visited was Tyre). From Antioch, Christianity spread to other Syrian cities: Apamea, Latakia, Tyre, Edessa, and Jarabulus.⁹⁹ In the second century, Syria

⁹³ Atiya, 2010, p. 208

⁹⁴ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 227

⁹⁵ Rustum, Kanīsat madīnat Allah ʿAnṭākiya al-ʿuẓmā 34-634 A.D, 1958, p. 24

⁹⁶ Bābādūbūlus, 1984, p. 308

⁹⁷ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 227

⁹⁸ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 18

⁹⁹ Bābādūbūlus, 1984, p. 54

witnessed the rise of organized Christian groups, including bishops and clergy. Thus, Christians existed in Phoenicia territory, Damascus, and Sidon since the Apostolic era. Furthermore, the epistles contain several references to the spread of Christianity in rural Syria during the third century.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, Antioch church was regarded as a distinctly Syrian church by St. Ignatius, an Antiochene martyr (107), who identified himself as the first Syrian bishop at the end of the first century.¹⁰¹ It is also interesting to mention that in the middle of the second century, Anicetus, who was a Syrian, was the eleventh Pope of Rome. This shows that the West was interested in Eastern Churches.¹⁰²

Furthermore, the emergence of theological schools such as the School of Antioch and the School of Nisibis-Edessa, enhanced the significance of Christianity in Syria. Hence, the School of Antioch, which was identified as the theological school, appeared in order to compete with the Alexandria School in the last half of the third century.¹⁰³ The priest and martyr Lucian (311) was well-known, and one of the founders of this school at the end of the third century.¹⁰⁴ The school thrived between the fourth and the early part of the fifth centuries. Then the deterioration started with Nestorius. According to John Chrysostom (354-407), who was educated at Antioch School, there were other schools in the last half of the fourth century. All of these schools were characterized by one character belonging to the Antioch School.¹⁰⁵

Edessa represented one of the most important centers in science and theology. It became the main foundation of the Syriac heritage.¹⁰⁶ The School of Edessa appeared in the second half of the third century as “a daughter of the Antiochian School”.¹⁰⁷ The most famous Syriac Fathers are St. Ephrem (373) and Rabbula (435).¹⁰⁸ Then, this school was closed, and the Nestorians were evicted by the ruler Zeno (474-491) in the year 489.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 84

¹⁰¹ Rustum, *Kanīsat madīnat Allah ʿAnṭākya al-ʿuẓmā* 34-634 A.D, 1958, pp.159-160

¹⁰² Kānīfih, 2001, p. 56

¹⁰³ Bābādūbūlus, 1984, p. 454

¹⁰⁴ Fortescue, 1908, p. 18

¹⁰⁵ Bābādūbūlus, 1984, p. 454

¹⁰⁶ Atiya, 2010, p. 303

¹⁰⁷ Bābādūbūlus, 1984, p. 115

¹⁰⁸ Fortescue, 1908, p. 19

¹⁰⁹ Fortescue, 1908, p. 20

Following this, the degradation phase in Edessa started.¹¹⁰ It was subsequently reopened as "the School of the Persians" at Nisibis, northern Mesopotamia.¹¹¹

Lastly, today, Antioch includes five patriarchs who hold the honor of the title of Patriarch of Antioch.¹¹² These patriarchates are Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Maronite, Melkite Greek Orthodox, and Melkite Greek Catholic. Despite Antioch was an important ecclesiastical center in early Christianity, but its influence began to decline, and the administrative center of the Patriarchate was eventually moved to Damascus in the fourteenth (1342).¹¹³

I.2.2. Northern and southern Syria

Syria splurges with its distinguished church architecture found in significant numbers extending from north to south particularly, built between the fourth and sixth centuries. It displays outstanding church buildings full of richness and creativity that influenced church architecture in Western Europe and across the world. Most striking, the diversity of churches established during this period characterized Syria from other countries.

Before Christianity grew significantly in the fourth century, pagan temples were scattered throughout the highlands in northern Syria. Then, as the majority of the population became Christians, churches and monasteries sprang up throughout the region. More than 1,200 churches have been built, the equivalent of one church every 4.5 km² in northern Syria. Sometimes churches are found on the outskirts of villages or along the roads leading to them. This indicates that the purpose of these churches was not only to serve the inhabitants but also for pilgrimage or as shrines. For example, Burj Ḥaydar (Burj Heidar), Bāṭūṭa (Babutta), Sīrjillā (Serjilla), Shīkh Slīmān (Sheikh Sleiman), and Kīmār (Kymar).¹¹⁴

Church architecture and monasteries can be attributed, in part, to the flourishing of agriculture and the establishment of social order between the second and fourth centuries.

¹¹⁰ Atiya, 2010, p. 307

¹¹¹ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 32

¹¹² Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 20

¹¹³ Fortescue, 1908, p. 15

¹¹⁴ Krrāz & Najār, 2017, p. 204

Furthermore, the population experienced a fivefold increase between the fifth and sixth centuries, due to population growth.¹¹⁵

On the other hand, a few of these villages are still inhabited, but most have been abandoned. This was due to several factors, including the Persian attack in the fifth century, in addition to the limitations of agricultural land, the plague that began in the middle of the sixth century, the Muslim conquest in the seventh century, and conflicts between the Muslims and the Byzantines. This highlights the historical challenges of this period.¹¹⁶

Thus, the prevalent Christian religion in the region spread significantly. Moreover, the importance of this region also lies in having well-known shrines such as St. Simon Stylites 492 and the birthplace of Mar Maroun which encouraged considerable numbers of believers and pilgrims. In this region, the Syriac language (Aramaic dialect) was used, as proved in several inscriptions, besides the Greek was educated.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, theological and doctrinal conflicts in Christianity played an important role in the Syrian countryside which witnessed tremendous spiritual activity such as monastic movement. The Greek Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox denominations lived in the “Forgotten Cities” and used Syriac and Greek inscriptions. Hence, it is difficult to identify whether churches belonged to Syriac or Greek denomination.

The monastic movement is another factor contributing to the prominence of Christianity in Syria. Despite the fact that in the third century, the Egyptian monasticism movement was the first with its roots to St. Anthony (the father of monasticism)),¹¹⁸ Syrian Christians brought the monastic life to a high level of spirituality. It was practiced in all forms of asceticism that began immediately after the persecution era.¹¹⁹ Between the fourth and sixth centuries, the phenomenon of monasticism in its various manifestations was prominent in Syria.

It started with the ascetic representing a rudimentary phase in the evolution of monasticism. Parallel to the creation and development of these numerous and magnificent forms of an

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp.39-40

¹¹⁶ Krrāz & Najār, 2017, p. 34

¹¹⁷ Loosley, 2017, pp. 7-9

¹¹⁸ Pīniyā, Kāstlyānā , & Firnān, 2002, p. 6

¹¹⁹ Pena, 1997, p. 105

anchorite, the emergence of a second monastic phenomenon was just as important as the first cenobite.¹²⁰

By the early first half of the fourth century, cenobites emerged significantly.¹²¹ The final form of this monastic movement had taken shape, followed by the emergence of specific architectural elements such as spacious porticoed structures to accommodate social and spiritual activity.¹²²

According to the chronological records, the anchorites were considered the first Syrian monastic order communities. The anchoritic pattern, characterized by pillar saints and voluntary seclusion, was more exclusive in Syria.¹²³ Many followers adopted this approach, and St. Simon is well-known for this trend.

Most striking, it is found about 44 columns to the stylite and about 107 towers of the voluntary recluses as evidence of this monastic heritage.¹²⁴ For example, St. Simon died at the age of 69, having spent 37 years as a pillar-saint, and St. Daniel lived 84 years, and spent 33 years as a pillar-saint. Among the Christian community, they were deemed new martyrs. They were granted the honor rites and worship that had previously been for martyrs (Fig. 8).¹²⁵

It is considered that the sixth century was a golden period in monastic life. Monasteries became institutions in the rural regions. The great number of archaeological remains is such significant proof of the spreading of Christianity, such as there are around 63 monasteries in Jabal Barisha (Jabal Bārīshā).¹²⁶

Overall, these monasteries are classified into three types according to their size in Jabal Barisha (Jabal Bārīshā): 35 small ones accommodate 7 monks, 17 middle ones accommodate 15, and 9 big ones accommodate 30 monks. The total number of monks was roughly 800, accounting for approximately 4% of the population. There are 35 monasteries in Jabal al-Ala (Jabal al-ʿaʿlā), followed by almost 500 monks accounting for 6% of the population.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Pena, 1992, pp. 11-19

¹²¹ Ibid, p.11

¹²² Pena, 1997, p. 108

¹²³ Pena, 1992, p. 25

¹²⁴ Pena, 1997, p. 105

¹²⁵ Pīniyā, Kāstlyānā , & Firnān, 2002, pp. 41-78

¹²⁶ Pena, 1997, p. 113

¹²⁷ Ibid, p.116

To summarize, these were the most common types of monasticism. Each type had its distinct characteristics, and they were all dedicated to living an austere and God-centered life.

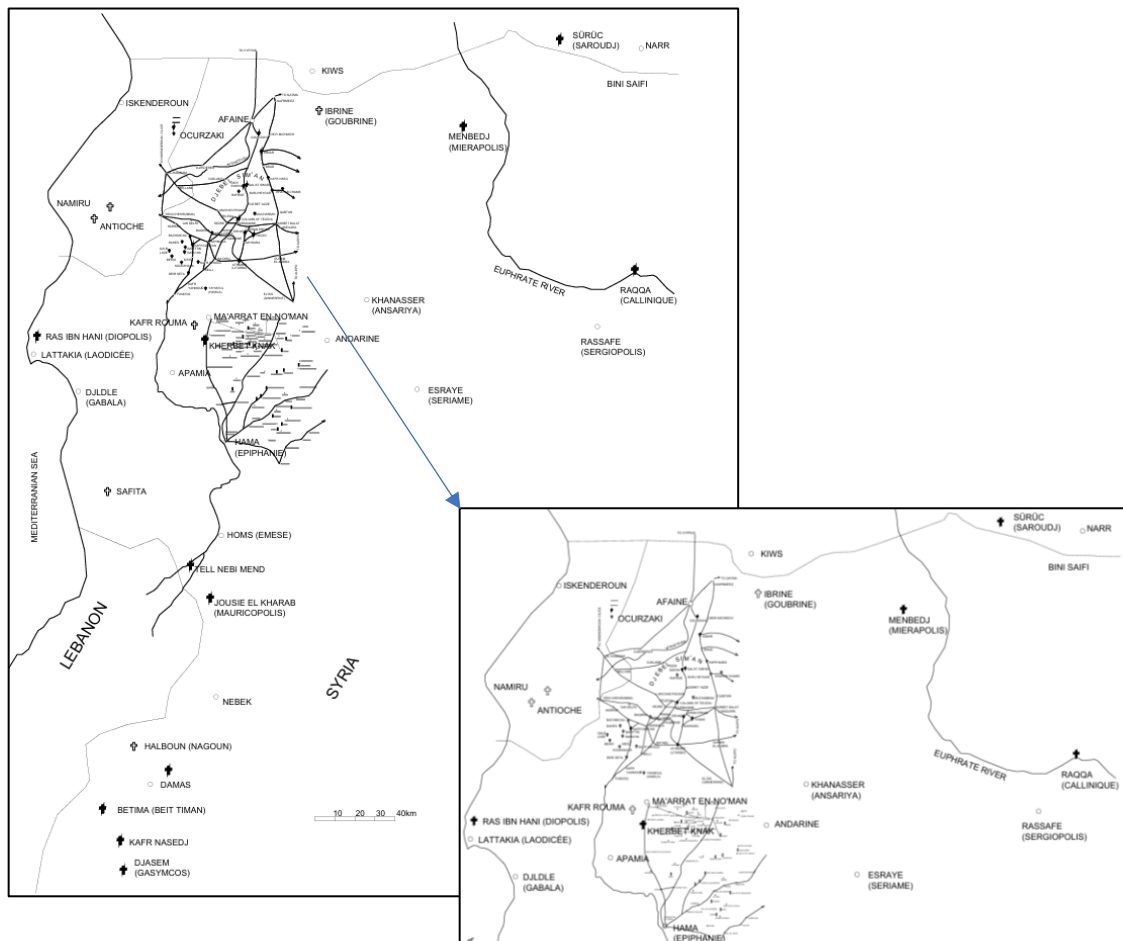


Fig. 8 A map illustrating the sites of Stylites in dead cities and towers of the recluses in Hama, drawn by the author based on (*Athanāsiyū*, 1997, pp. 460-711).

The fourth century in southern Syria is characterized by great acceptance and popularity of the Christian doctrine, so that in Bosra, in 362, half of the population embraced Christianity. During the fifth and sixth centuries, Christianity reached its zenith. According to historians, the number of dioceses ranged between 26 and 38. Consequently, Christianity experienced significant proliferation, leading to the conversion of numerous pagan temples

into Christian churches for worship. In contrast to the earlier periods in northern and central Syria, where temples were destroyed, a few instances were reused.¹²⁸

It is remarkable that most Christians in southern Syria followed Monophysitism (Jacobite, western Syriac, Syriac Orthodox) such as Suwayda (al-Suwaydā'), Qanwāt (Qanawat), Shahbā (Shahba), and Shaqqā (Shaqqa) obtained at least two churches.¹²⁹

In addition, the number of monasteries in southern Syria has increased to around 137-200, and Syriac Orthodox monasteries extend from Yarmuk to the Hama area.¹³⁰ There is a letter from the heads of Arab monasteries written to the Orthodox bishops in the last quarter of the sixth century. According to the findings of the manuscript, there are approximately 124 signatures from the leaders of the southwest Syrian monasteries; 18 of them were Syriac and wrote their names in Greek, whereas the rest were written in Syriac. As demonstrated in the text, this figure indicates the number of Syriac monasteries (Monophysites) in southern Syria and the flourishing of monastic life.¹³¹ This substantial corpus of evidence serves to underscore the profound and deep-seated Christian faith, its significance.

The rise in the Christian population between the fourth and seventh centuries is considered a core factor that demanded the construction of several churches and monasteries. On the other hand, the Muslim conquest impacted the demographic population of Christians. Yet, it is stated that Christians accounted for about 90% of the population in Syria until (616-722), while Muslims represented 6% (Fig. 9).¹³² Hence, Christianity was the dominant religion in Syria from the fourth to the seventh centuries.

¹²⁸ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. V), 1997, p. 374

¹²⁹ 'Abū 'Assāf, 1997, p. 72

¹³⁰ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. V), 1997, p. 464

¹³¹ Ibid, p.124

¹³² Badr, Salīm, & 'abū Nahrā, al-Masīḥiyya 'br tārīkhihā fī al-Mashriq, 2001, p. 33

Percentage of Christians in Syria from the fourth until seventh centuries

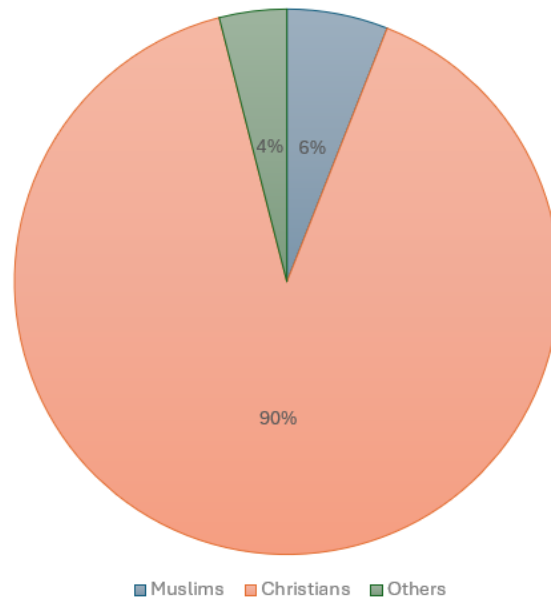


Fig. 9 A chart showing the Percentage of Christians in Syria from the fourth until seventh centuries, by the author

In addition, there were several Christian denominations that existed in the south or the north of Syria over this phase. Christians in Byzantine Syria with its capital Antioch adhered to the Monophysite doctrine, while Chalcedonians were notably numerous in the capital. While second Syria, with its capital Apamea, was ascribed to the Catholic doctrine (Deir Mar Maroun).¹³³ Furthermore, The Greek Orthodox denomination (Melkites) was found in urban centers such as Damascus, Aleppo, Antioch, and the Syrian coast, while the Syriac Orthodox denomination (Jacobite) was in the suburbs of Damascus and southeast Homs. In addition, the Greek Orthodox denomination was numerous in the Qalamūn, with a few Syriac Orthodox distributed over the northeastern Qalamūn to Homs (Fig. 10).¹³⁴

¹³³ Pīniyā, Kāstlyānā , & Firnān, 2002, pp. 88-89

¹³⁴ Immerzeel, 2011, p. 57



Fig. 10 A map illustrating the distribution of the Eastern Christian denominations (Antiochenes, Maronites, Jacobites, Nestorians), (*Atiya, 2010, p. 6*).

Another aspect that contributes to the importance of Christianity in Syria is the language. Despite the Greek language being used in commercial, cultural, and political life, the Aramaic language known as the language of Jesus and his disciples was widely used in Syria. By the second century, Syriac was the Aramaic dialect linked with Christian texts and the dominant ecclesiastical language, particularly in Edessa and the Eastern provinces. While southern Syria was renowned as “the province of Arabia”, the spoken language was Nabataean which is derived from Arabic.

I.3. Christian Denominations

Ultimately, providing an overview of the history of the Uniate churches and their renewed connection with Rome, as well as the non-Uniate branches, will create a valuable foundation. This will offer a prime opportunity for the fourth Chapter to explore the historical context of Christian denominations and church architecture in greater depth.

➤ The Syriac Orthodox Church:

The origin of the Syriac Church is attributed to the early period of Christianity in Antioch, in accordance with the Book of Acts. Hence the Antiochene church is deemed one of the most important Christian centers in the early years. As previously stated, as a consequence of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the Christian community split. Byzantine

imperial power enforced the council's doctrine in the city but was strongly rejected in the countryside. Jacob Baradaeus, who was the bishop of Edessa, backed the rejection of Chalcedon. By the sixth century, he had selected bishops and priests for their (Syriac) doctrine. Bear in mind, that the known Jacobites (called western Syriac) follow their liturgy and traditions using the Syriac language as well as spoken.¹³⁵ Nonetheless, the Persian and Muslim conquests generated suitable conditions for the Syriac church's evolution. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Syriac Orthodox witnessed a significant renaissance, with flourishing schools of theology, philosophy, history, and science. In the wake of the Tamerlane invasions in the fifteenth century, several Syriac churches and monasteries were demolished. In addition, persecution and killings in eastern Turkey caused terrible casualties. This resulted in extensive dispersion.¹³⁶ Until 1034, the Syriac Patriarchs lived at Antioch, thereafter as follows: “Mār Barṣaumā monastery (1034-1293), Dīr Za‘farān (1239-1924), Syria Homs, (1924-1959), and lastly Damascus in 1959”.¹³⁷

Many dioceses decreased in the of the last seventeenth century to 17, while today it has reached 28 dioceses. However, the number of this denomination decreased over centuries, probably due to some of them converting to Muslim in the seventh century, besides to appearance of the Syriac Catholic denomination and joining to Protestant Church.¹³⁸

The Syriac Antiochene Orthodox denomination exists in the following countries: Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Palestine, and Arab Gulf countries.¹³⁹ However, their number in Damascus is few compared to other denominations.¹⁴⁰

➤ **The Greek Orthodox Church:**

The Greek Orthodox Church is one of the oldest and most significant Christian churches in Syria. It dates back to the first centuries of Christianity. Its center is Antioch, whose affairs have been run and administered by the Patriarch of Antioch and the Rest of the Levant, headquartered in the ancient city of Damascus (in the fourteenth century), since

¹³⁵ Roberson, 1993, p. 34

¹³⁶ Ibid, pp.35-36

¹³⁷ Ibid, p.35

¹³⁸ ‘Abda, 2000, p. 50

¹³⁹ Ibid, p.51

¹⁴⁰ al-Shīhābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 8

the takeover of Antioch. A great number of this denomination are found in major urban centers and the Syrian coast.¹⁴¹

The great schism happened in the eleventh century between the Constantinople Patriarchate and the Rome Patriarchate, it became known as the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.¹⁴²

In the East, the Melkite denomination lived in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, Cyprus, Greece, and other cities, the Greek language was used in their worship. In addition, the Syriac language was also used in Syria. On the other hand, it is believed that the Melkite at Antioch diocese had their Syriac Antiochene ritual, while the Melkite in Alexandria had Coptic Alexandria ritual. When the situation of Melkite underwent the Byzantine control, they follow the Byzantine ritual (Greek Constantinople).¹⁴³

Thus, the Greek Orthodox Church has three patriarchates in the Middle East: the Antioch Patriarchate in Damascus, the Jerusalem Patriarchate in Jerusalem, and the Alexandria Patriarchate in Cairo.¹⁴⁴

➤ **The Armenian Orthodox Church:**

The Armenian Orthodox Church is widely regarded as one of the oldest churches. Christianity is known to have emerged in Armenia during the third century and was significantly propagated in the fourth century by Saint Gregory the Illuminator (255–326). They adopted Monophysitism (one nature) in 506 after the Chalcedon Council. The Armenian Church showed resistance to its neighbor Nestorian Church settled in the Persian Empire.¹⁴⁵ St. Gregory and the bishops who followed him were credited for establishing and clarifying the fundamentals of the Armenian Church. They spent several efforts in ecclesiastical arrangement and organization. At the same time, holy places were constructed such as churches and monasteries. In the second half of the sixth century, Armenia had twenty-seven dioceses instead of eighteenth.¹⁴⁶

The Armenian liturgy uniquely features characteristics belonging to Syriac, Jerusalem, and Byzantine traditions. Developed between the fifth and seventh centuries, it

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p.7

¹⁴² ‘Abda, 2000, p. 61

¹⁴³ ‘Abda, 2000, p. 61

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p.62

¹⁴⁵ Roberson, 1993, pp. 21-22

¹⁴⁶ Būyājyān, 2001, p. 359

was heavily influenced by liturgical practices from Syria and Jerusalem. Later, during the Byzantine period and the Middle Ages, it also adopted several Latin practices.¹⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that the Armenian liturgy features characteristics belonging to Syriac, Jerusalem, and Byzantine traditions. Between the fifth and seventh centuries, the liturgy in Armenia was constituted and accompanied by a great liturgical impact that came from Syria and Jerusalem. Thereafter, in the Byzantine period and Middle Ages, several Latin practices were adopted.

In 1071, when the Seljuk attacked and occupied Armenia, most Armenians evacuated to Cilicia (northern Syria, southern East Turk), then dispersed to Lebanon and Syria.¹⁴⁸ The relationship between the Armenians and the Latin Crusaders became strong, but they succeeded in maintaining their identity: community, language, and church as well as surviving a foreign hegemony. However, by the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the Armenians in Turkey endured a sequence of destruction followed by a considerable number of massacres reaching to nearly 1.5-2 million deaths. In the end, after gaining Armenia's independence in 1991, the Armenian Apostolic Church was positioned in the Republic of Armenia. Furthermore, Etchmiadzin has represented the holy city, while the Armenian Catholics reside close to Yerevan.¹⁴⁹

➤ **The Maronite Church:**

The Maronite denomination is considered an Eastern Catholic denomination. It is ascribed to Saint Maroun in 410, who spent his life in seclusion in northern Syria (close to Harimor Quraysh).¹⁵⁰ Many believers were interested in following his manner in monasticism. The monks were sometimes called "Maronite Monks" and were characterized by their great faith.¹⁵¹

After the death of Saint Maroun in the fifth century, an enormous convent was built positioned between Homs and Qalaat al-Madiq (Qal'at al-Maḍīq) Apamea called "*Dīr al-Qidīs Mārūn*".¹⁵² Despite that it was attributed to Antioch Patriarchate, the Maronites

¹⁴⁷ Roberson, 1993, p. 23

¹⁴⁸ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 8

¹⁴⁹ Roberson, 1993, pp. 22-23

¹⁵⁰ al-Hashim, 2001, p. 272

¹⁵¹ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 8

¹⁵² Ibid

succeeded in developing their traditions. Moreover, this monastery played a role in encouraging the Chalcedon Council.¹⁵³

Over the sixth and seventh centuries, particularly in central Syria, the number of Christian believers who followed the Maronite rose significantly. However, due to the Muslim conquest in 636, the Maronites moved to the northern mountains of Lebanon and built their churches and monasteries.¹⁵⁴ Their churches became more distinctive in the eighth century. Besides they opted their bishop who represented as Patriarch of the Antioch and all of the East.¹⁵⁵

By the twelfth century, there was a connection between the Maronite and the Latin church.¹⁵⁶ Particularly, the Maronite Church united with Rome in 1180. Furthermore, the Maronite Patriarchate was granted the name “Patriarch of Antioch” by the Pope of Rome in 1456. The presence of Maronites became more efficient when Pope Gregory established nearly 13 theological schools for the Maronites in Rome in 1584. In 1736, at the liwaīza conference, the connection between Maronite and Rome was affirmed using the Arabic language in Syriac rites, while the essential speech was recited in Syriac.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the Maronite Church was characterized with a rather cohesive and organization due to its connection with Rome.¹⁵⁸

Most striking, France represents an efficient western power that supported and protected the Maronite over the Ottoman period, particularly in the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁹ Today, the main center of the Maronite Patriarchate is situated in Bkerke in Keserwan, Lebanon. They also have dioceses in the east such as in Damascus, Aleppo, Tartus, Cyprus, and Egypt, and others in Lebanon. Still, according to the information mentioned, their numbers are low compared to other denominations.¹⁶⁰

➤ **The Chaldean Church:**

The Chaldean (East Syriac) denomination is highly important in Iraq. Hence, Timothy bishop and the Nestorian East community belonged to the Holy See in 1445 in Cyprus. This

¹⁵³ Roberson, 1993, pp. 122-123

¹⁵⁴ al-Shīhābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 8

¹⁵⁵ Roberson, 1993, pp. 122-123

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁷ ‘Abda, 2000, pp. 65-66

¹⁵⁸ ‘abū Nahrā, 2013, p. 16

¹⁵⁹ Roberson, 1993, pp. 122-123

¹⁶⁰ ‘Abda, 2000, pp. 65-66

was due to great efforts being made in order to draw the attention of Eastern churches (the Assyrian Church of the East) to Catholicism, particularly by Franciscans and Dominicans in the early thirteenth century. The Chaldean is named by Eugenius IV (ʿŪjīn IV) and it is deemed the first of the Eastern Churches that joined Catholicism.¹⁶¹ In the middle of the sixteenth century, he was rejected in 1552 by many Assyrian bishops, so they made their decision to associate with Rome. After electing Yuhannan Sulaka to represent their patriarch, he went to Rome in order to manage a union with the Catholic Church. Then, the declaration of Pope Julius III stated that Patriarch Simon VIII (Chaldeans) ordained him a bishop of St. Peter Basilica in the first half of 1553. However, a series of disruptions started between the Chaldeans and Assyrians and ended with the Chaldeans. The liturgy of the Chaldean is still active besides some Latin customs; Syriac is the liturgical language used.¹⁶²

The Chaldean Catholic Church comprises great numbers than the Assyrian Church of the East (Nestorians).¹⁶³ The center of the Chaldean Patriarchate is in Iraq, and its archbishopric center is only in Aleppo.¹⁶⁴

They have about eighteen dioceses (nine in Iraq, three in Iran, one in Aleppo, and northern East Syria, Lebanon, Cairo, and Detroit in the USA). In spite of the high number of dioceses, the Christian members of this denomination are still few, mainly in Damascus.¹⁶⁵

➤ **The Syriac Catholic Church:**

There were numerous examples of amicable connections between Catholic and Orthodox bishops throughout the Crusader period. Some Syriac Orthodox appeared to be in favor of union with Rome; however, no achievements have been accomplished. In 1626, the activity of Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries started among Syriac Orthodox believers in Aleppo.¹⁶⁶

The schism started among the Syriac Orthodox bishops when each of the two divisions appointed a patriarch. It is marked that in 1662 was an official separation occurred

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.68

¹⁶² Roberson, 1993, pp. 126-128

¹⁶³ Roberson, 1993, pp. 126-127

¹⁶⁴ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 8

¹⁶⁵ ʿAbda, 2000, p. 69

¹⁶⁶ Roberson, 1993, pp. 136-137

when patriarch Andrew Achadjan (1662-1677) established a separate denomination known as the Syriac Catholic Church.¹⁶⁷

The Ottoman authorities favored and backed the Oriental Orthodox against the Catholics. Over the eighteenth century, Syriac Catholics suffered from relapses, leading to regression, without appointing a Catholic bishop for a long time.¹⁶⁸ Most notably, the Syriac Orthodox picked Metropolitan Michael Jarwih of Aleppo to be a patriarch in 1782. Then he demanded to join Catholicism and traveled to Lebanon. He built the Our Lady monastery at Sharfih (Lebanon). Because of the persecution in Aleppo, the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate was conveyed to Mardin in 1850 (before, it was in Aleppo in 1829). Syriac Catholics are considerably found in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.¹⁶⁹

Concerning the spoken language, Arabic is used. On the other hand, Syriac is still used in a few areas as eastern Syria and northern Iraq.¹⁷⁰

The Syriac Catholic denomination has four dioceses in Syria. The major center of their diocese and cathedral church was named after Saint Musa al-Habashi (Mūsā al-Ḥabashī) and afterward renamed St. Paul. It is located in Damascus near Bab Sharqi. They have two churches outside Damascus's wall, as well as one within. On the other hand, there are still few.¹⁷¹

➤ **The Armenian Catholic Church:**

Through the Dominican Fathers, the Catholicism movement emerged among Armenians in the fourteenth century. This movement was continued by the Armenian Catholic monks, who are famous for working in the sectors of science in Venice and Austria in the late eighteenth century and still.¹⁷² The Armenian Catholic patriarchate was established in 1742 by Ibrāhām Artīsīfān (1740-1749).¹⁷³

It is important to mention that the center of Catholicism is placed in Antelias-Lebanon and has authority in Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, Iran, and Greece.¹⁷⁴ They had three dioceses in

¹⁶⁷ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 8

¹⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁶⁹ Roberson, 1993, pp. 136-138

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 138

¹⁷¹ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 8

¹⁷² ‘Abda, 2000, p. 76

¹⁷³ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 8

¹⁷⁴ Roberson, 1993, p. 24

Syria and three monasteries. In Damascus, the Armenian Catholic denomination is slightly in number and currently has a cathedral, diocese, and school.¹⁷⁵

➤ **The Greek Catholic Church:**

Since the middle of the seventeenth century, Capuchins, Carmelites, and Jesuits have been involved in missionary work in the patriarchate of Antioch.¹⁷⁶

The first appearance of Greek Catholicism was in Sidon, Damascus, and then Aleppo in 1700, when many clergy and members joined Rome. When the Damascene Athanasios III al-Dibbas died in 1724, the Damascene Sylvester Tanas bishop (1724-1759) was designated and resided in Damascus. After a week, the patriarchate of Constantinople appointed a Greek patriarch Cypriot Sylvestrus(1724-1766), deemed the first Greek patriarch of the patriarchate of Antioch. The schism happened between the Orthodox and Catholic denominations at the beginning of the eighteenth century (1724).¹⁷⁷ The Greek Catholic denomination was granted a formal (Farman) admission as Sylvestrus patriarch of this denomination by the Ottoman government (1848).¹⁷⁸

On the other hand, this denomination suffered from several persecutions, so Sylvester Tanas fled to Lebanon in 1833. Then, Maximus III (1833-1855) was appointed and inaugurated “The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Dormition” in 1834. In 1838, the patriarch was awarded the title “Patriarch of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem” by the Pope.¹⁷⁹

Finally, after the Maronite, this Greek Catholic denomination is one of the largest ones in the Middle East especially in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.¹⁸⁰ It has four dioceses in Syria, seven dioceses in Lebanon, one in Palestine, and one in Jordan.¹⁸¹

➤ **The Latin Church:**

The Catholic missionary movement started in the East when the Latin Patriarchate was established in Jerusalem in the eleventh century. Most of its members were foreigners. In 1219, the monks of Latin denomination founded the Franciscan and later the Dominican

¹⁷⁵ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 8

¹⁷⁶ Roberson, 1993, p. 140

¹⁷⁷ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 7

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁷⁹ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 7

¹⁸⁰ Roberson, 1993, p. 142

¹⁸¹ ‘Abda, 2000, p. 61

order and built several eastern churches that were subject to the Holy See in Rome. The liturgy of these churches is conducted in Arabic.

Overall, Latin existence in Syria was comparatively new. Their influences became efficient when the Franciscans, Jesuits, and Capuchins started to appear in the East (Lebanon, Damascus, and Aleppo). Their main aim was to endeavour in order to attract the East churches by constructing their monasteries and churches which were directly connected with Rome. Ultimately, Latin succeeded not only through the building movement but also through its rituals, traditions, and roles. On the other hand, the number of Latin Christians was still insignificant, especially in Damascus.¹⁸²

It is interesting to mention that in Syria, between 1762 and 1954, a new apostolic vice was assigned an equivalent to the ambassador pope, and Aleppo was represented as a residence place (1772). The Latin Church has eleven dioceses distributed in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Cyprus.¹⁸³

I.4. Conclusion of the Chapter

Given this chapter, it addresses three aspects to conclude, which are:

- Concerning the historical part, Syria embraces different cultures and civilizations that overlap and interact over thousands of years. Furthermore, it is essential to briefly recap the main historical phases and events in Christianity in Syria and in Damascus. Thus, the importance of this chapter would be reflected in the following chapters on both the liturgical and architectural sides.
- Concerning the importance of Christianity, Syria played a vital role in the prevalence of Christianity and was a connection point in the Christian world. It had lavishly flourished in theology, schools, monastic movements and church architecture, forming an invaluable historical legacy. The importance of the architectural side will be displayed in the subsequent chapters.

Of significant note, doctrinal, religious, and ideological diversity made Syria distinctive and rich by embracing several Christian denominations. The divisions in Christian doctrine about the nature of Christ that are accompanied by several denominations are

¹⁸² al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 9

¹⁸³ ‘Abda, 2000, p. 81

such clear evidence of the development of Christian theological thought, which has spread over the centuries until today. Christian denominations withstood the historical changes and events they went through. Thus, it reflects a deep faith in Christianity.

II THE EVOLUTION OF LITURGY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

Overview:

The primary objective of this chapter is to establish a foundational understanding of church buildings by focusing on three essential aspects: architectural forms and elements, symbolic meanings, and liturgical functions of church architecture. Hence, the development of church architecture and liturgical arrangements correlates with the historical phases previously examined.

This chapter shows a deeper understanding by locating the architectural developments within a broader historical and liturgical context. Hence, it would serve as a foundation for the Byzantine and Crusader church architecture in Syria, as well as the Greek Orthodox church architecture in Damascus in the following chapters.

The second chapter of this study is divided into four subsections. The first subsection defines liturgy and explains its essential phases because liturgy and church architecture have a deep relationship. The second subsection attempts to explain the concept of the church in symbolic, liturgical, and architectural aspects. Furthermore, the third subsection presents the general trend of Christian architecture in the early centuries, starting with the catacombs and house churches. The fourth subsection tries to give an overview of the Christian Basilica, and two main aspects of its external forms: the symbolic and the functional. It also includes the internal spatial arrangement of the Eastern Christian Basilica. Additionally, it gives an overview of the roles of bishops, benefactors, and architects in the Byzantine church. Given these reasons mentioned above, the objective of the second chapter is to provide answers to these questions that spring to mind:

- How did Christians adapt to using catacombs and houses as places of worship??
- What are the external forms of a Christian Basilica, and what are the symbolic and functional approaches to each?
- What are the characteristics of internal arrangement in the East Christian Basilica?
- Who played a significant part in the church building in the early Byzantine period?

II.1.The Definition and Significance of Liturgy

The term liturgy is derived from the Greek word “leitourgia” or “Laos (people), Ergon (work)” which signifies “work of the people”. In other words, it points out public service or public work. The word liturgy was used in the Eastern church to describe Christian worship, particularly for the ecclesiastical rite “Eucharist secret” by the Holy Fathers and Christian writers.¹⁸⁴ While the West distinguished two terms to express Christian worship as follows: Missa was used for the Eucharist and Rite was used for general Christian worship. As a consequence of the impacts of Greek-Byzantine texts, the word liturgy started to be used in the West in the seventeenth century and was disseminated as a Latin term. Thereafter, the term "Theologia Liturgia" was introduced to theology science in the West during the middle of the eighteenth century, after which it rapidly spread throughout the East and West.¹⁸⁵

Hence, the liturgy has been designated a branch of practical theology science that investigates Christian worship, and everything associated with it. This science illustrates all liturgical forms from the beginning to the present, their origin, establishment, and evolution, as well as the history of ecclesiastical rites. Also, it includes the arrangement of sacraments, and divine services, the church, and all the topics linked to it such as the evolution of the Church, its forms, arrangement, and symbolism. What is more, it examines the tools utilized for divine worship, such as liturgical books, vessels, and priestly garments.¹⁸⁶

Overall, the liturgy aspect includes the symbolic, human, salvific, theological, universal, dogmatic, and biblical dimensions.¹⁸⁷

So, liturgy is not merely an outward phenomenon. The Eucharist is considered the main source of Christian life.¹⁸⁸ Liturgical rites and worship are the heart of the Eastern church and orthodoxy.

In terms of the historical evolution of liturgy, it is demonstrated by these phases, which are:

¹⁸⁴ Yāzjī, 2005, pp. 13-14

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 14-15

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 16

¹⁸⁷ Āzar, 2015, p. 46

¹⁸⁸ Bogdanovic, 2017, p. 50

- The first phase represents the Apostolic era, covering the first century. Over this phase, it had been determined that fasting on Wednesday and Friday, three dives of baptism, and public confession for the forgiveness of sins.¹⁸⁹

- The second phase is specified as the persecution era extending from the last half of the first century to the beginning of the fourth century. Though the restrictions on Christian worship, it was characterized by an increase in the praises and psalms chanted, mass baptism for those in faith, honoring martyrs and celebrating their day, and similar practices.¹⁹⁰ Noteworthy that in the second century, there was a description (Justin Martyr) of liturgical services.¹⁹¹

Given these two phases, it is interesting to note that liturgical studies did not appear in the early centuries. This could be attributed to the simplicity of the liturgical rituals in the first centuries. Thus, the church did not find it necessary to explain it.¹⁹² However, the church started getting concerned about liturgical interpretations such as Cyril of Jerusalem in 347, who discusses the secret of baptism in-depth, the Chrism and Eucharist secrets, as well as St. John Chrysostom of Antioch with his teaching sermons.¹⁹³

- The third phase begins in the fourth century and lasts until the ninth century. It is also known as a phase of the development of ecclesiastical architecture, drawing icons, and worship. Two different types of liturgies emerged in the East and the West: The East maintained the Byzantine rite (Eastern liturgy), while the West adopted the Roman rite (Western liturgy). Besides, several ecclesiastical feasts were added to the known ones, such as the Annunciation, the Circumcision of Jesus, the Feast of the Transfiguration, the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, Palm Sunday, Ascension Day, Epiphany, and the Feast of the Cross.¹⁹⁴

- The final phase starts in the ninth century and continues until the present day. Worship takes its final form. In addition, liturgical texts and other books appeared. Each

¹⁸⁹ Āzar, 2015, p. 21

¹⁹⁰ Ibid

¹⁹¹ Yāzjī, 2005, p. 21

¹⁹² Ibid

¹⁹³ Ibid, pp. 21-22

¹⁹⁴ Āzar, 2015, pp. 22-23

patriarchate has its prayer texts. Thus, liturgical prayer books became a key source of similarities and differences among Christian denominations.¹⁹⁵

In addition, the liturgical books include the texts and describe the communion, the prayers, and the sequence of the rites and the ceremonies. On the other hand, the difficulty lies in that these texts in their present form are all post-iconoclastic.¹⁹⁶ There are four fundamental materials, which are:

The Barberini manuscript, which dates back to approximately 800 and was issued by Brightman, is considered the oldest of the liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil.

Furthermore, there is a manuscript from the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem attributed to approximately 900. It is deemed an excellent copy of the Typicon, which is a book that specifies the changing sections of the liturgy according to the "*year-long cycle of feasts*".

Albeit these liturgical sources contain a multitude of information about the liturgy of the Early Byzantine church, they must be used with caution, as the liturgy had already undergone significant changes by the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁹⁷

The third material is identified through several references regarding early Byzantine liturgy connected with the historical phase. For example, in "*The Councils, the chronicles, the law codes, the histories, and the biographies*", all of these sources expose events and episodes that correlated with liturgy. All of these references were compiled by Hanssens.¹⁹⁸

Ultimately, it is considered that "commentators" are the fourth material as another source of liturgy. When Byzantine spiritual authors focused on the spiritual significance and meaning of numerous liturgical events in a work of literature known as "commentaries". This source primarily presents internal meaning rather than describing liturgical practices. Notwithstanding this fact, it was challenging to do so without mentioning the liturgical ceremonies and their order.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Yāzjī, 2005, pp. 21-22

¹⁹⁶ Mathews, 1971, p. 112

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p.113

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p.114

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p.113

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that at the beginning, the secret of the Eucharist (breaking bread) was accomplished after hymns, praises, readings, and praying for the Eucharist. The rite started crystallizing and taking a united form in each church and had approaches between the old rituals of the churches. It was natural to have variances in form but not in content. The Greek Orthodox Church includes three forms of the Holy Mass (divine liturgy). Each one belongs to a saint who has a special influence, as follows: St. Basil of Caesarea, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Gregory the Great by celebrations per year.²⁰⁰

II.2. The Church with its Architectural, Liturgical and Symbolic Concepts

Since the inception of Christianity, the church has been a secretive holy place that symbolizes how God communicates with humanity, where everything exists in amazingly well-designed harmony and fashion.²⁰¹ The existence of the church allows Christians to live the kingdom of God on earth, and to band together through it with Jesus Christ, who reconciled heaven with earth in the Eucharist. The church represents the window of the world to eternity.²⁰² All believers practice ecclesiastical rites and secrets participation with effective praying in the liturgy. Hence, the church is a microcosm world that has always been at the service of the liturgy.²⁰³ Moreover, the church is the place where sacrifices are made from sacramental bread and wine, referring to the body and blood of Jesus.²⁰⁴ From this point, the church indicates to the Christian congregation, and endeavours to accomplish itself as God's church and the Body of Jesus.²⁰⁵

Symbolism in Christianity is deemed one of the essential matters in church buildings. An ancient Canon psalm says, "*What is in the church is a reflection of what is in heaven*". Ecclesiastical architecture symbolizes the whole world (universe); the roof is the sky, and the floor is the earth, showing a materialistic world and a non-materialistic one.²⁰⁶ Accordingly, Christianity gives the church theological and symbolic meaning.

²⁰⁰ 'Atiya, 2001, p. 203

²⁰¹ Fayyād, al-Ma'bad al-Masīhī, 2007, p. 2

²⁰² 'Ibrāhīm, 2002, p. 11

²⁰³ Naşūr, 2013, p. 5

²⁰⁴ Zakī, 1980, p. 4

²⁰⁵ 'Ibrāhīm, 2002, p. 11

²⁰⁶ Naşūr, 2013, p. 7

Externally, churches are traditionally built on comparatively higher places. The presence of a few steps at the entrance gains to draw believers' attention to the gatherings and prayers and in order to remind one that the church must be conspicuous like a city at the apex of the mountain (Matthew 5:14). The church is in the middle of the parish reminding us of the Good Shepherd who is always with us in the form of the Holy Eucharist which is preserved in the altar.²⁰⁷

Moreover, depending on the different doctrinal views between Eastern and Western churches, it is said that in Western design, the tower of the church reaches up to the sky looking for God, while the church dome exhibits a close, embracing surface because God is always with us.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, Western churches illustrated the picture of the crucified Christ on the upper part of the choir, at the intersection of the nave with the transept. In the East, in Byzantine churches, the Blessing Christ is put on the central dome, where believers assemble.²⁰⁹

Hence, the architectural system of the church and its spatial arrangement from the content to the form is built exclusively in accordance with liturgical requirements and a certain system, as Paul the apostle said, "*Let everything be fit and according to the arrangement*" (1Co14:40).²¹⁰ Our entry to the church is determined from the West, while the altar is situated in the East on a raised platform. The Holy of Holies and the royal door of the iconostasis represent a place where the word of the Heavenly Father is read.

The Christians chose the exact opposite direction of the pagan temples for the orientation of church buildings. From the commencement of church construction, there was a tendency to give the apse an easterly orientation. This orientation is appointed in the Apostolic Constitutions in the middle of the third century.²¹¹

Accordingly, the law regarding orientation appears to have been enforced more rigorously in the Eastern Empire than in the Western Empire (where there was diversity in Rome).²¹²

²⁰⁷ Murqus, 1985, p. 28

²⁰⁸ Fayyād, al-Ma'bad al-Masīhī, 2007, pp. 14-15

²⁰⁹ Mathews, 1998, p. 97

²¹⁰ Zakī, 1980, p. 4

²¹¹ Lowrie, Monuments of the Early Church, 1906, p. 176

²¹² Stewart & Simpson, 1954, p. 20

There are, however, exceptions to the orientation, whether in the East or West Empires: in the East, the enormous basilica adjacent to the Anastasis in Jerusalem had an eastward entrance. The large entrance of the ancient basilica at Tyre, which dates back to the fourth century, was designed to face the rising sun. In addition, it is thought that the primary church in Antioch had "an inverted orientation" because the altar was located on the western side.²¹³ The sanctuaries of the two churches are oriented to the east: S. Peter ad Vincula and S. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, which was directed to the west before reconstruction was carried out.²¹⁴

It is presumed that the nature of the land or the direction of the roadway was occasionally viewed as a reason for not adhering to this rule. It is also possible that the entrance of the church was placed to the east, admitting the sun's rays.²¹⁵

Hereunder are a variety of reasons for taking the church in the eastern direction:

- It is mentioned by Origen (185-254): "It is befitting for us to pray to head towards the East, as a sign of the soul's aspiration towards the dawn of light, that is, the sun of righteousness and salvation that shines on the new world, i.e., the Church".²¹⁶
- There is always an expectation of God's advent, waiting for the second coming of God, announcing such lightning from the East (Matthew 24:27).²¹⁷
- Taking an East orientation is to remind us of the new birth (baptism), Saint Clement of Alexandria (150-215) indicates that each time we stand to pray toward the East, we recall our new life, which is obtained by baptism, when we are heading East.²¹⁸
- St. Athanasius (296-373) mentioned that the Crucified Jesus looked toward the West, we are committed to looking to the East, toward the Crucified.²¹⁹

II.3. Early Christian Architecture

II.3.1 The catacombs

Over the first two centuries, the number of Christians practicing worship in the community rose significantly. However, there were uninterrupted persecutions in many

²¹³ Lowrie, *Monuments of the Early Church*, 1906, p. 176

²¹⁴ Stewart & Simpson, 1954, p. 20

²¹⁵ Lowrie, *Monuments of the Early Church*, 1906, p. 176

²¹⁶ ʾIbrāhīm, 2002, p. 65

²¹⁷ Ibid

²¹⁸ Ibid

²¹⁹ Ibid, p.66

places, followed by forbidding the Christians to hold their meetings and seizing numerous properties.²²⁰ Due to the strong desire of a great number of Christians to practice their rituals and set up their assemblies, they opted for catacombs located outside the city wall to resume practicing their ceremonies as in Rome (Fig. 11).²²¹ This was thanks to the Roman stringent rules prohibiting attacking cemeteries as places of dead people.²²² Accordingly, the aim of employing catacombs was to fulfill two major functions: funeral places and the spiritual needs of Christian worship (religious needs and social welfare).²²³ Christians did not live in secrecy in 250. They were able to possess properties and set their ceremonies. Outside the towns, cemeteries had to be built, so the dead were undisturbed by pagan neighbors. Martyrs' tombs could be distinguished by monuments, and the living could gather in adequate facilities for memorial services and funeral banquets.²²⁴

Because the remains of saints and martyrs were put in catacombs, this encouraged believers to take their blessing and veneration. The value and importance of catacombs rose significantly after the appearance of church buildings.²²⁵ Since then, Christians had built churches on or near martyr graves or placed holy reliquaries of martyrs and saints (bones) at the main altar if there were no martyr graves. The concept of this rite has an extremely profound meaning “The true altar in the church is the spiritual body of God, all the bodies of martyrs that united with it”.²²⁶

Regarding the spatial organization of the catacomb, it usually consists of two to four stories linked with narrow stairs. Furthermore, it includes several longitudinal vestibules and forked corridors intersecting with each other and dug into the rock underground. Moreover, there are rectangular niches (tombs) allotted to the dead situated on the two sides of these vestibules. These *arcosolia* were covered with marble and brick panels bearing inscriptions and symbols.²²⁷ Because of the darkness and dampness, there were several

²²⁰ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 25

²²¹ Loosley, 2017, pp. 5-6

²²² 'As'ad, 2011, p. 14

²²³ Stewart & Simpson, 1954, p. 2

²²⁴ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 26

²²⁵ Muṭlaq, 2003, p. 119

²²⁶ Murqus, 1985, p. 26

²²⁷ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 30

upper openings allowing daylight to enter, besides the oil lamps which were positioned in the niches and arcosolia.²²⁸

It is worth noting that the walls and ceilings of the catacombs were adorned with frescoes and theological symbols such as the Good Shepherd, the Fish, and the Vine, which all indicate Jesus Christ. In the case of the vine and the figure of the Good Shepherd, are known oriental themes.²²⁹ These symbols simply unveiled how Christians expressed their deep faith.

Drawing on the information, the first discoveries in 1578 accounted for more than 40 catacombs in Rome and its suburbs.²³⁰ As well as there were findings in Homs in Syria (Fig. 12).²³¹

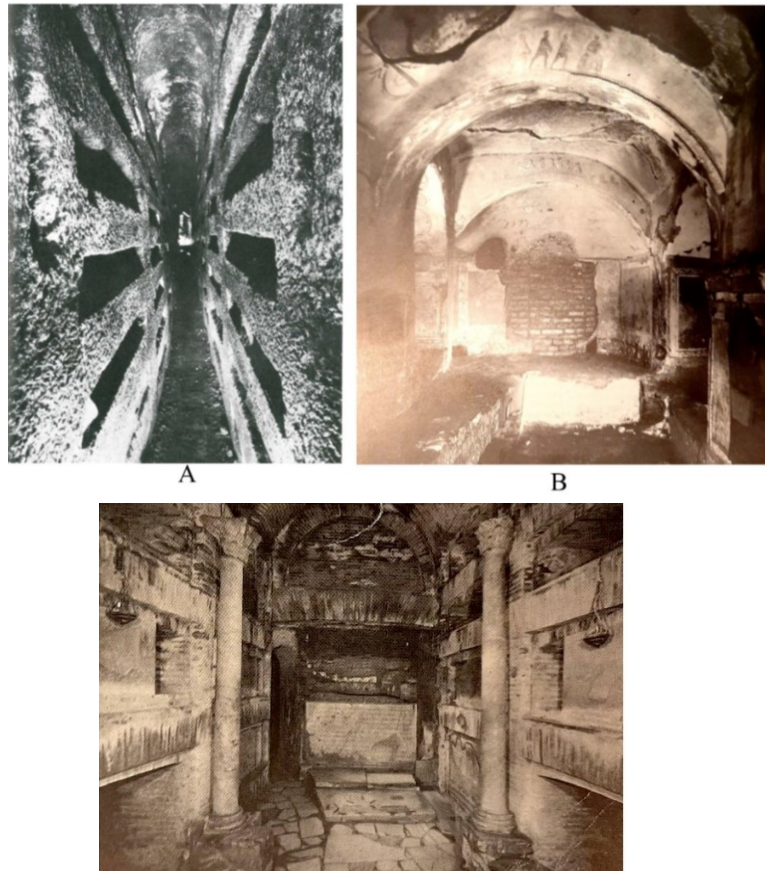


Fig. 11 A. Catacomb of Panfilo in Rome ascribing to the third or fourth century, (*Krautheimer, 1986, p. 31*). B. Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome ‘Greek Chapel’, (*Milburn, 1988, p. 26*). C. Catacomb of Callistus in Rome ‘Crypt of the Popes’, (*Milburn, 1988, p. 24*).

²²⁸ Kafā, 1997, pp. 8-9

²²⁹ Naşūr, 2013, p. 5

²³⁰ Muṭlaq, 2003, p. 120

²³¹ ʿAsʿad, 2011, p. 14

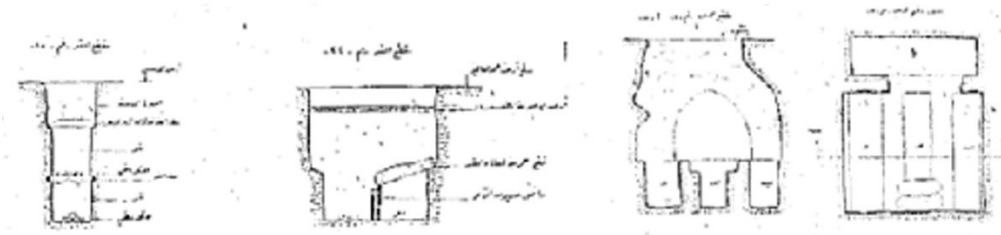


Fig. 12 Section of catacombs in Homs, Syria ('As'ad, 2011, p. 14).

II.3.2 House church

Simultaneously with using the catacombs, inside the city, Christians were accustomed to assembly for worship in houses. Due to the persecution phase (first three centuries), houses used as churches were indistinguishable and similar to the local surrounding buildings to avoid attracting attention, especially in this critical phase.²³²

As the author of the “Acts of the Apostles” describes the life of the Christian congregation in the Apostolic era, “*Breaking bread at home, they partook of food in gladness and simplicity of heart*”.²³³ Yet, by the beginning of the third century, the congregation had to possess its own construction in accordance with their new needs. These religious and social requirements had greatly grown. In addition, a wealthy and distinct liturgy had emerged. Hence, the common meal had been limited based on rare occasions such as meals served to the needy (*agapai*) or burial and memorial feasts (*refrigeria*) conducted at graves or martyred places. The two parts were showing this common service. The first one was represented as “Mass of the Catechumens”, participated by two: faithful and catechumens, which included scripture readings, sermons, and traditional prayer. While the second one was “Mass of the Faithful”. This section was divided into three parts as follows: “*the procession of the faithful bringing offerings for the sacrifice and contributions for the maintenance of the poor and the church; the Sacrifice proper- the Eucharist; and the communion*”.²³⁴

It is important to note that the scale of house churches in the big cities of the Roman Empire varied from these in the smaller cities, owing to several factors such as geographical

²³² Krautheimer, 1986, p. 26

²³³ Milburn, 1988, p. 9

²³⁴ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 26

territory, the funding of the congregation, and the congregation's affluence, also the architectural influences of the residential forms.²³⁵

Thus, the common internal arrangement of the house-church consisted of a large meeting room, separated into two parts by a low wooden railing. The first part is a slightly raised platform occupied by the bishop and priest, while the believers took the lower part. Catechumens and penitents were participating in the antechamber (vestibulum), to be able to listen, but without seeing the “Mass of the faithful”. In addition, there was a subordinate room that was used for keeping altar vessels and a vestry. Some of the house churches included a library.²³⁶

Concerning the furniture, it was characterized by simplicity. Furthermore, there was presumably a chair for the bishop, a table (Mensa) for the Eucharist, and a second table dedicated to offerings.²³⁷

According to Eusebius, in the middle of the third century, “*churches of spacious dimensions*” had been “*erected from the foundations, in every city*”. Based on White’s point of view, using the term “*erected from the foundations*” probably means that the house churches were renovated and reconstructed.²³⁸

Dura Europos:

Undoubtedly, Syria proves clearly that Christianity expanded in the Roman Empire. One of the earliest churches in early Christianity, known as Dura-Europos (*Qalʿat al-Ṣalihiyya*) in the Syrian desert next the Euphrates River.²³⁹ The structure was probably erected early in the third century and transferred to ecclesiastical use in 232. According to Clark Hopkins, “excavation teams” mentioned that a graffito marking the erection of a building is unusual in Dura which was found in the assembly room (232); it would have been equally fitting to have a through renewal and rededication.²⁴⁰ This church is the same age as the Jewish synagogue built in 245, in the same street, and both have similar forms.²⁴¹

²³⁵ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 28

²³⁶ Ibid, p.26

²³⁷ Ibid

²³⁸ Balderstone, 2007, p. 6

²³⁹ Milburn, 1988, p. 9

²⁴⁰ Doig, 2008, p. 12

²⁴¹ Milburn, 1988, p. 10

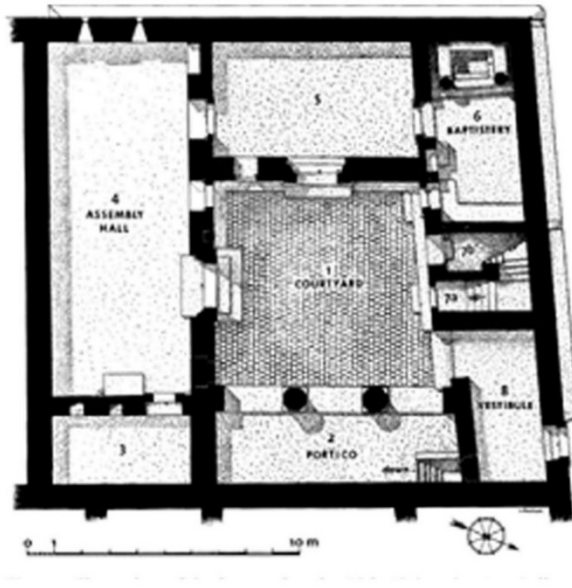
The assembly room of the house church could hold nearly seventy-five people. It was joined to another room in the south after removing the wall due to the restoration. It has a slightly elevated platform oriented to the east, which was probably devoted to assembling (teaching, prayer), and the Eucharist.²⁴² To the right of the assembly room, there is another room, probably functioning as a school, dedicated to catechumens, with a door leading to the baptistery chapel. The baptistery chapel ends with a west niche surmounted by an arch, supported by two columns. Under the canopy, there is a small font basin, because of its small size, it is assumed was used for the baptism. All in all, the plan of Dura-Europos church follows the Asiatic traditional style, consisting of a central courtyard accessible by vestibules (Fig. 13).²⁴³

Most striking, the baptistery of Dura-Europos is decorated with wall paintings, with Eastern artistic influence, representing New Testament themes such as '*St. Peter's attempt to walk on the water*' and '*The healing of the paralytic*'. Three inscriptions were found distributed in the house church: "*There is one God in heaven, Remind Christ of Proclus in your midst, and Remind the Christ of the humble Siseos*". Most likely, mentioning both Siseos and Proclus is related to their role as benefactors of the adorning chapel (Fig. 14).²⁴⁴

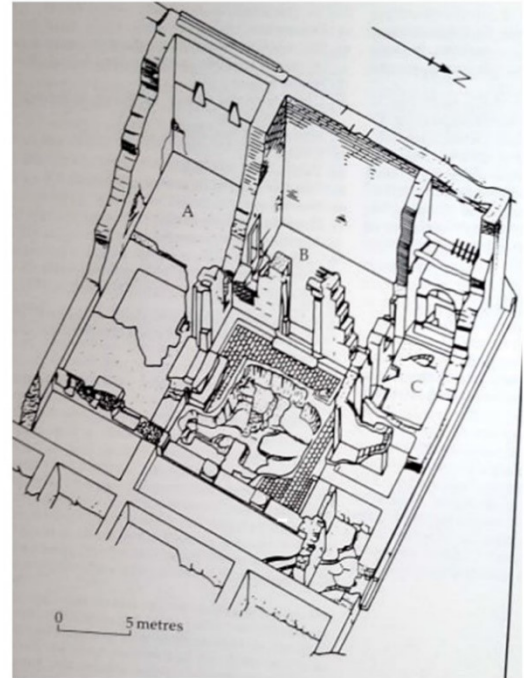
²⁴² Peppard, 2016 , p. 17

²⁴³ Milburn, 1988, p. 10

²⁴⁴ Ibid



A

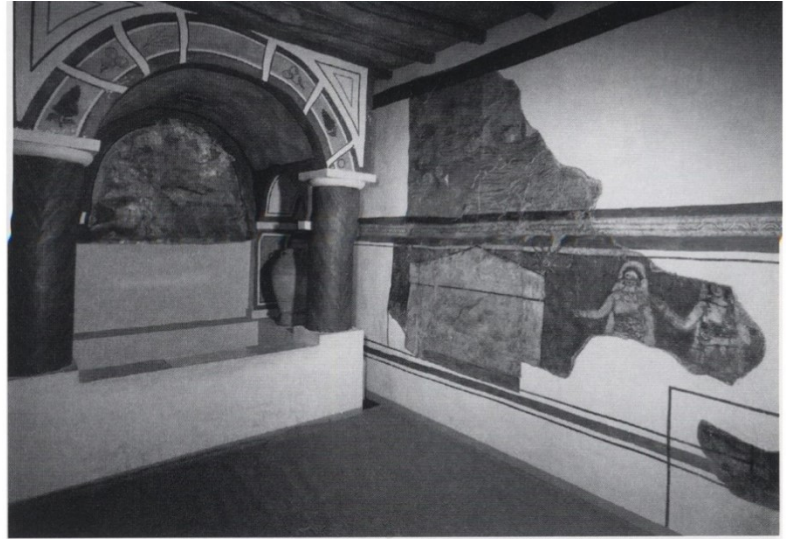


B

Fig. 13 A. Ground plan of Dura-Europos in Syria, (Peppard, 2016 , p. 17). B. An isometric of Dura-Europos, (Milburn, 1988, p. 8).



D



C

Fig. 14 C. The font of Dura-Europos covered by a canopy, (Peppard, 2016 , p. 145). D. A wall painting of the baptistry at Dura-Europos, (Cormack, 2000, p. 13)

II.4. External and Internal Sides of the Christian Basilica

II.4.1. A Brief overview of the Christian Basilica

How was Christian architecture adapted to use the basilica?

Roman architecture was a major influence on church architecture at the beginning of the fourth century. Due to the lack of financial resources in the early Christian period, Christian communities and architects were compelled to adopt the available buildings, according to the new functions of the Christian faith. Accordingly, the Roman basilica was used as a Christian church.²⁴⁵ Civil Basilica or ‘secular basilica’ buildings were found in considerable numbers dedicated to social, political, and commercial functions in the Greco-Roman world.²⁴⁶ These basilicas were distinguished by their varied sizes, simplicity, and substantial effect, and they could accommodate a large number of people (Fig. 15).

With regards to the liturgy of the Mass, in the early fourth century, it became standardized across the Empire. By the same token, the fundamentals persisted as follows: the division between the Mass of the Catechumens and the Mass of the Faithful; the Eucharistic sacrifice; the divide between the clergy and believers.²⁴⁷

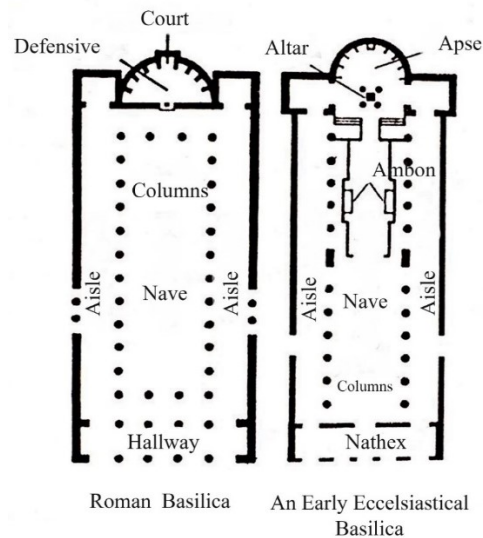


Fig. 15 A plan showing the Roman Basilica and Christian Basilica, by the author after (Āthanāsīyū, 2004, p. 28)

²⁴⁵ Muṭlaq, 2003, p. 122

²⁴⁶ Lowrie, *Monuments of the Early Church*, 1906, p. 89

²⁴⁷ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 40

Overall, the Christian Basilica was built in accordance with its function, like a memorial, or pilgrimage shrine, episcopal or parochial, and congregational.

All churches (congregational) containing holy relics were not represented as shrines or martyriums (where the real cemetery was found outside of the city wall or at its gate) in the fifth century. These churches could be identified from other churches devoted to the same saint, each of which had a little part of his relic. Thereby, many churches that carried the names of saints and martyrs inside the city did not belong to the commemorative martyria church but were considered churches.²⁴⁸

In addition, the plan of the martyrium was modified in order to allow celebrating the liturgy "*decently and orderly*". The basilica, on the other hand, acquired a chapel devoted to holy relics at times, and the martyr shrine grew into something like a parish church. The distinction between the two forms of structure grew unclear. Sometimes, twin basilicas emerged, which presumably showed different functions such as congregational or episcopal, parochial basilica and martyr's basilica.²⁴⁹

It is interesting to know that the practice of venerating holy relics differed between the East and West. In the West, it was forbidden to move the relics from one place to another or divide them. So, the shrines were located in the cemeteries, where the funeral basilica was outside the walled city. In contrast, in the East based on the Eastern traditions and especially in Syria, it was allowed to convey the holy relics from one site to another. It was also common to split up the relics of martyrs and allocate them substantially.²⁵⁰ For example, St. Babylas' body was moved to Daphne (outskirts of Antioch in 351-54) is considered the first example. Besides, between 356-357, St. Andrew, St. Timothy, and St. Luke relics were conveyed to the Holy Apostles church in Constantinople. Thus, the movement of martyrs' relics grew common, dismantling these relics for greater distribution. Furthermore, almost every church, whether memorial or parochial, had fragments of holy relics starting in the fourth century.²⁵¹ Hence, the mausoleums, or even saints' shrines (centralized plan) were built within cities rather than only outside the walls as they had been in the past. It is likely that the veneration of holy relics and the practice of breaking up

²⁴⁸ Grabar, 1949, p. 101

²⁴⁹ Milburn, 1988, pp. 88-89-124

²⁵⁰ 'Amīn, 2015, p. 87

²⁵¹ Mango, Byzantine Architecture, 1985, p. 44

saints' bodies and spreading parts of relics aided in the transfer of the saint's relics to the cities and towns.²⁵²

II.4.2. The Exterior forms of Christian Basilica and their functional and symbolic approaches

Specifically, unlike any rigid buildings, the concept of Christian Basilica buildings demonstrates two key sides: symbolic and functional approaches. Hence, ecclesiastical architecture adopted two major forms: a rectangular basilica and a centralized plan (square, cruciform, and polygonal forms) with different functions.

Each form carried theological meaning due to the importance of symbolism and its concept in Christianity and liturgical expressions. The basilica church shows different forms regarding liturgical celebration and functions like martyrium (memorial), congregational church, and monastic church. Celebration of the liturgy was the major aim of erecting church buildings. However, at times, liturgy changes led to architectural modifications. These forms will be addressed in further detail below.

➤ Churches with rectangular plan:

▪ Symbolic approach:

In the beginning, conventional churches took a rectangular plan following the basilica type. The rectangular form indicates the ship perched on the ground toward the East, to the light. The Church is a vessel of salvation and rescuer, which transports believers from the deluge of sin to the East tranquillity harbor to the Kingdom of God to the source of light through the sea of life safeguarding humanity.²⁵³

▪ Functional approach:

The rectangular form is considered fundamental to all other forms of church buildings such as square, octagonal, and cruciform, which adopt other symbolic considerations. This form, with a rectangular plan with a gable roof, was dedicated to ordinary worship, Eucharist, and liturgical assemblies of the Christian community such as congregational church²⁵⁴ and later monastic churches.²⁵⁵ There was, without a doubt, a functional distinction between the

²⁵² Grabar, 1949, p. 101

²⁵³ Fayyād, al-Ma'bad al-Masīhī, 2007, p. 18

²⁵⁴ Grabar, 1949, p. 69

²⁵⁵ Milburn, 1988, p. 123

monastery church and the parish church. The major function of the monastic church is to accommodate monks, not women or catechumens whereas the parish church is distinguished by the separation of men and women (Fig. 16).²⁵⁶

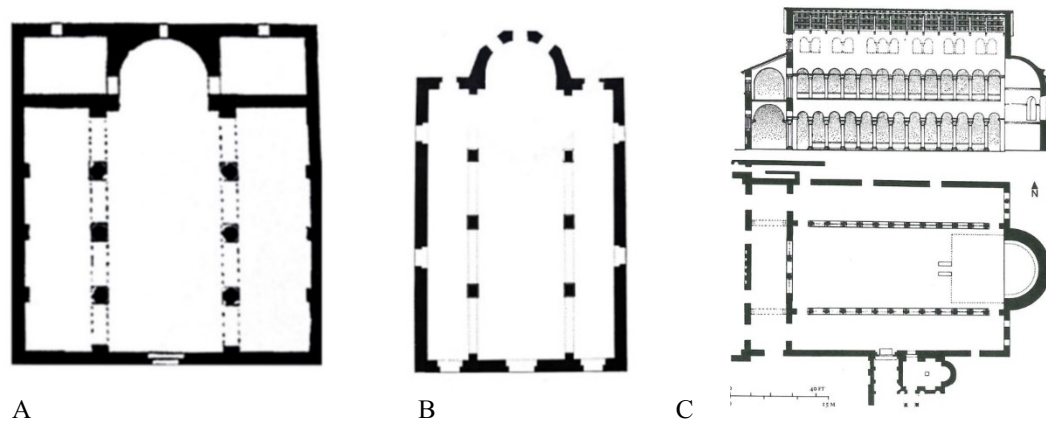


Fig. 16 A. Plan of Dana church in northern Syria (483). B. Plan of East church of Dīr Salīb northern Syria (600), (Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 60). C. Plan and section of Church Acheiropoietos in Salonica, (Krautheimer, 1986, p. 100).

➤ Churches with centralized plan:

▪ Symbolic approach:

In Christianity, the circle represents completeness, eternity, and infinity. It resembles Heaven on Earth, sending an invitation for every believer to enter with divinity and eternal love, so, God is the beginning and the end in the integrity circle.²⁵⁷ This idea is reflected in the design of churches, which are often centered around the Gospel and sacred rituals, also honoring martyrs and saints.²⁵⁸

Moreover, churches with centralized forms show the journey of catechumens toward baptism, and subsequently into the church to join the assembled congregation.²⁵⁹ The theological concept of baptism, the death of sins in the Old Adam, and the resurrection to a new life with Christ rendered the centralized form of martyrium an effective form for the baptistery.²⁶⁰ Hence, essential theological meanings like death and resurrection are present in the circle.

▪ Functional approach:

²⁵⁶ Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 1985, pp. 8-43

²⁵⁷ Fayyād, *al-Maʿbad al-Masīhī*, 2007, p. 18

²⁵⁸ MacDonald, 1965, p. 20

²⁵⁹ Hackett, 2011, p. 57

²⁶⁰ Doig, 2008, p. 39

The centralized architectural form of memorial, like those at Golgotha and Bethlehem, was influenced by the imperial mausoleum, as mentioned “the application of the central plan to temple building began in the second century when Hadrian reconstructed the Pantheon once it had previously been preferred at the imperial mausolea. It was particularly prevalent in martyria, or buildings erected to commemorate major events in the biblical tradition and the life of Christ, or to honor martyrs.²⁶¹ The martyrion church, which is a shrine containing an item of Christian "testimony" differs greatly from the ordinary congregational church and the monastic church.²⁶² Christians got accustomed to using the centralized forms for their martyria, baptistries, and memorial shrines,²⁶³ built on the holy tomb or near to it whether in the East or the West.²⁶⁴ Centralized church form has been developed in several forms, square, circular, and polygonal including diverse covering methods like timbered ceilings, vaults and domes supported with squinches and pendentives.²⁶⁵ In addition, within this form, the liturgical rites illustrate two kinds: offering the Holy Sacrament and assembling of the Christian community,²⁶⁶ at times, both were merged.²⁶⁷

It is interesting to mention that the “centralized” plan under Constantine and Theodosius I (379-95), confirmed the separation between memorial forms and congregational ones.²⁶⁸ Thereby, in early Christian architecture, the deep correlation between the symbolic approach and the functional one (memorial shrines, baptistries) led to the centralized and congregational, and professional buildings.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, over the early Christian period, the architect was aware of respecting the tradition of the basilica, connected to the functional fundamentals of Christian buildings. Thus, the centralized plans, which were covered with vaults or domes, were dedicated to shrines, martyrs, and baptistry. The baptistry was dedicated to baptizing adults and children in the baptismal

²⁶¹ Ibid

²⁶² Mango, 1985, p. 8

²⁶³ Rustum, *Kanīsat madīnat Allah 'Anṭākya al-ʿuzmā* 34-634 A.D, 1958, pp. 411-412

²⁶⁴ Grabar, 1949, p. 97

²⁶⁵ Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 1985, p. 7

²⁶⁶ Grabar, 1949, p. 69

²⁶⁷ Milburn, 1988, p. 10

²⁶⁸ Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 1986, p. 68

²⁶⁹ MacDonald, 1965, p. 16

basin. In the Middle Ages, the baptismal room was not a separate building, but rather a modest room without significant features joined to ordinary churches.²⁷⁰

Hereunder, there are two discernible categories:

- Completely circular shape such as The Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church of St. George in Thessalonica (Fig. 17).²⁷¹

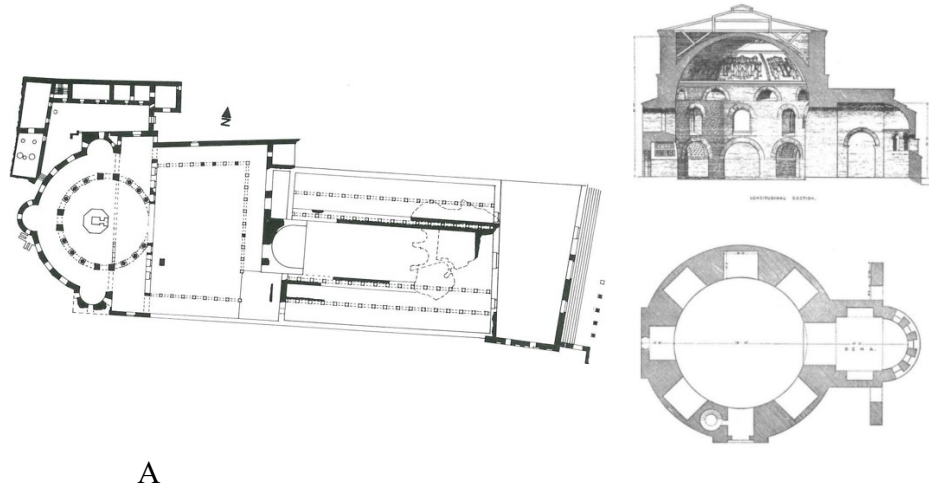


Fig. 17 A. Plan of Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, (*Krautheimer, 1986, p. 62*). B. Plan and section of Rotunda St. George in Thessalonica, (*Hoddinott, 1963, p. 110*).

- Octagonal plan like Church of St. George in Izraa, cathedral in Bostra, and St. Vitale in Ravenna - Italy) (Fig. 18).²⁷²

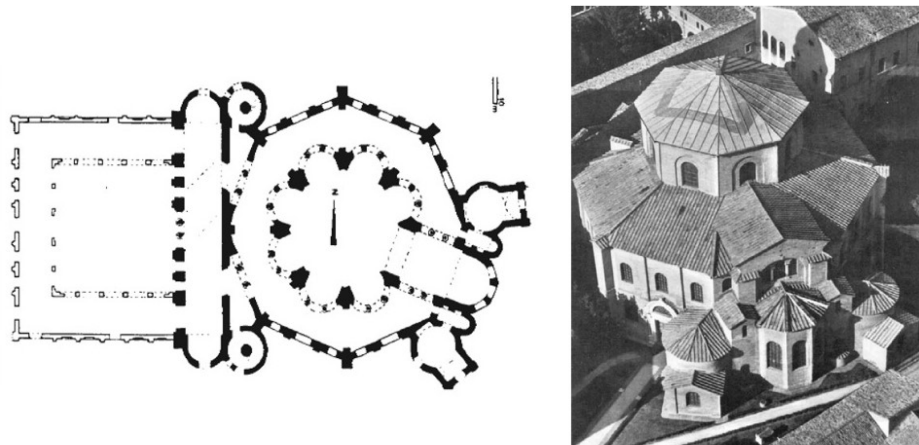


Fig. 18 Plan and view of St. Vital Basilica in Ravenna (526-547), (*Escrig, 2006, p. 48*).

²⁷⁰ Grabar, 1949, pp. 97-98

²⁷¹ Naşūr A. , 2013, p. 12

²⁷² Ibid

➤ **Churches with cruciform plan:**

▪ **Symbolic approach:**

Regarding the symbolic aspect, the cruciform is one of the most important symbols in Christianity, as according to St. Paul that all the divine arrangement is present in the word of the Cross.²⁷³ Thus, all the Cruciform plan churches point out a great depth of divinity, which is demonstrated substantially in the Christian church-building world. It symbolizes divine providence.²⁷⁴

In addition, the adoption of the cruciform church layout has been regarded symbolically as portraying Christ's victory in accordance with cited by Smith from Ambrose's inscription of the cruciform church of the Holy Apostles in Milan. The cruciform plan highlighted Christ's humanity and suffering, and it served as an alternative orthodox emblem to the triple-apse sanctuary. Smith was more concerned with the dome as a symbol of heaven than with the meaning of the different plan shapes. The writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, on the other hand, show that both the cross and the octagonal design carry significant meaning as well.²⁷⁵

▪ **Functional approach:**

Concerning architecture, it illustrates a kind of development of memorial shrines and martyr churches which took cruciform or octagonal shapes. Hereunder, four types of cruciform plan types are identified:

- **First type:** It emerged in the fourth century, it has a cross shape, with arms of equal dimension, and each arm constitutes a single hall covered with a timbered gable roof. The centralized square, which resulted in the intersection of the single halls, is roofed with a dome such as St. Babylas (381) (Fig. 19).

²⁷³ Kafā, 1997, p. 18

²⁷⁴ Naşūr A. , 2013, p. 6

²⁷⁵ Balderstone, 2007, p. 18

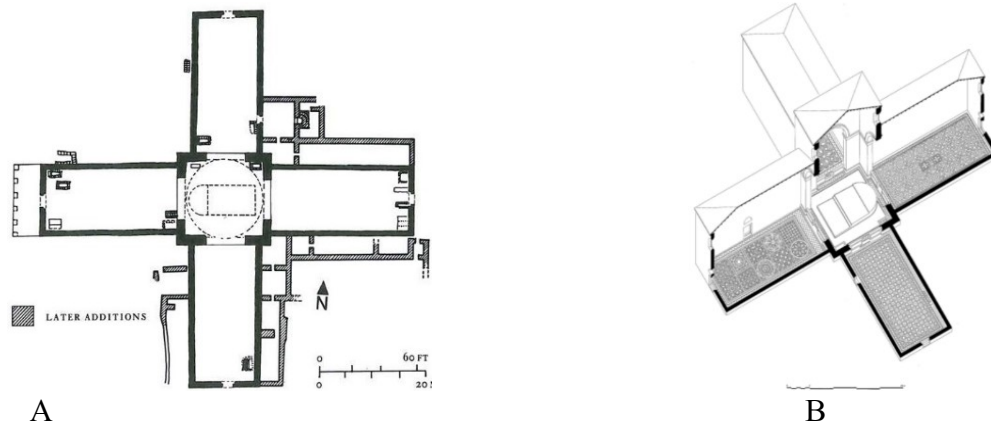


Fig. 19 A. Plan of Martyrium Church of St. Babylas in Antioch, (Krautheimer, 1986, p. 76). B. Viewing reconstruction (Tchalenko, *Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1*, 1980, p. 351).

- Second type: The arms of the cross are different in size and length; the Western arm is longer and larger, and the Eastern one has an apse. This type is covered entirely with an equal height roof (the four sides of the cruciform and centralized square) or a separate covering. Example: Church of St. John in Ephesus (4th -5th) (Fig. 20).
- Third type: The center of the intersecting four arms takes an octagonal shape instead of the traditional square, characterized by an octagonal-shaped dome such as at St. Simon (541-565).
- Fourth type: This type is characterized by an interior cruciform plan, and an exterior square or rectangular plan “Cross in Square”. This type expanded widely in Byzantine architecture. Example: Church of Apostles and Martyrs in Jerash (Fig. 20).²⁷⁶

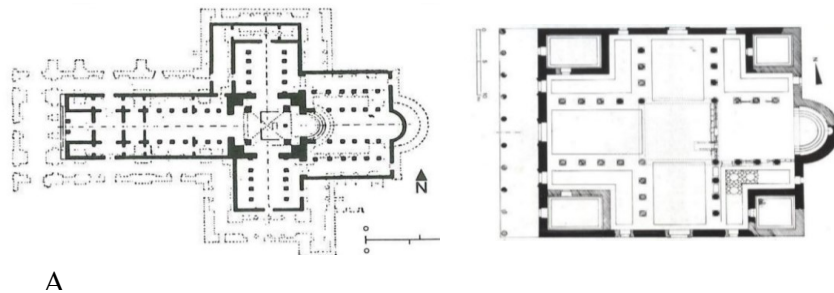


Fig. 20 A. A Plan of St. John Church built in 450 in Ephesus, (Krautheimer, 1992, p. 106). B. Plan of St. John the Baptist, St. George and St. Cosmas and Damian Church in Gerasa, (Mango, 1979, p. 23).

²⁷⁶ Amīn, 2015, pp. 44-45

II.4.3 The Internal spatial arrangement, the elements and the symbolic liturgical meaning in the East Christian Basilica

A Christian Basilica is generally rectangular in plan, with a central nave surrounded by two or more lateral aisles. Two rows of columns separate the nave and aisles.²⁷⁷ The nave and side aisles are dedicated to believers, with men using the right aisle and women taking the left or the gallery. Galleries were more prevalent in early Byzantine architecture.²⁷⁸ The apse is used by the clergy and the bishop. Hence, there is an architectural and functional separation between the clergy and laity, as well as between the nave and the altar. The columns are topped by arches. A wooden gable roof covers the basilica. Remarkably, the center nave's ceiling is higher than the lateral ones, allowing for greater illumination.²⁷⁹ It is worth noting that the local tradition was sometimes associated with additional features like porticos, galleries, side chambers, an atrium and a crypt.²⁸⁰ In addition, there was a baptismal font and an atrium with a fountain.²⁸¹ Before entering the church, believers washed their hands and faces as a sign of their purity of heart. It is stated, *"the hand which prayer ought to lift toward God"* which is an affirmation of purity in receiving the Eucharist. In addition, the priest and deacon washed their hands before celebrating the Mass (Fig. 21).²⁸²

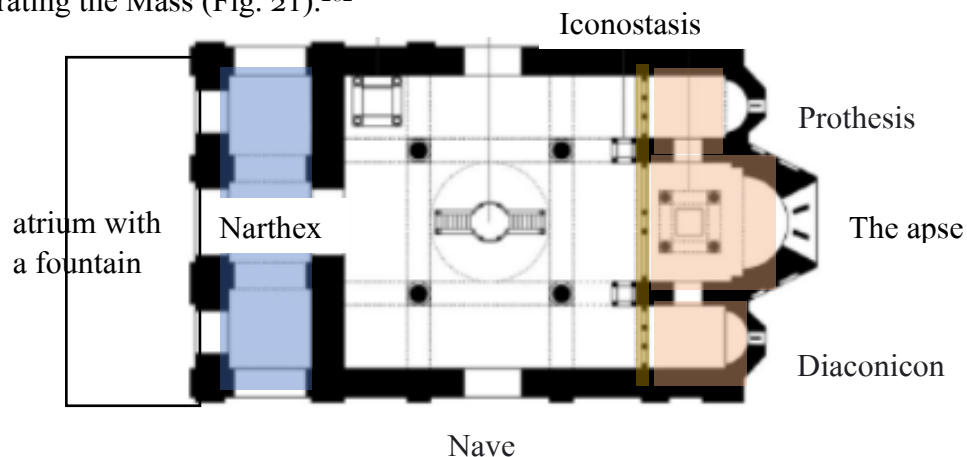


Fig. 21. A drawing of typical Byzantine church, (Bogdanovic, 2017, p. 135), modified by author.

²⁷⁷ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 41

²⁷⁸ Stewart & Simpson, 1954, p. 26

²⁷⁹ Mango, Byzantine Architecture, 1985, p. 42

²⁸⁰ Krautheimer, 1986, pp. 94-95

²⁸¹ Stewart & Simpson, 1954, p. 3

²⁸² Pena, 1997, p. 77

Below is a concise explanation of the most common architectural features of an Eastern Christian Basilica:

The apse takes a semicircular form and is oriented to the East, used by the clergy and priests. It is covered by a half-dome. Some churches have three apses facing east. The sanctuary is typically elevated on a raised platform.²⁸³

Moreover, two rectangular chambers are known as pastophoria or sacristies (prothesis and diaconicon) surrounding the apse. While the north chamber prothesis is devoted to preparing the offering (Eucharist), the south chamber diaconicon is used as a vestry to store the books and church equipment.

The southern chamber, on the other hand, was differentiated by social access during the fifth century, alluding to the usage of this space as a chapel containing sacred relics of martyrs or saints. In other circumstances, these shrines often showed a distinct edifice creating a different kind of structure.²⁸⁴

As previously said, Christians believe in and honor the saints through praying and touching their tombs. This ritual spread across Syria in the second half of the fifth century. Antioch, Edessa, and Apamea, as well as minor villages and dead cities in northern Syria have numerous sacred relics.²⁸⁵

Hence, at the outset of the fifth century, Christians in Syria started to put holy relics in reliquaries. The reliquaries are rectangular stone boxes that could put the holy relics such as bones. They were roofed by a sloped stone lid pierced by an opening. The other opening was positioned on the lower part of the box. One of the important special liturgical and tool characteristics is that these relics were kept in the martyr's chapel not under the altar as in the West.²⁸⁶ Believers would drop the oil into the hole of the reliquary, allowing the second hole to wipe their handkerchiefs in the sacred oil and get a blessing or heal the illness by anointing the oil on their faces. Another possibility for getting the blessing was to put the oil in bottles taken by the believers (Fig. 22).²⁸⁷

²⁸³ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 40

²⁸⁴ Milburn, 1988, p. 124

²⁸⁵ Pena, 1997, p. 129

²⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 132

²⁸⁷ Pena, 1997, p. 132

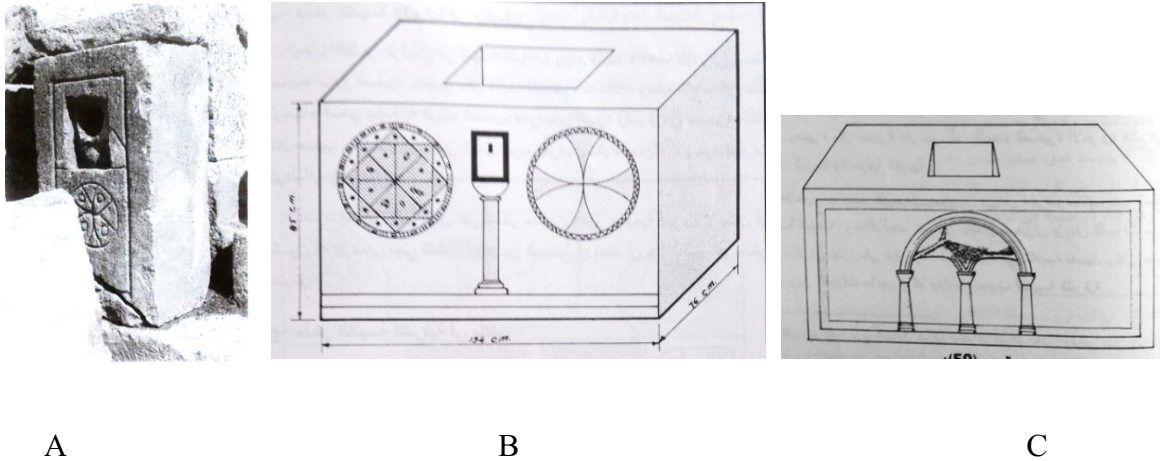


Fig. 22 A. A reliquary in Bāfittīn Church in Jabal Bārīshā, (*Ḥajār*, 1995, p. 242). B. A reliquary of northern church of Bāshmshlī. C. A reliquary in Bāqirḥā Church (western church), (*Pīniyā, Kāstlyānā , & Firnān*, 2002, p. 266).

Iconostasis (εικονοστάσιον) is defined as a barrier that separates the nave from the altar, the Holy of Holies. It is deemed the most important liturgical and architectural element in the Orthodox churches (Fig. 23). In early Christian times, the iconostasis was a low barrier with a height of about one meter extending merely the width of the nave, except the aisles. It was decorated with tiny columns and symbols of the Redeemer Christ. The Iconostasis was pierced by an entrance opening to the middle aisle. This type of iconostasis was in use until the fifth century. Later, in the sixth century and afterward, the height of the tiny columns increased remarkably, a horizontal lintel extended above them, and the iconostasis occupied the entire width of the church with two entrances on each side. This was owing to the appearance of the diaconicon and prothesis. The openings of the iconostasis were covered by curtains (from the fifth century and after). Over the eighth and ninth centuries (iconoclasm period), iconostasis became higher.²⁸⁸ By the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, iconostasis was made up of wood instead of marble shown in many churches.

It is interesting to mention that iconostasis manifests the same arrangement of icons in each Orthodox church. The icon of the Virgin Mary (Theotokos) is located to the right

²⁸⁸ Naşūr A. , 2013, pp. 16-17

of the Royal Door with the icon of the saint that the church is dedicated to. To the left of the royal Door, the Icon of Christ and beside it, the icon of Saint John is placed.²⁸⁹

In light of the liturgical movement, it is recognized by two processions ‘the Little Entrance, and the Great Entrance’. The clergy emerges from the north entrance of the iconostasis and returns through the royal doors in a circular procession. So, this is entirely done with the clergy. Believers' involvement is expressed in prayer and reverence, which is manifested visibly by drawing the sign of the cross and kissing an icon.²⁹⁰

The ambo is a frequent element in the Byzantine church which emerged between the fourth and fifth centuries.²⁹¹ The first ambo appeared occupying a single side, then it became two. It is located in front of the sanctuary in the nave accessed by a few steps. One of the ambos is used for reading the Gospel and the other for the Epistle.²⁹²

The gallery is considered a common feature in the early Byzantine churches found in the East and Syria. It was used by women and catechumens sometimes.²⁹³ It occupies the upper level of the church, surrounded by three sides west, north, and south. This part exists mainly in the Greek Orthodox churches (Fig. 23).²⁹⁴



Fig. 23 The gallery and iconostasis of Saint Demetrius church in Thessaloniki (5th century), (Krautheimer, 1986, p. 162).

²⁸⁹ al-Ḥilū , Samīn, Qasāṭlī , & O’Sullivan, 2007, p. 42

²⁹⁰ Mathews, 1971

²⁹¹ Bogdanovic, 2017, p. 7474

²⁹² leacroft, 1977, p. 5

²⁹³ ʿAmīn, 2015, p. 46

²⁹⁴ Mathews, 1971, p. 117

The narthex was a distinctive architectural feature designed for catechumens and penitents, who were "listeners" during the service.²⁹⁵ This part is placed in the western part of the Byzantine Christian Basilica as the portico extending the entire width of the church.²⁹⁶

All the internal arrangement of the church serves liturgical requirements, besides bearing a symbolic meaning. The apse indicates the 'cave of Bethlehem', or the cave where 'Christ was buried'.²⁹⁷ Moreover, the arches indicate the victory of Christianity.²⁹⁸ The victory arch which is an intersection element between the altar and church nave represents a bridge between heaven and earth, and the transition from death to eternal life.²⁹⁹ There is always an expression of the Holy Trinity such as three apses, three windows in apses, and three aisles.³⁰⁰

II.4.4 An overview of the roles of Bishops, Benefactors, and Architects in Byzantine Church architecture

Lastly, it is important to note the Byzantine church building mechanism. In early Byzantine architecture, there were two sorts of specialists who functioned as architects: '*mêchanikos* or *mêchanopoios* and *architektôn*. The term *mêchanikos* is defined as an engineer, however, it is more appropriately defined as an architect with proficiency in mathematics.³⁰¹ For example, Hagia Sophia Cathedral was constructed by: Anthmeios of Tralles and Isidorus of Miletus. They were known as *mechanopoioi*, as they were highly knowledgeable in statics and kinetics theory as well as mathematics. Yet, it appears that Isidorus and Anthmeios were more scientists than architects: Isidorus was more physicist and Anthmeios was a mathematics specialist.³⁰² While *architektôn* is considered a master builder.³⁰³

These three texts provide insight into the roles of architects and bishops in building churches:

²⁹⁵ Lowrie, *Monuments of the Early Church*, 1906, p. 107

²⁹⁶ Stewart & Simpson, 1954, p. 12

²⁹⁷ Mango, 1991, p. 42

²⁹⁸ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-milādī* (Vol. I), 1997, p. 93

²⁹⁹ Kwākbī, 1982, p. 103

³⁰⁰ Mango, 1991, p. 42

³⁰¹ Mango, 1985, p. 14

³⁰² Krautheimer, 1986, p. 206

³⁰³ Mango, 1985, p. 15

- The first text shows that Emperor Constantine and Bishop Macarius communicated about the Holy Sepulchre in 326. They discussed using materials like marble and other expensive materials. The local officials were told to provide the necessary materials and workers. The bishop acted as the leader of the planning committee.³⁰⁴
- The second letter dates to 380, from St. Gregory of Nyssa to the bishop of Iconium Amphilochius. Depending on this letter, the absence of the architect's role is obvious. However, St. Gregory provided the plan and simple drawings with elevation and dimensions, width, and length.³⁰⁵
- The third letter provides key details about the construction of the Gaza cathedral from 402 to 407. It explains that the government handled the financial aspects. Many Christians volunteered to help build the cathedral. Architect Rufinus only created a basic design since the main plan came from Constantinople. The bishop was involved in overseeing the construction.³⁰⁶ .

In summary, three historical documents show that bishops played a crucial role in building churches. The bishop's role was central, while the architect mainly created a basic design and carried out the plans rather than creating them. ³⁰⁷ Additionally, church construction often relied on funding from emperors and wealthy donors.

³⁰⁴ ʿAmīn, 2015, p. 41

³⁰⁵ Mango, 1985, p. 16

³⁰⁶ Ibid

³⁰⁷ Mango, 1985, p. 18

II.5. Conclusion of the Chapter

Given all the information mentioned above, the conclusion of the chapter can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, the catacombs represent an essential and rudimentary phase in the Christian life (first three centuries). As a result of persecution, Christian communities got used to employing burial grounds that offered protection to their prayers and gatherings. Although the great faith of Christians, ecclesiastical architecture was not adequately shown.

Secondly, employing a house as a church was a viable concept in early Christianity in accordance with historical incidents until the "Peace of Constantine" in 324 arrived.³⁰⁸ The house church exemplifies the first place of Christian worship above the ground with a plain form structure for praying and gathering. It represents a principal source in early ecclesiastical architecture reflecting on the comprehension of the basilica plan which started appearing over the fourth century.

Subsequently, as mentioned, the essence of the depth of Christianity is illustrated in the celebration of the Eucharist. Since the early centuries, there has been a profound correlation between the tombs of martyrs, honoring the martyrs, and relics of saints associated with erecting churches. Moreover, civil basilica buildings were reused, developed and modified becoming conventional typical Christian architecture in accordance with a new function: the Christian Basilica. Hence, reusing these buildings was a response due to the exigency to have churches for significant numbers of Christians to celebrate liturgy.

Thus, the main aim of using forms was to serve the liturgical, theological, and spiritual needs. Simplicity and flexibility were the main characteristics of ecclesiastical architecture. This is remarkable through the gradual transformation of reusing simple forms for worship which bestowed functional purposes starting from catacombs and house churches, ending with using the basilica forms (Early Christian period and late antique) and granting symbolic meanings.

Most importantly, it indicates the essence of the relationship between church architecture and liturgical requirements: exterior forms, internal elements, besides their symbolic and liturgical space.

³⁰⁸ Loosley, 2017, p. 3

III. CHARACTERISTICS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF SYRIAN CHURCH ARCHITECTURE IN THE BYZANTINE AND CRUSADER PERIODS

Overview:

The foundational chapters of this study offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the evolution and significance of church architecture in Syria. As discussed above, the first chapter shows a geographical and historical aspect, tracing the historical phases of Christianity in general and particularly in Damascus and highlighting pivotal events. These historical events are reflected in the development of church architecture, beginning with the catacombs, house church, and basilica.

The second chapter illustrates the liturgical and symbolic aspects of church design, showing how each architectural detail or part of the church has taken the meaning and symbol of Christianity with its liturgical and architectural dimension, not like any residential building. This chapter emphasizes the liturgical and architectural dimensions that define church architecture.

Together, these two chapters provide a solid structure for the third chapter, which examines Syrian church architecture during the Byzantine period from the fourth to the sixth century and the Crusader period from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. This chapter offers a detailed examination of church examples in southern and northern Syria, arranged chronologically to highlight their unique characteristics. In addition, two notable Crusader churches in Tartous and Homs are briefly discussed.

In other words, this comprehensive chapter focuses on architectural features of churches in Syrian regions and provides a groundwork for subsequent chapters. In particular, it builds the foundation for the analysis of church architecture in Damascus in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and whether there is a continuity of ancient Syrian church features through time.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to attempt to provide answers to these presumptive questions, providing a rich foundation for further exploration and comparison:

- What are the main features of Syrian Christian churches externally and internally between the fourth and sixth centuries?

- What are the common architectural denominators and the differences in church buildings between northern and southern Syria, and what are the main factors that contributed to showing these types?
- What architectural styles emerged in church buildings during the Crusader period??

III.1. Introduction

In Syria, church architecture developed through several stages, beginning with reusing public buildings to serve as churches, thus meeting the liturgical requirements, local tradition, and taste. This led to adopt the basilica layout to create a martyria, congregational, and monastic churches. In addition, geographical nature, available materials, and culture are the main factors in showing diversity in church construction. Furthermore, the economic prosperity observed in the major urban centers and the smaller suburbs and villages was a major factor that influenced the diversity of church architecture. This is reflected not only in churches but also in local buildings, in which all available sources and factors were exploited to produce distinctive construction.³⁰⁹ On the other hand, due to the strict regulations, church construction ceased during the Muslim period and Christian communities diminished.³¹⁰ Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, the Crusaders settled in the area between western Homs and eastern Latakia, as well as along the coastline chain. They erected castles and fortifications on mountain tops, totalling 18 castles and fortresses including chapels and churches.³¹¹

Scholars Butler and Tchalenko have put forward several theories regarding the origins of basilicas in the early Christian period. A possible theory is that these structures could be derived from existing pagan structures, such as temples or tombs, by adopting their architectural plan. The second theory is to use and develop local residences (accommodation sites) as churches.³¹²

Thus, there are two principal regions: the northern part between Antioch and Aleppo and southern Syria with Jabal Hauran and Bosra. These two areas possess a great number of churches that reflect the extent of the spreading of Christianity including Christian denominations.

The approach of this study is divided into key points:

³⁰⁹ Kennedy, 2016, pp. 1-2

³¹⁰ Guidetti, 2009, pp. 6-7

³¹¹ Ṭanūs, 2014, p. 55

³¹² Kīfūrkiyān, 2002, pp. 35-36

- Chronological contextualization: The development of church architecture is placed in a historical context, looking at the Byzantine influence and the local adaptations from the fourth to sixth centuries as well as the Crusader period. This makes it easier to see how historical events and the order of liturgical requirements affected architectural developments.

- Selection of case studies: Churches were chosen for analysis based on their historical significance, special architectural features, and spatial location in the northern and southern parts of Syria. The case studies include basilicas and smaller rural churches which are examples of major architectural trends. These structures also differ in size and function, such as cathedrals, martyria, parish churches, monastic churches, and chapels. The focus has been given to the sites which are well documented in archaeological and historical sources in order to guarantee the data reliability.

III.2. Syrian Church Architecture over the Byzantine Period from the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries in Northern Syria

III.2.1 Churches in the Fourth Century

Hereunder is a map depicting the locations of fourth-century churches (Fig. 24).



Fig. 24 A map showing sites of churches in the fourth century, by the author after (Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 63)

- **Qirqbāza (Qirqbize) Church:**

The church is situated to the north of Qirqbāza (Qirqbize) village, where Jabal al-Ala exists. This church is among the oldest in Syria, following the precedent set by the Dura-Europos house church. It serves as a significant example for many scholars due to its substantial archaeological and historical significance. Hence, it represents the advanced phase of the development of the house church in Dura-Europos.³¹³

Qirqbāza Church ascribes to the first third of the fourth century.³¹⁴ Previously, this church was a villa oriented to the west (Fig. 25).³¹⁵ Qirqbāza Church corresponds to the Dura-Europos house church regarding in its various elements, except the use of the raised platform: The eastern platform at Dura-Europos was dedicated to the bishop's seat, while at Qirqbāza (Qirqbize) it was placed in the center of the nave.³¹⁶

The church scheme demonstrates a single nave pierced by two entrances on the south wall. The eastern door is more adorned than the western one.³¹⁷ The scheme is concluded with a square apse on an elevated platform, spanned with a triumphal arch. Subsequently, this was converted into a curtain wall beside decorative columns as well as doorways (Fig. 26).³¹⁸ A stone barrier connecting the bema and the nave carrying rich decoration such as discs, and cross frames that faced the wooden iconostasis is also notable (Fig. 27).³¹⁹ The altar is supplied with light through three narrow windows. Furthermore, there is an entrance on the south permitting access to “martyrium”.³²⁰ Besides, two entrances are placed on the southern wall for men and women in accordance with the tradition of the fourth century.³²¹

³¹³ Milburn, 1988, p. 125

³¹⁴ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū‘at baṭraḳiyyat ‘Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 111

³¹⁵ Makhūl, 2000, p. 189

³¹⁶ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū‘at baṭraḳiyyat ‘Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 114

³¹⁷ Ibid

³¹⁸ Milburn, 1988, p. 125

³¹⁹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū‘at baṭraḳiyyat ‘Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 115

³²⁰ Milburn, 1988, p. 125

³²¹ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 74

Remarkably, this church obtains five splendid embellishment reliquaries to preserve the remains of saints and martyrs found in (martyrium /prothesis), three of which date from the fifth century,³²² while the other two attributed to the sixth century.³²³

In the wake of the earthquake in 530, the entrance of the church was rebuilt, and a new chamber was reconstructed for martyrs close to the one in the church.³²⁴ Furthermore, a burial ground was added and an aisle appeared in the south presumably used as the bishop's accommodation.³²⁵ There were no pews in this church hall.³²⁶ Generally speaking, this church is characterized by plainness which is evident in the lack of external decorations.³²⁷

Undoubtedly, this church represents a primitive yet essential point for all churches in this area over the following centuries. Thus, all these transformations gradually manifested the development phases resembling the houses, thereafter modifications were added according to the liturgical orderings.³²⁸

It is believed that over this period that architects were inspired by residential construction than by temples. Hence, most of the churches in this region have a yard surrounded by walls probably employed for accommodation or a baptistery.³²⁹

Moreover, hereunder the church examples which resemble Qirqbīza church with a single nave: Ma'ramāyā (Ma'aramyya), il-Ishrūq (al-Ishruq), Nūriyyah (Nuriyye), Bāmūqqā (Bamuqqa), Surqāniyā (Surqanya), and Juwāniyyeh churches. On the other hand, Nūriyyah (Nuriyye) and Bā'ūda (Ba'uda) churches show a longer sanctuary to serve an additional element is the apse which manifested for the first time.³³⁰

³²² Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 79

³²³ Makhūl, 2000, p. 190

³²⁴ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 79

³²⁵ Makhūl, 2000, p. 190

³²⁶ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 79

³²⁷ Ibid, p. 114

³²⁸ Ibid, p. 81

³²⁹ al-Karīm, 2011, p. 40

³³⁰ Pena, 1997, p. 63

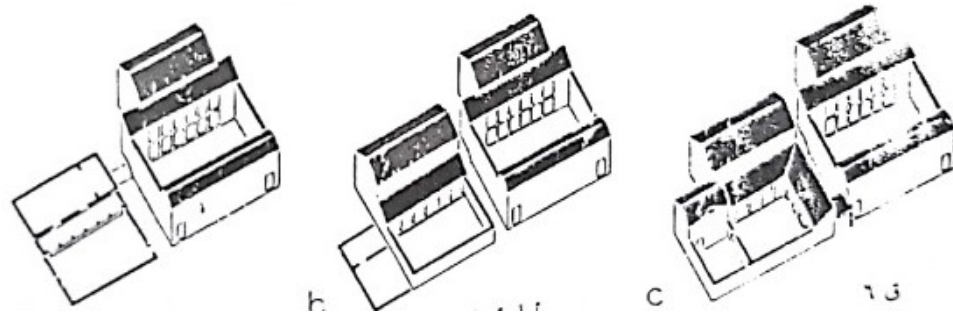


Fig. 25 The figure displays the development phases over three centuries (right to left) :3rd-4th-6th with the adjoining villa, cutaway view of the church, bema, cistern, iconostasis, two south doors, (*Athanāsiyū*, 1997, p. 78)

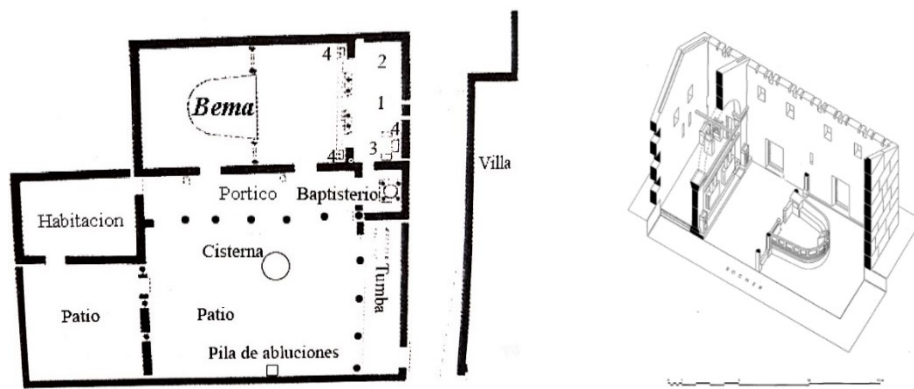


Fig. 26 Qirqbīza (Qirqbize) Church plan showing the following: 1- Altar, 2- Diaconicon, 3- Martyrium, 4- Reliquaries, (*Castellana & Fernandez*, 2014, p. 74). Reconstruction model of Qirqbīza house Church, (*Tchalenko*, *Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1*, 1980, pp. 235-236).

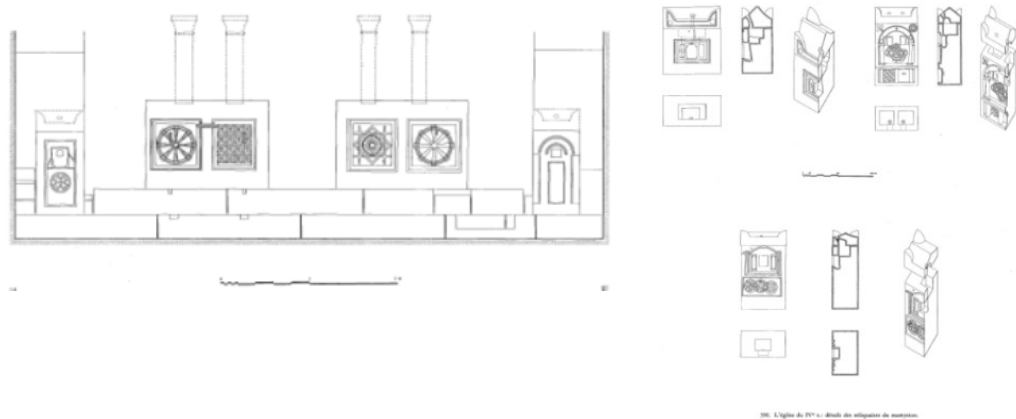


Fig. 27 Christian symbols on the chancel screen. Reconstruction of the reliquaries, (*Tchalenko*, *Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1*, 1980, p. 237)

- **Bānqūsā (Banqusa) Church, northern church:**

Two churches in Bānqūsā (Banqusa) city belong to Jabal Barisha. It is believed that the northern church predates the southern church, which was established in the sixth century.³³¹

The northern church is deemed one of the largest and most ancient churches erected in northern Syria. This church is believed to have been constructed as a church/ house or a transformation from a pagan temple. Notably, two different dates can be observed on the frame of the entrances, mainly 349, and 352, which indicates that the church dates back to the mid-fourth century.³³²

Its layout is rectangular including three aisles; the middle is wider than the two lateral ones. The church plan ends with an east apse flanked by two small chambers to the north and south, outwardly appearing as a linear wall. Additionally, two rows of six columns split the plan into seven bays.³³³ The presence of stones probably belongs to bema in the nave.³³⁴ On the ground floor, six windows are distributed on the northern and southern sides. On the upper level, eleven windows are positioned on each side (Fig. 28).³³⁵

Remarkably, the capital of the columns bears several Christian symbols as well as the chancel screen such as the cross, the fish, and the wine vase chrism. It is thought that the chancel screen is ascribed to the subsequent period of the church's date.³³⁶ The church has a martyrium and a reliquary.³³⁷ Concerning the adornments, no evidence was shown. It is worth mentioning that a square baptistery and the founder of the church's tomb were added later.³³⁸

³³¹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 231

³³² Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 26

³³³ *Ibid*

³³⁴ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 141

³³⁵ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 231

³³⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 26

³³⁷ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 231

³³⁸ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 26

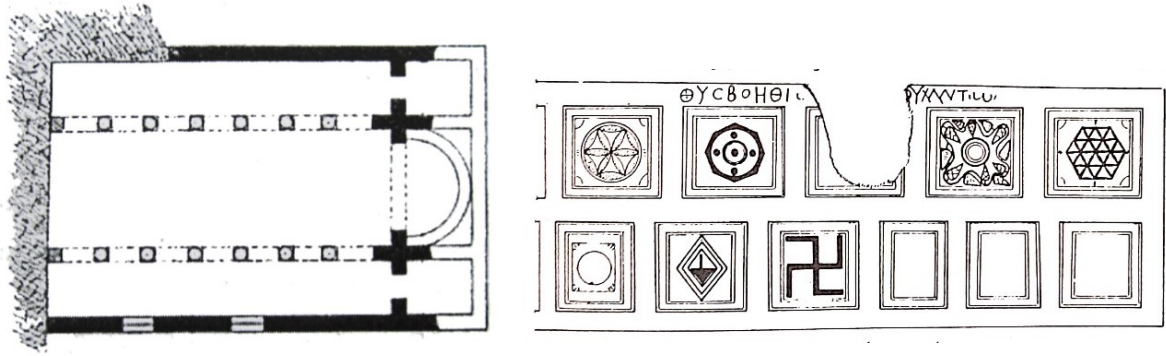


Fig. 28 Bānqūsā (Banqusa) church plan on the right, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 150*) and to the left is the chancel screen of the church, (*Athanāsiyū, 1997, p. 234*)

- **Sinkhār (Sinkhar) Church:**

Sinkhār (Sinkhar) Church exists in Jabal Simon.³³⁹ Its plan shows a quite clear definite oblong form compared to other churches. The church illustrates an equivalent basilica type consisting of a nave and two aisles divided into six bays by two lines of columns. There is a deep apse positioned in the east accompanied by two protruding internal sidewalls (Fig. 29). The columns are characterized by their limited length and thickness.³⁴⁰ Notably, Ionic order is discerned in most of the columns' capitals, yet one of them displays the Doric type.³⁴¹

A square chamber is placed on the north side of the apse allowing access to the northern aisle through a door. On the plan, the southern one presents itself as more expanded and protrusive towards the east, possessing two means of access: a door leading to the apse and an arch to the south aisle (Fig. 30). In addition, there is a southern door permitting access to the baptistery or a chapel located to the southeast, which is believed to date back to the sixth century. Moreover, the bema is placed in the middle of the nave distinguished by a semicircular form and dedicated to performing the first part of the liturgy by clergy.³⁴²

The church has three entrances on the south wall. The middle entrance is of particular interest as it carries an engraving of "a six-cross", which symbolizes the 'monogram of

³³⁹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-milādī* (Vol. IV),, 1997, p. 548

³⁴⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 30-31

³⁴¹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-milādī* (Vol. IV),, 1997, p. 548

³⁴² Ibid

Christ'.³⁴³ It is important to note that a chapel on the southeast side of the church is attributed to the sixth century.

In terms of roofing, the entire structure has a gable roof, while the eastern part has a semi-dome.³⁴⁴

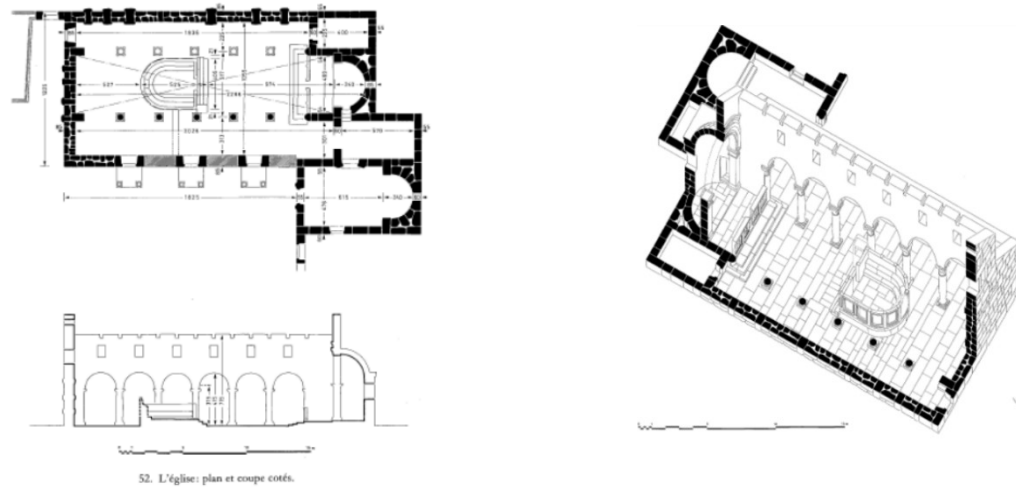


Fig. 29 Sinkhār (Sinkhar) Church plan and its chapel and reconstruction model of the church, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 22*

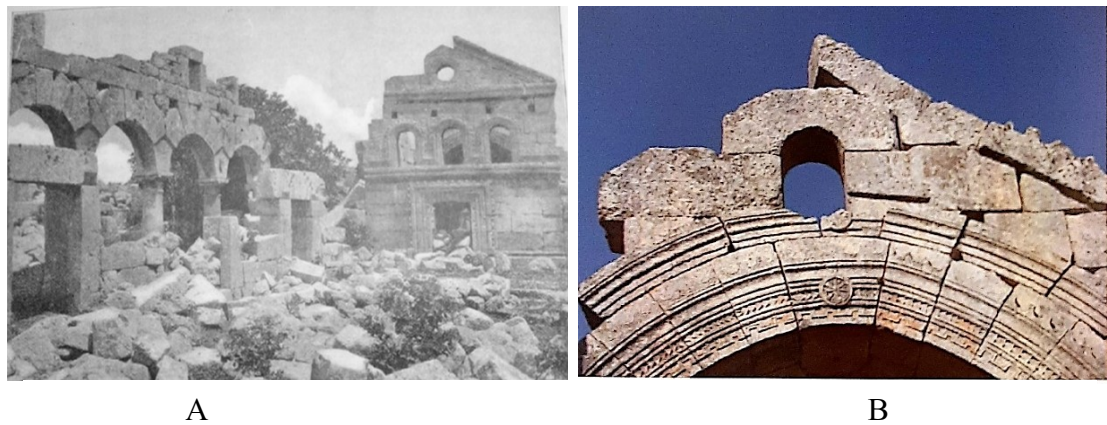


Fig. 30. A. A View showing Sinkhār Church, (*Butler, 1929, p. 30*). B. The triumph arch of the church, (*Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 272*).

- **Burj Ḥaydar (Burj Heidar):**

³⁴³ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 31

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*

The church is placed to the southeast of a tower and another church dates back to the sixth century at Jabal Simon.³⁴⁵ It is worth mentioning that monk ‘Li‘āzar’ lived there according to a Syriac inscription discovered on the east wall of the tower Burj Ḥaydar (Burj Heidar).³⁴⁶ There is also a Greek inscription ending with a cross observed on the western door of the south wall.³⁴⁷

The church is oriented to the east. Its blueprint shows basilica features: a nave, two side aisles, and an east apse. There are two rows of five columns carrying six arches. In addition, there is a square chamber (diaconicon) to the north of the apse. However, the form of the martyrium is noticeably unfamiliar, ending with an apse in the south with three entrances (Fig. 31). One of these entrances is an arch leading to the south aisle. Concerning the church openings, two doors with horizontal lintels are positioned on the south wall preceded by a portico of columns.³⁴⁸ The semicircular windows are pierced on the upper level. In addition, there are two windows placed in the apse while the west wall has three windows.³⁴⁹ What is more, the bema and martyrium were added in the sixth century.³⁵⁰

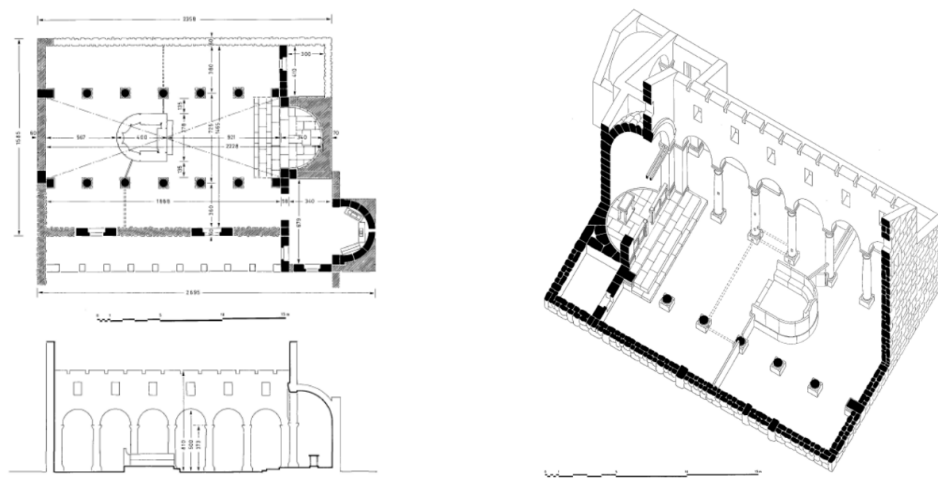


Fig. 31 Plan of Burj Ḥaydar (Burj Heidar) Church and its reconstruction model, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archæologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 383*)

³⁴⁵ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 32

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*

³⁴⁷ Makhūl, 2000, p. 82

³⁴⁸ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū‘at baṭrakiyyat ‘Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 502

³⁴⁹ Kennedy, 2016, p. 5

³⁵⁰ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū‘at baṭrakiyyat ‘Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 502

- **Kharāb Shams (Kharab Shams) Church:**

One of the significant archaeological church examples is Kharāb Shams (Kharab Shams), which is located in Jabal Simon.³⁵¹ Kharāb Shams (Kharab Shams) village prospered in the pagan period as well as between the fourth and sixth centuries (Christian period). The church dates to the fourth century. It is interesting to note that this church was turned into a fort in the tenth century (Muslim conquest).³⁵²

The layout of the church shows a basilica plan divided into a nave and two side aisles by two rows of columns supporting five broad and high arches.³⁵³ The church features an east semicircular apse, flanked by two side rooms. When observed from the exterior, the straight wall of the apse is visible (Fig. 32). The church is distinguished by the altar fence with its splendid decoration.³⁵⁴ There is a bema placed in the middle of the central nave, concluding with a semicircular west end.

Furthermore, five doors are distributed as follows: two on the northern and southern sides, and one on the western side. A portico precedes the western façade including eight columns and seven openings.³⁵⁵ Numerous rectangular windows are found on the north side of the clerestory, their shape resembling that of the fourth century. Whereas those on the south side have an arcuate shape, which is recognized as a type of possible renovation adapting the architectural style of the fifth century.³⁵⁶ In addition, the apse has two windows.³⁵⁷

With regards to the roofing method, a timber roof covers the entire church except the apse, roofed with a half dome, while the covering of the side chambers is a slab roof because of the extension of the aisle roof (Fig. 32) (Fig. 33).³⁵⁸

It is remarkable that the western part of this church gives the same impression of Ruwayḥa (Ruweiha) Church. However, Kharāb Shams' ratio appears narrower and higher in addition to the existence of a single portal. There are windows at both ends of the aisles, three of

³⁵¹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 516

³⁵² Makhūl, 2000, p. 82

³⁵³ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 32

³⁵⁴ Makhūl, 2000, p. 82

³⁵⁵ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 222

³⁵⁶ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 518

³⁵⁷ Makhūl, 2000, p. 82

³⁵⁸ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 33

which have an arcuate form in the western façade, while in Ruwayḥa (Ruweiha) Church, the windows are small and rectangular. One of them is placed on the upper level and two are pierced in the pediment.³⁵⁹

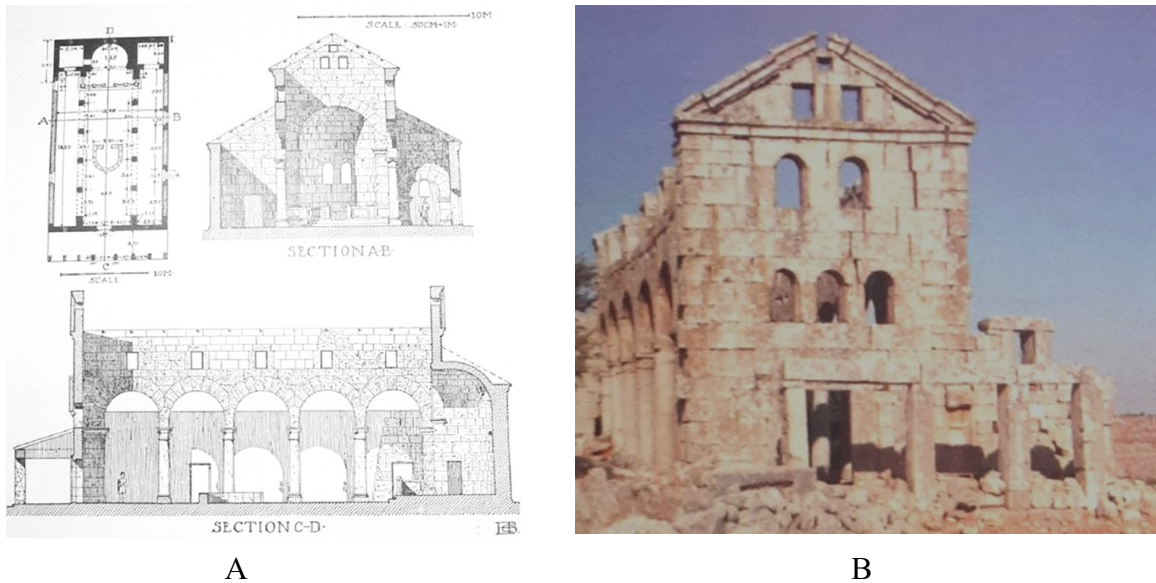


Fig. 32 Plan and section of Kharāb Shams, (Butler, 1929, p. 32). B. Exterior view showing the main west entrance, (Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 223).



Fig. 33 Exterior view facing south-west, (Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 226)

- **Fārfartīn (Fafertin), the Holy Apostles Church:**

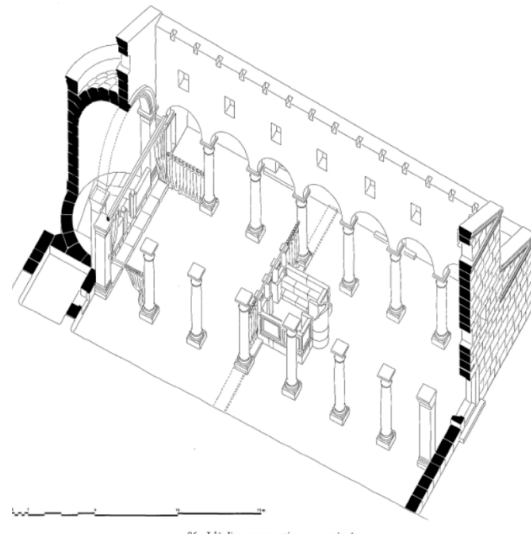
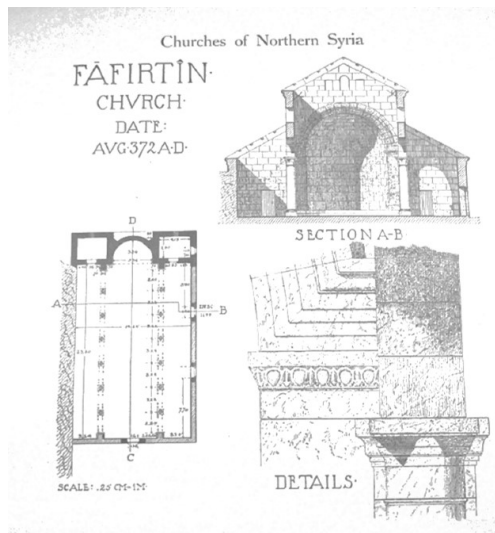
Fārfartīn (Fafertin) is situated in Jabal Simon. It is deemed one of the earliest-dated churches in northern Syria. The church was built in 372 in accordance with the Greek

³⁵⁹ Ibid

engraving found on the eastern door of the south wall.³⁶⁰

Overall, the church follows the conventional basilica plan in this region: a nave and two aisles terminated with an east apse.³⁶¹ The two rows of columns divide the church into seven bays. It is remarkable that the two side chambers have doors leading to the side aisles. It is thought that the southern chamber was primarily utilized for the performance of offerings and liturgical services that were traditionally executed by deacons.³⁶² The columns of this church show Doric Tuscan styles. Furthermore, the apse is decorated with four bands (Fig. 34) (Fig. 35).³⁶³

Two entrances are placed on the southern and one on the western wall.³⁶⁴ The windows are pierced in the wall of the middle aisle taking a square form surmounted by an arch. Generally, the windows and doors are rectangular showing little to no decoration or adornments.³⁶⁵



³⁶⁰ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-milādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 574

³⁶¹ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 34

³⁶² Balderstone, 2007, p. 12

³⁶³ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-milādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 574

³⁶⁴ Balderstone, 2007, p. 12

³⁶⁵ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 34

Fig. 34 Plan and section of Fārfartīn (Fafertin) Church, (*Butler, 1929, p. 33*). B. Reconstruction model church, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 45*).



Fig. 35 Interior and Exterior view of east apse, (*Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 189*)

- **Kfr Nabū (Kafr Nabu) Church:**

The church, which is located in Jabal Simon, was built in 398. Kfr Nabū (Kafr Nabu) Church is considered the first church that was part of the Pagan temple.³⁶⁶ The plan comprises 2 to 3. It consists of a nave, two narrow aisles, and seven bays. The plan ends with a deep east apse and two square side chambers whereas the north one has only one access to the apse. Externally, the east end shows a linear wall. Two entrances of this church are on the southern wall and one on the west (Fig. 36). The columns of this church demonstrate the Ionic order like the common types throughout this early period. Decoration does not exist.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 492

³⁶⁷ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 34

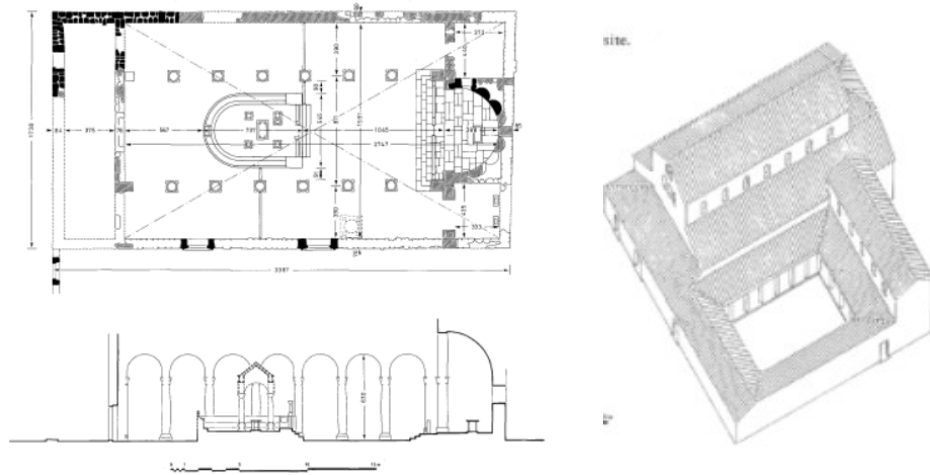


Fig. 36 Kfr Nabū Kafr Nabu Church plan and its section and reconstruction model, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaelogie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, pp. 81-82*).

- **Bāṭūṭa (Babutta) Church:**

The church was constructed at the end of the fourth century and is ascribed to Jabal Barisha. It is directed to the East. The plan of this church displays a conventional basilica form consisting of a nave and two aisles, including five bays. The form of the apse is a half-circle pierced with an arched window, while externally it shows a straight wall. Both chambers surrounding the apse have access to the side aisles.³⁶⁸ There is a bema in the middle of the nave. Moreover, the most intriguing attribute of this church is the variety of capital types of the columns, such as Corinthian, Tuscan, and Ionic ones. Besides, the arch of the apse takes a horseshoe shape. The windows are rectangular in shape, accompanied by jambs and lintels.³⁶⁹ The doors, on the other hand, are merely on the southern façade (Fig. 37).³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīḳhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 474

³⁶⁹ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 34

³⁷⁰ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 164

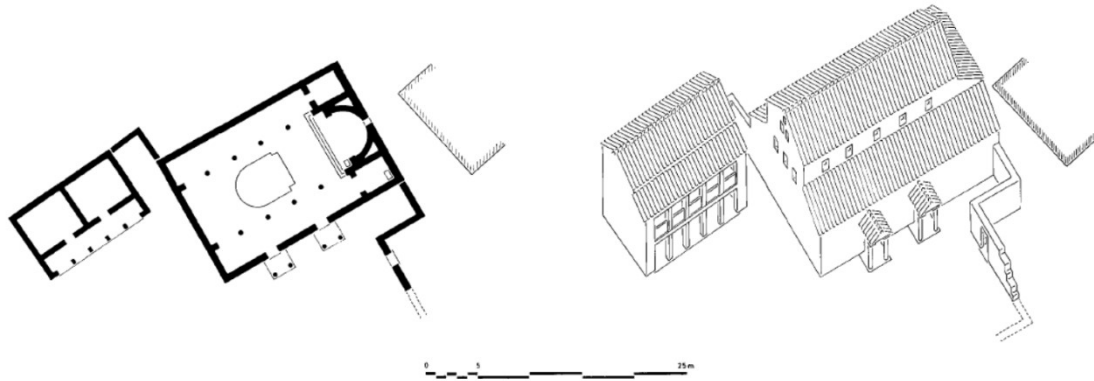


Fig. 37 Plan of Bātūṭa (Babutta) Church and its perspective, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, pp. 33-34*).

- **Brād (Brad) Cathedral, Julianos Church:**

Brād (Brad) is considered the second significant city after Antioch “the capital of first Syria”.³⁷¹ This edifice is located in Jabal Simon.³⁷² Butler contemplated that the importance of Brād Cathedral lies in being the largest church in northern Syria, except for St. Simon Church bestowed the term cathedral. Owing to the resemblance of the Doric apse columns carrying egg-motif engravings, it is thought that the church was built simultaneously with Fārfartīn (Fafertin) Church 372.³⁷³ It is worth pointing out that the cathedral was a pagan temple before it was turned into a church built by Julianos.³⁷⁴

However, based on Tchalenko’s view, the church was built at the end of the fourth century 399/402. Supportive evidence for this hypothesis of the exact date of the church construction was on the adorned lintel near the western door: The Greek inscriptions carry the date 402. Moreover, thirteen additional Greek inscriptions are perceived in the church: Nine of which surmount the arch, and one is above the western portico. Besides, there is another one placed on the mosaic ground of the martyrium joined to the north wall carrying the names of the donors. It is remarkable that the names of the architects Danial and Julianos, are also found in the inscriptions.³⁷⁵

³⁷¹ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 281

³⁷² Athanāsiyū, Mawsū‘at baṭrakiyyat ‘Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-milādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 481

³⁷³ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, pp. 34-35

³⁷⁴ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 282

³⁷⁵ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū‘at baṭrakiyyat ‘Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-milādī (Vol. IV), 1997, pp. 484-488

In the wake of the earthquake, which resulted in measurable destruction in the church, the west wall and numerous columns and chambers connected to the apse remained intact. It was difficult to redesign the plan of this church.³⁷⁶

Concerning the layout, it represents a basilica plan consisting of two side aisles and one wider nave split by two rows of columns. The east wide apse is placed between two rectangular chambers. The chamber in the north has two doors; one of which leads to the apse and aisle, while the chamber in the south has only one door opening to the south aisle. The apse is pierced with three arcuate windows.³⁷⁷ The bema is positioned in the middle of the nave.³⁷⁸ Besides, an atrium is situated to the south provided with columns on its three sides (Fig. 38). It is believed that the existing two portals on the northern and southern sides and the chapel on the northern side were attached in a later period.³⁷⁹ Strikingly, it is believed that this church, with its width, represents a typical Syrian church type (Fig. 39).³⁸⁰ Remarkably, a columnar narthex precedes the western façade of the cathedral.³⁸¹ As for the openings, an approximate number of 18 windows are found on both sides of the nave. On the southern wall, there are three doors, each of which is preceded by a small square portico. On the northern wall, however, there are merely two doors. Additionally, three entrances are placed on the western façade, and the middle one is wider than the two lateral ones.³⁸²

The existing tomb on the north side of the apse is most likely dedicated to Saint Maroun.³⁸³ Hence, at the beginning of the fifth century, a martyrium of St. Maroun (square plan) was built after constructing the church to keep the relics properly. Its plan has one aisle ending with an east apse. Columns of the pagan temple were reused in this martyrium. It has one entrance leading to the north chamber. The southern room attached to the apse contains the reliquaries, still preserved in the same place. Not to mention, there are two

³⁷⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 34

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*

³⁷⁸ Balderstone, 2007, p. 12

³⁷⁹ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 35

³⁸⁰ Milburn, 1988, p. 125

³⁸¹ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 35

³⁸² Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 35

³⁸³ al-Karīm, 2011, p. 87

entrances positioned in the western and northern walls. The whole outwardly east façade illustrates a straight wall.³⁸⁴

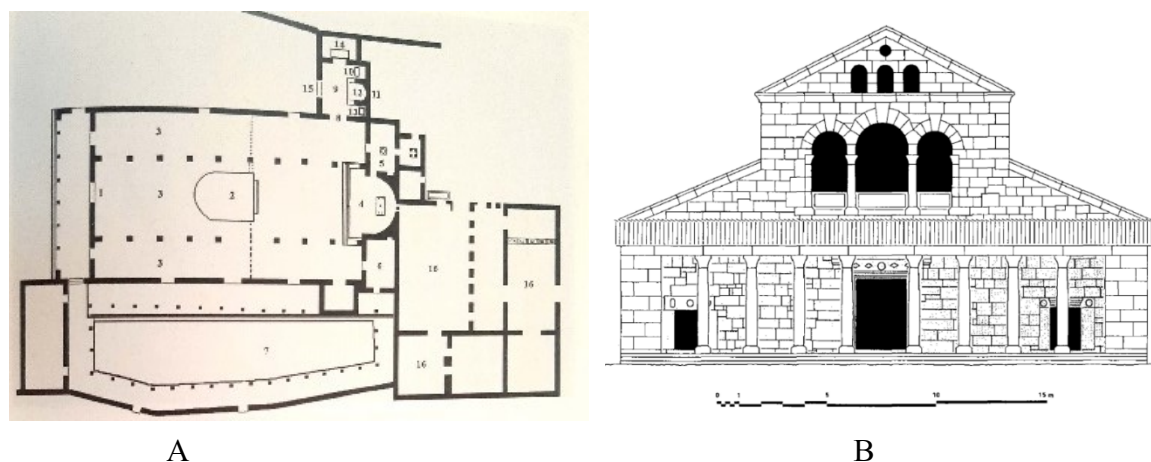


Fig. 38 A. 1. West gate, 2. The bema, 3. The three naves, 4. The presbiterium, 5. The diaconicon 6. The southern martyrion, 7. The southern courtyard, 8. The triumphal arch and the north martyrion, 9. North martyrion, 10. Space between the small apse and north wall of the martyrion, 11. East outer wall of the north martyrion, 12. The apse of the martyrion (where the relics of the martyrs were kept), 13. Space between the small apse and the north wall of the cathedral (where reliquary of Saint Mārūn was kept), 14. Place added in the middle ages to accommodate a sarcophagus, 15. West gate of the martyrion, 16. Rooms for the benefit of the church, (*Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 285*). B. The main façade of the cathedral, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 33*).

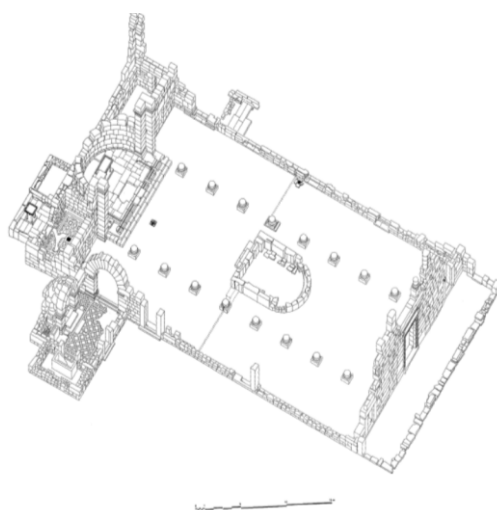


Fig. 39 A remodelling of the cathedral, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 11*)

³⁸⁴ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV),, 1997, p. 591

- **Bā'ūda (Ba'uda) Church:**

Based on the Greek engravings shown on the lintel of the southwestern entrance, the church dates to 392.³⁸⁵ The scheme of this church is characterized by three aisles terminated with a rectangular apse. Two side chambers surround the apse (martyrium in the south and diaconicon in the north). The church is provided with two southern doors (Fig. 40).³⁸⁶ It is argued that nave proportions changed entirely, short-nave churches were not unusual in the fifth and sixth centuries.³⁸⁷

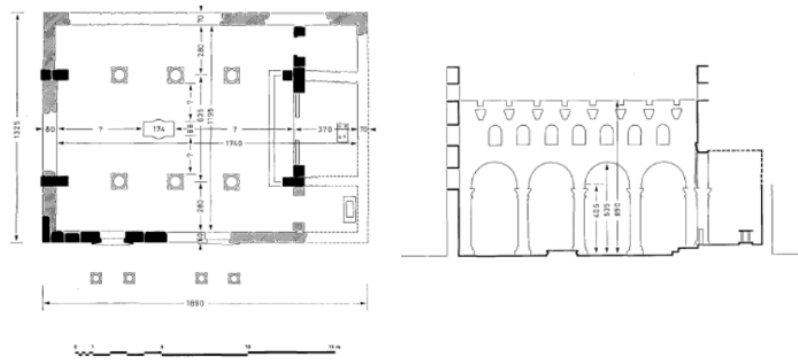


Fig. 40 Bā'ūda (Ba'uda) Church plan and section, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 188*).

- **Sirjillā (Serjilla) Church:**

This church is located in Jabal al- Zawiyye and is one of the most significant examples exhibiting the development phases of construction over three centuries. On the other hand, in the late phase of the Muslim conquest, a small mosque was built in this religious ensemble; a mihrab was built in the south wall ascribed to the Mamluk period.³⁸⁸

The church dates to the end of the fourth century. Initially, the plan of the church starts with a portico leading to the main nave, which was divided in the north into two separate parts for men and women. The east apse showed a straight wall externally. In addition, there was a choir in the east of the apse, with two side chambers distributed on both sides of the altar.³⁸⁹ In the fifth century, a variety of modifications were carried out. Two doors on the

³⁸⁵ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 172

³⁸⁶ Athanāsīyū, *Mawsū'at baṭraḳīyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV),, 1997, p. 198

³⁸⁷ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 37

³⁸⁸ Layla, 2010, p. 88

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 87

north side with a colonnade in front serve as demonstrations of these changes. The new plan obtains a divided nave of five bays terminating with a protruding profound apse, where two side chambers flank it. Furthermore, three rectangular windows are shown, comparable to those in the Sinkhār Church over this phase.³⁹⁰ The entire apse became one axis of the main hall. While the function of the two side chambers has been switched: the north one was devoted to the martyr. Moreover, a new room was added in the east leading to the hallway, which served the three upper rooms and the internal square. Lastly, the whole building was enlarged toward the south in the third phase of the church in the sixth century. There is a nave and two side aisles, and the east was added including Naos. The chamber of martyrs increased in size in the north (Fig. 41).³⁹¹



Fig. 41 To the left Sırjillā (Serjilla) Church plan in the fourth century, and to the right the modification in the sixth century, (*Layla*, 2010, p. 88).

³⁹⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 59

³⁹¹ Layla, 2010, p. 88

III.2.2 Churches in the Fifth Century

It is intriguing to highlight the group that consists of four remarkable churches: Bābsqā (**Babisqa**), Ksījah (Keseijbe), Saint Paul and Moses Church at Dār Qītā (Dar Qita), Qaṣr al-Banāt (Qaser al-Banat) great convent. These churches date back to the first half of the fifth century and are located in Jabal Barisha.

The structures were executed by the same architect Markianos Kyris. However, the name Markianos Kyris had been inscribed differently, as Kyros shown in the engraving of Dār Qītā (Dar Qita) church dates 418 and Kyios is at Qaṣral-Banāt (Qaser al-Banat). The appearance of different names indicates the difficulty of using Greek characters and engraving on stones.³⁹²

Hereunder, several churches that belong to the fifth century (Fig. 42).

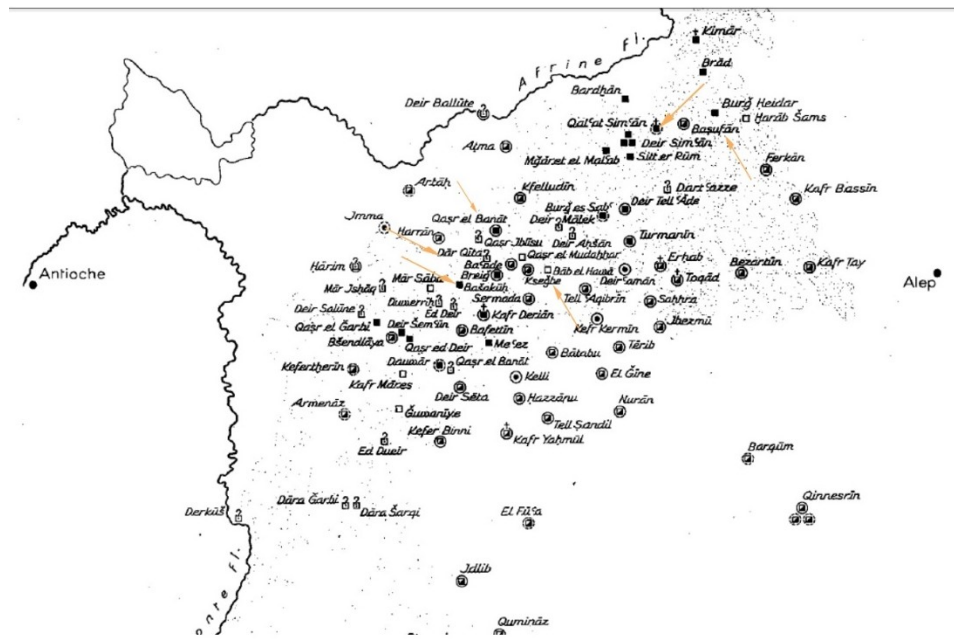


Fig. 42 A map illustrating location of churches of the fifth century, by the author after (Tchalenko, *Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1*, 1980, p. 136).

- **Bābisqā (Babisqa) Church: East church 401**

Bābisqā city is considered one of the ancient cities existing in Jabal Barisha. It possesses two main churches: the eastern church ascribed to the fifth century, and the other

³⁹² Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 47-50

one to the sixth century.³⁹³ Regarding the inscription found on the lintel of the east door in the southern wall, this church was erected between 390 and 410 by Markianos Kyris (presbyter and architect).³⁹⁴

However, the church bears different inscriptions such as the following: 401 found on the lintel of the eastern door on the southern wall, Greek engraving on the eastern lintel in the courtyard of the church carries the date 438, 452 is shown overhead of the lintel window on the western façade, and other ones on this façade: 456 and 529. According to these various dates, the church had been developed over these two centuries: in 390 the eastern door was carried out by bishop and architect Markianos. Thereafter, in 401, the church was established, and the engraving of his name was on the lintel of the eastern door in the south façade. In the year 480, the baptistery was marked with its great door erected by another designer due to the dissimilarities in the drawings and oriental details of this entrance and the lateral two in the church made by Markianos.³⁹⁵

This church is considered one of the distinctive churches in this group due to its size compared to the two lateral churches located in Bābisqā city. It is remarkable that the middle aisle tended to be wider than in the fourth century. Its layout obviously shows three aisles, the middle one is the widest. These three aisles are separated by two rows of seven columns carrying six arches on both sides. The church has similarities with Fārfartīn (Fafertin) Church, which belonged to 372, because of a prominent semicircular apse between two square side chambers. The north chamber (diaconicon) is accessible by an arch connected to the aisle. Likely, this arch or the walls carrying the date 143 were derived from a pagan temple.³⁹⁶ The chamber, which is dedicated to martyrs, has two reliquaries. The bema is placed in the middle of the central aisle (Fig. 43).³⁹⁷

As the church has three entrances, it is believed that this church was devoted to pilgrims as well as a martyr shrine (martyrium).³⁹⁸ Moreover, the southeast entrance on the south façade

³⁹³ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 164

³⁹⁴ Makhūl, 2000, p. 173

³⁹⁵ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 168

³⁹⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 47-49

³⁹⁷ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 164

³⁹⁸ *Ibid*

is more decorative than the southwest one, most likely because this entrance was used for the celebration of communion and also used by men. Whereas the southwest was dedicated to women.³⁹⁹ Hence, these differences between the entrances were common in northern Syria.

The paintings, symbols, and engravings are seen on most church walls. Not to mention that the baptistery represents one of the most outstanding and independent buildings in the entire Syria, appearing in the second half of the fifth century.⁴⁰⁰ The engraving and decoration on the western door of the baptistery is one of the most impressive comparable in the limestone region.⁴⁰¹ The square baptistery is attached to the south side of the church.⁴⁰²

Given the external features of this church, the rich decorations on the south side wall give the same impression as the church of Saint Paul and Moses at Dār Qītā (Dar Qita).⁴⁰³

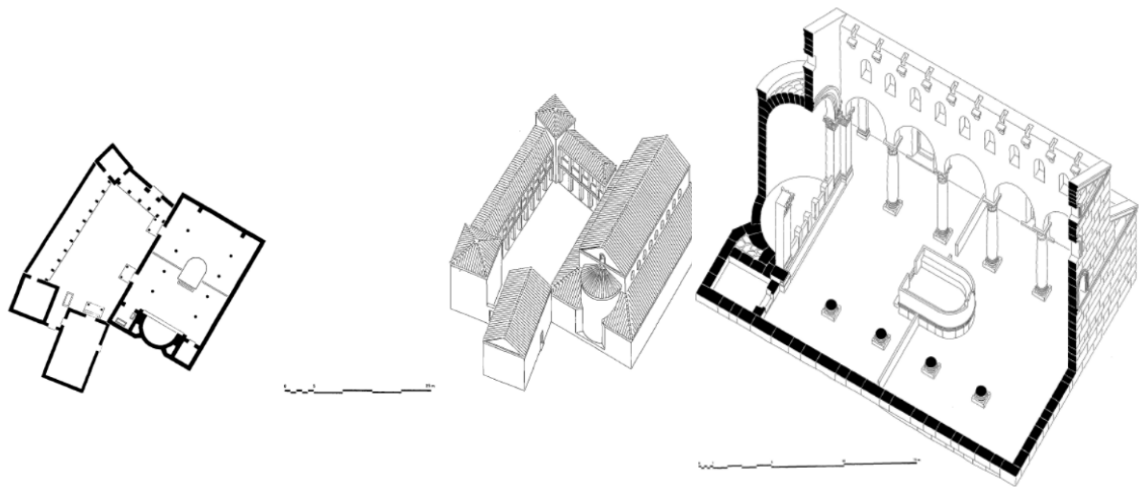


Fig. 43 Bābisqā Church plan and its reconstruction model, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archéologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, pp. 167-171*).

- **Ksījah (Keseijbe) Church: East church**

Ksījah is a city situated to the northeast of Jabal Barisha. Two churches are found: one belongs to the fifth century, and the other dates back to the sixth century. Moreover, there is a baptistery deemed the oldest one in Syria. The church is situated in the eastern part of this city, designed by Markianos Kyrus. The overall outline of the church and its

³⁹⁹ Ibid, p.173

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, p.164

⁴⁰¹ al-Khūrī, 2015, p. 59

⁴⁰² Makhūl, 2000, p. 174

⁴⁰³ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 49

decorative details both externally and internally resemble the previous churches in Bābisqā. According to the inscriptions identified on the lintel of the southwest door, it was built in 414.⁴⁰⁴ Another Greek inscription mentions the presbyter Bīzzūs and the architect Markianos Kyris.⁴⁰⁵

The church has a basilica plan with five bays ending in an east apse and showing a straight wall externally. Most apparently, the southern chamber is a prothesis pierced with three entrances: a door leads to the apse, the second to the southern aisle, and the final door opens to a small baptistry.⁴⁰⁶ There is also a burial chamber including a sarcophagus. The capitals of the columns exhibit a notable diversity, featuring Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian styles. There is a portal in front of the southern side of the church. Furthermore, the church has two reliquaries. To the south of the courtyard, there are remains of a building of two floors believed to be related to ecclesiastical accommodation (Fig. 44).⁴⁰⁷

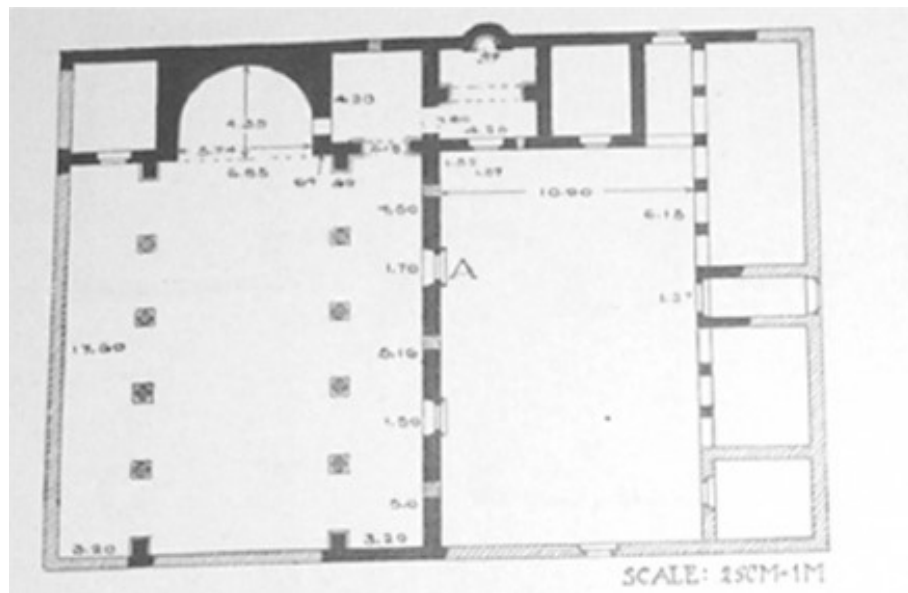


Fig. 44 Ksījah (**Keseijbe**)Church (east church) plan, (*Butler, 1929, p. 50*).

⁴⁰⁴ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 332

⁴⁰⁵ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 50

⁴⁰⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 49-50

⁴⁰⁷ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 332 4

- **Saint Paul and Moses Church at (Dar Qita) Dār Qītā, 418**

Dār Qītā possesses three churches: Saint Paul and Moses, constructed in 418 by Kyril, Sergius Church in 537 (showing diaconicon and prothesis chambers with towers), and the Holy Trinity Church dates back to the sixth century, as well as the baptistry.⁴⁰⁸

Saint Paul and Moses Church is located in the northern part of the city and is considered the main church. It is the third church built by Kyrillias and has the same characteristics as Bābisqā Church.⁴⁰⁹ There is an engraving on the lintel of the two straps as follows: “*One God and his Christ and the Holy Spirit. A vow to Paul and Moses: Diodoros presbyter: Kyros architect: 25th, of Loos in the 466th. (year) (August, 418 A.D)*”.⁴¹⁰

By and large, the layout of this church comprises three aisles and six bays ending with an elevated apse. The two side chambers and apse show an externally straight ending. The side aisles and two chambers are connected by two entries, respectively.⁴¹¹ The bema is placed in the middle of the nave.⁴¹² The windows on the side aisles and the clerestory feature arcuate lintels (Fig. 45).⁴¹³

The two magnificent doors with distinctive and picturesque ornamented straps are the most outstanding features of this church (Fig. 46). A belt of engraved decorations is shown that followed by acanthus leaves and twining vines. Notably, there were no entrances with particular embellishment features such as the ones in this church during this era in Syria. According to the captions, only two churches testified to this type of dating back over the next half century. One of them is situated at Bāqrhā (Baqirha- east church).⁴¹⁴

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, p 278

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid

⁴¹⁰ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 53

⁴¹¹ Ibid, p. 51

⁴¹² Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 278

⁴¹³ Butler, 1929, p. 51

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 51-52

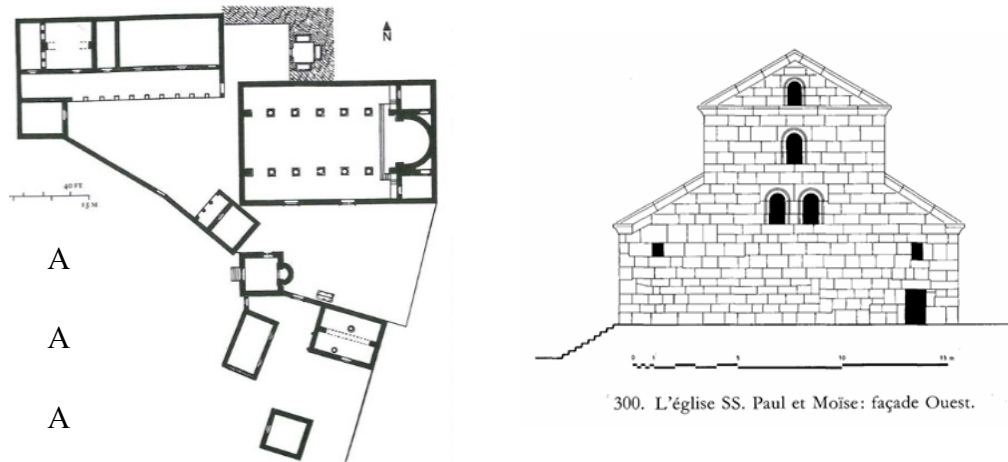


Fig. 45 Saint Paul and Moses Church at Dār Qītā plan, (*Krautheimer, 1986, p. 142*), and the eastern façade of the church, (*Tchalenko, 1980, p. 179*)



Fig. 46 A door of the southern façade of the church, (*Butler, 1929, p. 53*).

- **Great convent at Qaşr al-Banāt (Qaser al-Banat):**

The church was built in the fifth century by Markianos Kyrus, who was entombed there.⁴¹⁵

Its blueprint shows a nave, and two side aisles split by two rows of columns and seven bays. There is a bema discernible with a raised platform. The apse's north chamber has two doors that lead to the aisle and the convent. The southern chamber has merely one access to the south aisle. Most noticeably, the internal decorations are richer than in previous church examples made by the same architect Markianos Kyrus (Fig. 47).⁴¹⁶ Two entrances are

⁴¹⁵ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 450

⁴¹⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 54

distributed on the two side walls, and one on the western side is preceded by a portal, which was erected later.⁴¹⁷

According to the scholar Butler, there is an engraving mentioned as follows: “*O Christ help Kyrios (the) architect, in the fulfillment of a vow he built (the church); the same, having died, (his) tomb (is) in (the) apse*”.⁴¹⁸

Furthermore, on the higher level of the western façade, a distinguishing feature of an open loggia with a wide arch positioned in the center of two tight arches resting on smaller columns was accomplished. This brought to mind the western façade of Brād (Brad) Cathedral.

There is some disagreement over whether men or women used this monastery. Tchalenko assumed this monastery was dedicated to women due to the interior arrangement of the tower located on the north side of the church, which may have served as a nuns' residence.⁴¹⁹

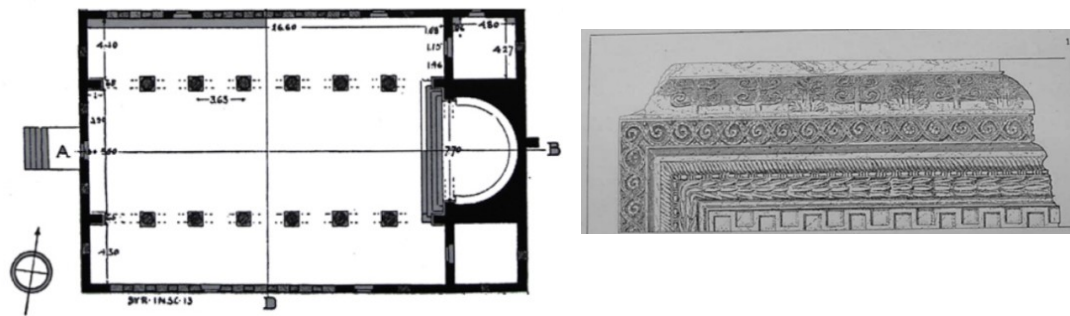


Fig. 47 Qaṣr al-Banāt Church plan, (Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 91) and to the left the lintel of the side door, Butler, 1929, p. 55).

- **Qal't Kālūtā (Qal'at Kalota):**

The church is located in the southwest of Kālūtā located in Jabal Simon. It is believed that at the exact place of the church, there were two pagan temples dedicated to Nabū. Hence, some structural parts of the pagan temples were exploited and shown in the church as follows: the northern side of the church extending from the north entrance to the west

⁴¹⁷ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 450

⁴¹⁸ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 54

⁴¹⁹ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 450

side of the diaconicon (has been maintained as it was before), the part preceding the stairs, and the western part from the west of the northern corner to the west entrance.⁴²⁰

Thus, it served as a pagan center in the second century before becoming a church in the fifth century.⁴²¹ However, due to the conflicts between the Byzantine and Aleppo rulers, the church was transformed into a castle.⁴²²

According to the plan, the church has three aisles and six arches resting on columns on both sides. Moreover, the east part consists of a semicircular apse, a diaconicon chamber is set up on the north and has two doors leading to the apse and northern aisle. The square martyrium chamber is located to the south of the apse and connected to the aisle by an arch (Fig. 48).

In terms of entrances, there are two entrances on the south, one door on the north and one on the west wall. Moreover, the four windows are distributed on the northern and southern façades above the arches, while two windows are positioned on the east facade.⁴²³ These two windows feature a round-topped, this type seems as one of the early double window examples.⁴²⁴ Still, the western facade has an arch situated above the lintel of the door. The roof was made up of wood and surmounted by a layer of brick.⁴²⁵

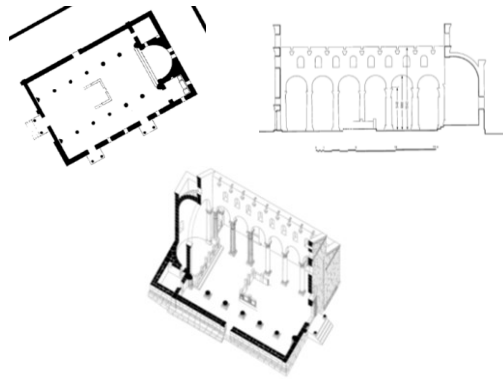


Fig. 48 Kālūtā (**Kalota**) Church plan, section and reconstruction model, (Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, pp. 125-126-129).

⁴²⁰ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-milādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 587

⁴²¹ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, pp. 55-56

⁴²² Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-milādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 586

⁴²³ Ibid

⁴²⁴ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 56

⁴²⁵ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-milādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 587

- **Saint Mary Church at Shīkh Slīmān (ash-Sheikh Sleiman):**

Shīkh Slīmān Church is deemed a significant antiquarian church in Syria, belonging to Jabal Simon.⁴²⁶ Remarkably, an inscription on the lintel of the northern entryway recalls the name of Saint Mary. However, evidence of the exact date of the church building has not been found. On the one hand, its proportions and arrangement are ascribed to the fourth century. Some indications allude to the fifth-century ecclesiastical style, such as the engravings and the ornamental features on the slabs of the chancel rail which correspond to the fifth-century lintel disc ornamentation. Moreover, the capitals of these columns are attributed to a time before the second half of the fifth century.⁴²⁷

The scheme exhibits an obvious basilica plan divided into three aisles: the middle one is broader than the lateral ones. There are two rows of five columns on both sides with the six arches resting on them. Except for two Ionic columns, the majority of the columns in this church are Corinthian style.⁴²⁸ Remarkably, the diaconicon chamber is connected to the apse and the aisle by doors and has two reliquaries (Fig. 49).⁴²⁹

With regards to the openings, 12 windows with arcuate lintels are distributed on the southern and northern walls.⁴³⁰ At the same time, five windows pierce the western wall: two above the door and three positioned in the composed triangle of the façade. Furthermore, the apse acquires two windows with straight tops. The church has two entrances on the southern wall, another one placed on the western one and one preceded by a portico of two columns on the northern wall (Fig. 49).⁴³¹ The western entrance is introduced by a narthex composed of four columns and is deemed the early example in northern Syria which shows the narthex on the western side.

The roof is demonstrated by a gable roof for the nave, a sloping one at both side aisles, and a semi-circular dome for the apse.⁴³²

⁴²⁶ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 556

⁴²⁷ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 58

⁴²⁸ Ibid

⁴²⁹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 556

⁴³⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 58

⁴³¹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 556

⁴³² Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 58

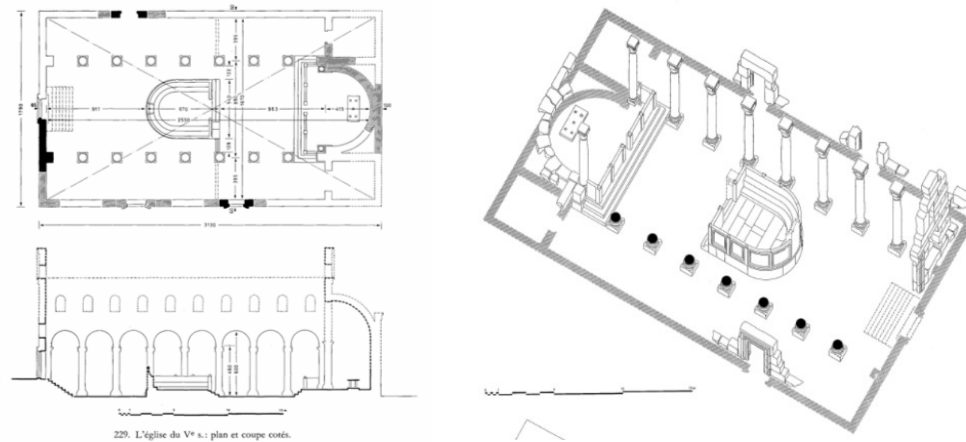


Fig. 49 Saint Mary Church at Shīkh Slīmān plan section and reconstruction model, (Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, pp. 125-126-129).

- **Mashabbak Church:**

Mashabbak church is situated in Jabal Simon and is ascribed to the second half of the fifth century (460).

Its layout perfectly illustrates a basilica type: the middle nave is wider than the two equal side ones. It is thought that the side aisles were used by women and the central aisle by men. The east apse is flanked by two square side chambers that comprise a straight wall outwardly. It is important to note that stairs are found in a carved rock on the church's northern side, presumably accessing the martyrs' relics.⁴³³ The columns are Corinthian and Ionic types. There are four entrances distributed: two on the southern side, one on the northern, and the main entrance on the western side. The most remarkable aspect of this church is its entrances carrying decorative details despite the destruction. There are porches surrounding the entrances covered with wood (Fig. 50).⁴³⁴

Based on Butler's view, the windows of this church are deemed as one of the ancient types that carried prominent frames resembling the coupled ones in Sīrjillā Bath dating to 473. The upper level of the church has nine arch openings excluding the ones on the second floor of the

⁴³³ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, pp. 608-609

⁴³⁴ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 63

Western façade. Furthermore, the apse is pierced by two windows, and the prothesis chamber has two as well.⁴³⁵

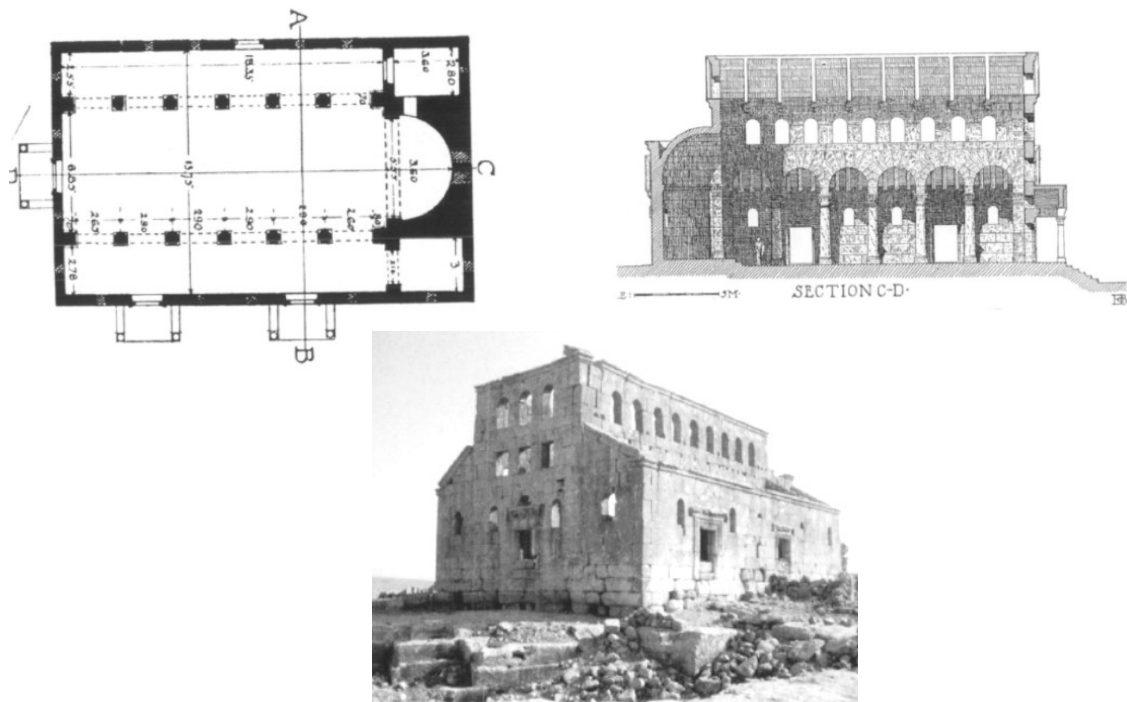


Fig. 50 Mashabbak Church plan, section, and exterior view from south-west, (*Kennedy, 2016, p. 9*).

- **St. Simon Monastery:**

St. Simon Stylites is highly renowned for his asceticism. He spent most of his time atop the column for 37 years until he died in 459.⁴³⁶ The body of St. Simon was brought to Antioch and put in the cathedral before being moved to Constantinople.⁴³⁷

As Butler describes St. Simon Church: “As all roads in northern Syria led to Qal‘at Simon, so does the history of Syrian architecture lead up to the building of the great church. The great cruciform church is unique in the history of architecture and is not only the most beautiful and important existing monument of architecture between the buildings of the Roman period of the second century and the great church of Hagia Sophia of Justinian's

⁴³⁵ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 63

⁴³⁶ Kennedy, 2016, p. 16

⁴³⁷ Balderstone, 2007, p. 30

time, but also is the most monumental Christian building earlier than the masterpieces of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in northern Europe”.⁴³⁸

Several efforts were expended to complete this large monument representing an essential ecclesiastical example.⁴³⁹ Emperor Zeno oversaw the construction of this massive pilgrimage cathedral between 474 and 479.⁴⁴⁰ Based on the scholar George Tchalenko, he establishes that the year 490 was the completion date of the church's construction.⁴⁴¹ Furthermore, the column in the center of a cruciform plan represents St. Simon residence as well as a pilgrimage place.⁴⁴²

It should be noted that the phases of carrying out this huge building are separated into two. The initial phase appears to have included a monastery and a small basilica with a single apse which was subsequently utilized as the monastery chapel. The pillar, which is positioned on the basilica's east-west axis to the west, was the original that St. Simon used as a place of residence.⁴⁴³ The scheme of St. Sam‘ān church is distinguished by its cruciform plan including four equivalent arms. Each arm depicts a “Syrian” basilica plan consisting of a central nave and two side aisles. Hence, an octagonal square is formed by meeting these four basilica arms. On the other hand, it is thought that the central octagon was roofless.⁴⁴⁴ Most striking, the East basilica plan terminates with three semicircular apses showing a slight extension than the other ones. Additionally, the east basilica plan shows a minor inclination away from a perfectly straight orientation (Fig. 51).⁴⁴⁵

Evidence suggests that a second phase of construction preceded the erection of the magnificent cruciform church, which features a central pillar. It is believed that this triple-apse basilica appears to have been erected first, linked to the earlier small basilica with a single apse. As the pillar is shown on the east-west orientation of the triple-apse basilica (Fig. 52) (Fig. 56).⁴⁴⁶

⁴³⁸ Kennedy, 2016, pp. 17-18

⁴³⁹ Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 1985, p. 48

⁴⁴⁰ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 145

⁴⁴¹ Hājār, 1995, pp. 28-30

⁴⁴² Milburn, 1988, p. 129

⁴⁴³ Balderstone, 2007, p. 31

⁴⁴⁴ Milburn, 1988, p. 129

⁴⁴⁵ Balderstone, 2007, p. 31

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid*

It is notable that the column constitutes three equal pieces “*in honor of the Trinity*” based on Butler’s view. It appears that this second phase was used to communicate a Nicaea viewpoint on the theological issue to the great number of visiting pilgrims. Then, if this is true, the basilica with its three apses and pillar were most likely built before St. Simon’s death; prior to 359. Not to mention that St. Simon is known to have advocated the Orthodox against the Monophysites. Another proof that could be considered is the diverse embellishment on the arches of the basilica with three apses and those on the arches encircling the octagonal marking the later period of the building.⁴⁴⁷ Then, three further basilicas were built to create a cruciform plan, while maintaining an octagonal courtyard around S. Simeon's column (Fig. 56).

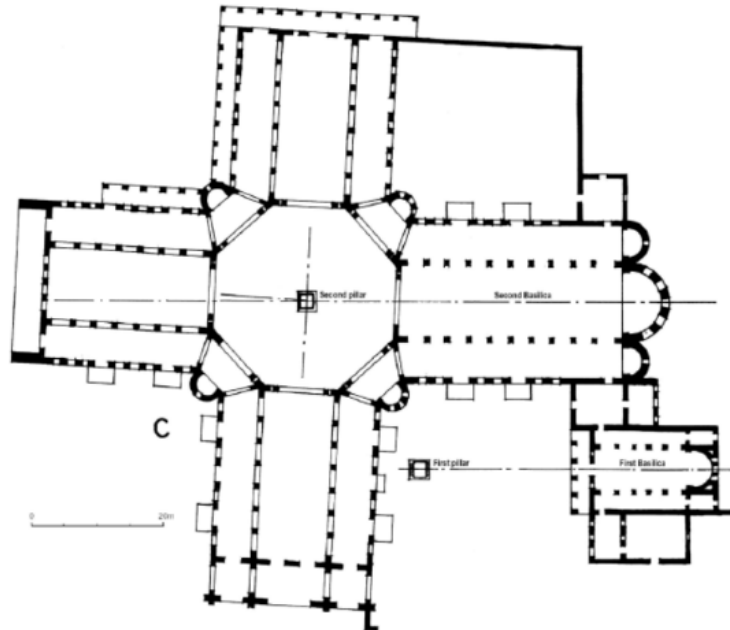


Fig. 51 St. Simon Monastery plan,(*Balderstone, 2007, p. 31*), and the Southern façade of church, (*Kennedy, 2016, p. 16*)

A portico with four columns and three unequal arches precedes the main magnificent south façade (Fig. 54). Each one is topped with a beautiful pediment. The four arms are covered by a gable roof. There is an argument concerning the dome, many scholars mentioned that the columns stand by themselves in the open air, while several archaeological research studies have affirmed there was a structure carrying a wooden roof

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid

above the octagon or a dome, which perhaps demolished in the wake of earthquakes at the beginning of the sixth century.⁴⁴⁸

Regarding the decorations of the octagonal square, it is notable that the Corinthian capitals are followed by acanthus leaves found in the entrance “bending leaves due to passing a breeze”, and the triumphal arch illustrates bands of embellishments (Fig. 52).⁴⁴⁹

Thus, this massive structure brought the functions together of serving a basilica and a martyr shrine as to celebrate the liturgy and dedicated to a considerable number of pilgrims (Fig. 53). St. Simon Church is therefore unique, and it is followed by a baptistery, a large monastery, hostels, and other structures.⁴⁵⁰

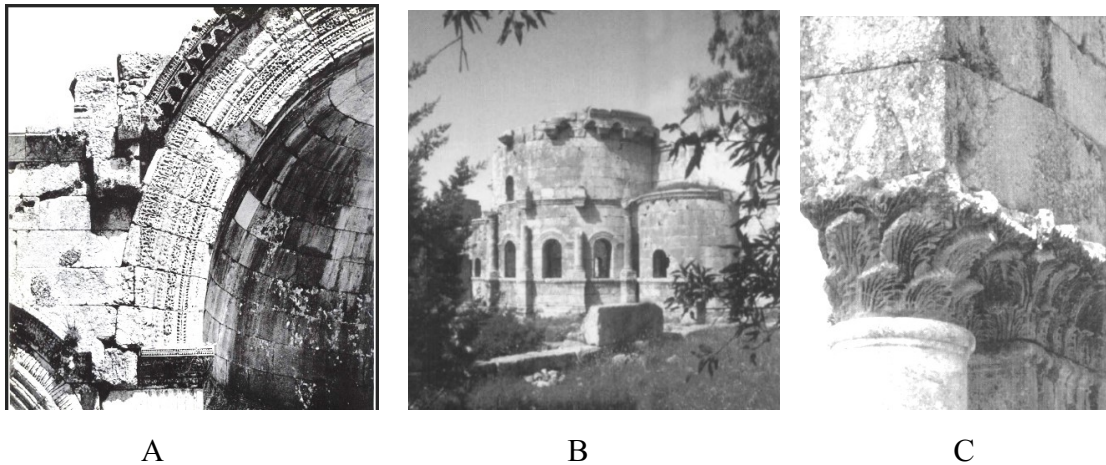


Fig. 52 A. B. Exterior view of the apses and ornamentals, (Mango, 1985, p. 4849 C. “windblow” acanthus leaves showing on capital of column, (Kennedy, 2016, p. 20)

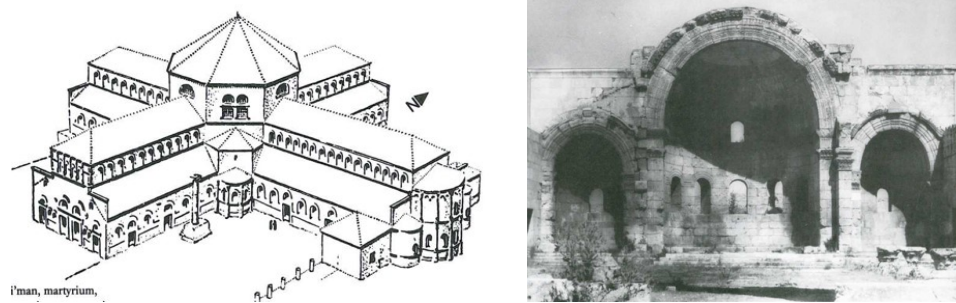


Fig. 53 A. Exterior reconstruction view, B. Interior view of apses, (Krautheimer, 1986, pp. 148-150)

⁴⁴⁸ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 570-579

⁴⁴⁹ Kennedy, 2016, p. 19

⁴⁵⁰ Milburn, 1988, p. 129



Fig. 54 The southern façade of the church, (*al-Karīm*, 2011, p. 76)



Fig. 55 View from the outside showing the remnants of St. Simon's pillar (*al-Karīm*, 2011, p. 76)



Fig. 56 Exterior view of the apses and ornamentals, (Darke, 2013)

- **Kalūtā (Kalota), East Church 492:**

This church dates back to the fifth century. Hence, the western façade generally belongs to the beginning of the fifth century. On the other hand, the embellishments appearing on the southern façade are rather ascribed to the middle of the sixth century.⁴⁵¹

Its blueprint shows a basilica plan including a nave and six bays. It terminates with an apse and two side chambers. However, the northern chamber obviously stretches. Perhaps, it was modified after carrying out the church.⁴⁵² This diaconicon chamber has two entrances: one to the northern aisle and the other permitting access to the apse. The southern chamber is identified as a martyrium opened to the southern aisle by an arch (Fig. 57).⁴⁵³ The apse roof is the most striking in this church, which features a half dome and strips of ornamental molding bordering the arched openings.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 67

⁴⁵² *Ibid*

⁴⁵³ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 578

⁴⁵⁴ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 67

The main entrance of the western façade is preceded by a porch covered by a wooden gable roof. The southern doors are also preceded by porches and are lavishly decorated; it is supposed that men utilized the right door. Moreover, the pediment of the western facade shows two round arch windows surmounted by another circular one. The southern façade is pierced by four richly decorated windows and two entrances similar to the northern façade.⁴⁵⁵

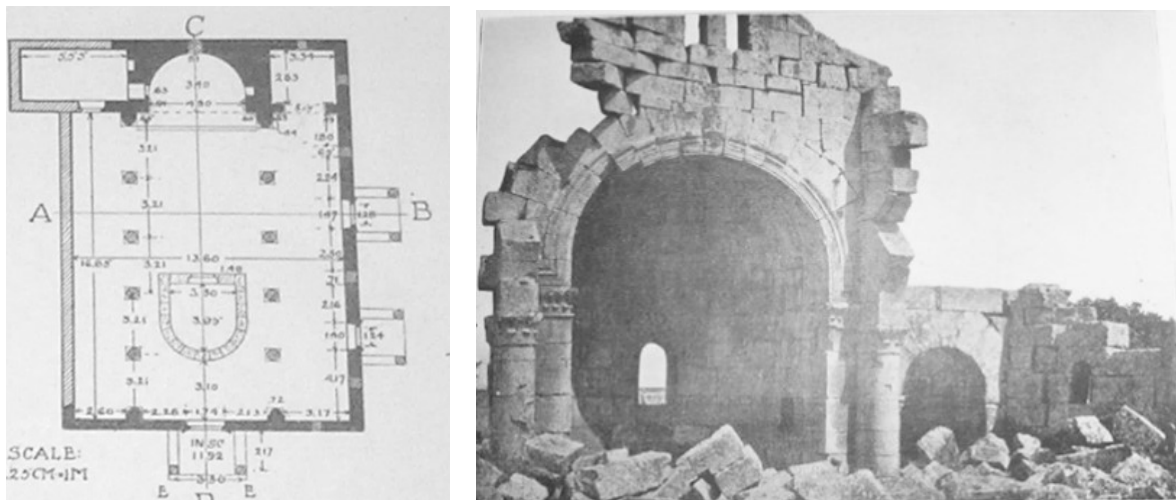


Fig. 57 Kalūtā, East Church plan and to the left interior facing east apse, (*Butler, 1929, p. 67*).

- **St. Bākhūs Church at Bāšūfān (St. Bacchus at Basufan):**

The church is considered one of the largest churches located in Jabal Simon. According to the Syriac etching, Saint Bākhūs (Bacchus) was the patron of this church, which was founded in the year 491/2.⁴⁵⁶ This church was turned into a fort during the Crusader period.⁴⁵⁷

The plan depicts a basilica with two side chambers. These chambers stretch and project more than the apse. It is noticeable that the southern prothesis chamber has an entrance to the apse. In terms of openings, the apse has three windows, and the southern façade is provided with two huge windows and one entrance (Fig. 58). It is still uncertain, although it is thought that the western facade displayed two towers and a narthex.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid

⁴⁵⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 70

⁴⁵⁷ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 473

⁴⁵⁸ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 69

Owing to the resemblance of the adornments of its apse with those of St. Simon such as two rows of columns and the capitals of the columns in the nave, it is supposed to have been executed by the same labourers.⁴⁵⁹

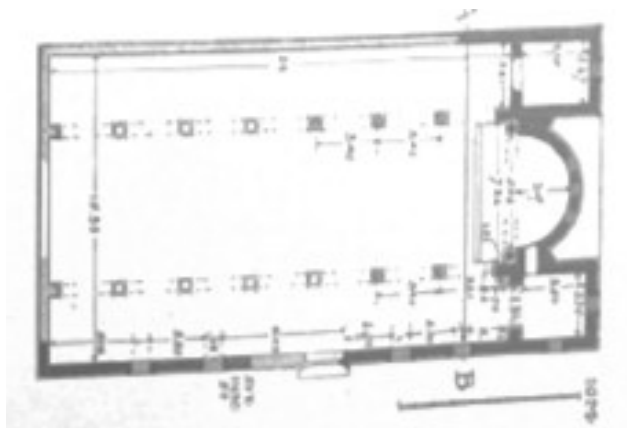


Fig. 58 St. Bākhūs Church at Bāšūfān (St. Bacchus at Basufan), (*Butler, 1929, p. 69*)

- **Fidrah (Fidre) Church:**

The main distinction in this church is that its central aisle is narrower than the ones in the other churches. Furthermore, square piers are used to divide the space into a nave and two aisles. On the other hand, it is still thought that if further evidence were uncovered, this church would most likely be attributed to the fourth century (Fig. 59).⁴⁶⁰

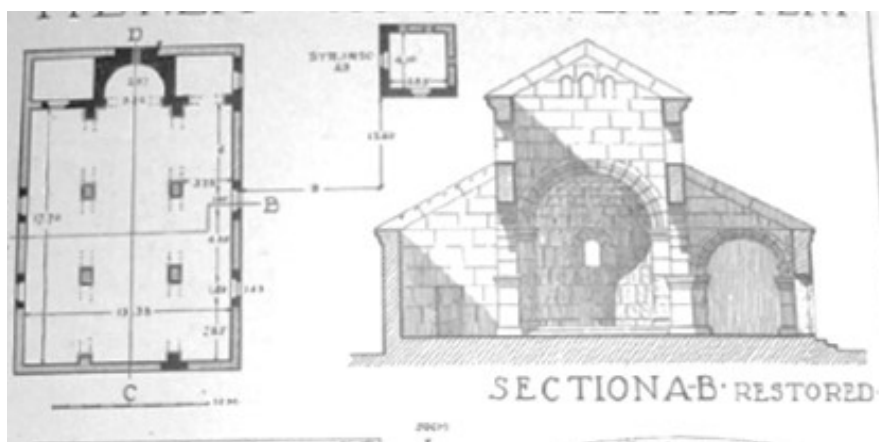


Fig. 59 Fidrah Church plan and section, (*Butler, 1929, p. 70*)

⁴⁵⁹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 468

⁴⁶⁰ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 438

- **Chapels:**

Ultimately, it is important to mention that not only basilicas are found in considerable numbers but also chapels. They are discovered in huge cities, small villages, and even private places. However, the date of several chapels' construction is still unknown. Their designs and embellishments are diverse. Thus, in order to provide a clear picture of these chapels, it is suggested to be classified based on their layout and in line with Butler's classification.

- The first is a simple rectangular layout with an east sanctuary and columns that support the architrave, or an arch connected with the side walls. such as Burj Bāqrhā (Baqirha) chapel and two in Bānaqfūr (Banaqfur) and near Sīrjillā (Serjilla) (Fig. 6o).⁴⁶¹
- The second type resembles the first one which shows a single nave that is narrower, broader or even the same width as the sanctuary. Besides, there is an east arch leading into a rectangular room with lower roofing such as Srīr chapel (Fig. 6o).⁴⁶²
- The third type is distinguished by a rectangular layout terminated with a projecting east apse like Nūrīyeh (Nuryah) and Kfīr (Kfyr) chapels (Fig. 6o).⁴⁶³
- The fourth type is identified like the third one except for the walls flanking the apse such as Bā'ūdā (Ba'ude) and Rabī'a (Rbi'a) chapels (Fig. 6o).⁴⁶⁴

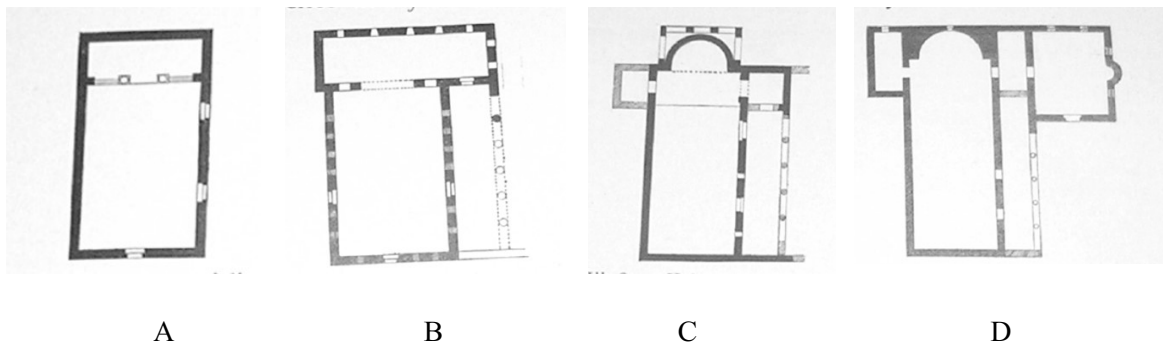


Fig. 6o A Bānaqfūr chapel plan, (*Butler, 1929, p. 76*), B Srīr chapel, (*Butler, 1929, p. 76*), C Kfīr chapel, (*Butler, 1929, p. 77*), D Rabī'a chapel, (*Butler, 1929, p. 77*).

⁴⁶¹ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 74

⁴⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 74-76

⁴⁶³ *Ibid*

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 74

III.2.3 Churches in the Sixth Century

- **Dīr Sītā (Deir Seta) Church: northern church**

There are several Christian buildings located at Dīr Sītā (Deir Seta) in Jabal Barisha, which are: a pastoral church, a northern church, a western church with a martyrium (a center for pilgrims) and an eastern church.⁴⁶⁵

It is argued that this church belongs to the fifth or sixth century (520-530). The style of this basilica represents an ancient type. Its plan consists of a central wide aisle and two narrower side aisles. Two rows of six columns split the plan into seven bays. The plan terminates with an east apse and two side chambers. Which is perceived outwardly with a linear wall and a row of twelve columns attached to it. The northern chamber has merely one access to the north aisle by an arch. According to M. de Vogüé, the apse and side rooms have no windows. (Fig. 61).⁴⁶⁶

However, there are several openings: 12 on the north wall and a massive seven on the south wall.⁴⁶⁷ In terms of entrances, there is one door on the north facade and two doors on the south façade. The western entrance, on the other hand, is preceded by a narthex.⁴⁶⁸

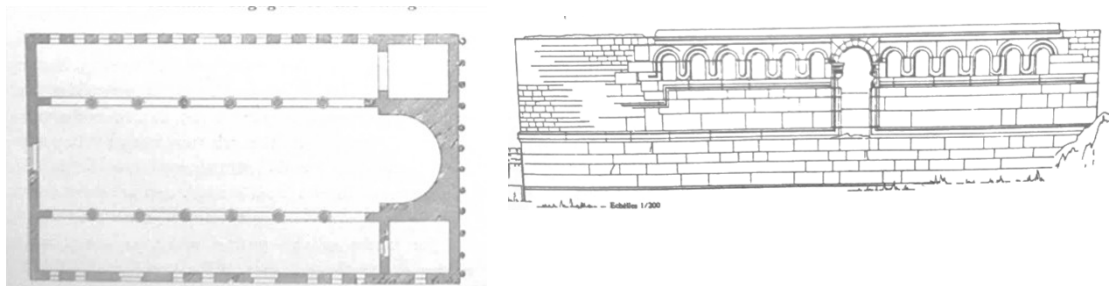


Fig. 61 Dīr Sītā (Deir Seta) Church plan, (Butler, 1929, p. 128), southern façade of church, (Athanāsiyū, 1997, p. 250).

- **Bānqūsā (Banqusa) Church: south church**

The southern church at Bānqūsā follows the traditional basilica layout in this region, with a nave and two aisles. The most distinguishing feature is a deep apse which is encircled by two protruding square side chambers on the east. This church's entrances are as follows:

⁴⁶⁵ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 294

⁴⁶⁶ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 128

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid

⁴⁶⁸ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-mīlādī (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 294

a huge one on the western façade and two entrances on the southern and northern facades preceded by porches (Fig. 62).⁴⁶⁹

On the upper level, there are eleven windows, and on the ground floor, there are six distributed on the southern and northern sides. Furthermore, the apse has three windows and two in each chamber.⁴⁷⁰

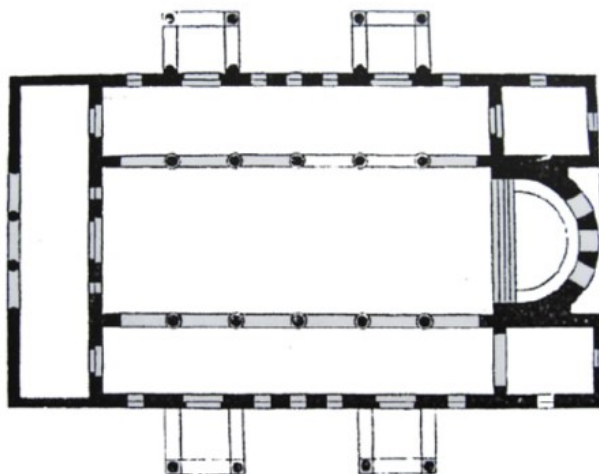


Fig. 62 Bānqūsā (Banqusa) Church plan (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 55*).

- **Dīr Turmānīn (Deir Turmanin) Church:**

It is one of the most important churches in Jabal Simon.⁴⁷¹ The layout includes a nave, two aisles, a projecting apse and two side chambers (Fig. 63).⁴⁷² Overall, this church had a distinctive association with Qalb Loze and Bānqūsā (Banqusa) in the matter of showing the two square towers as its external apse form. The two side towers of the western façade stand out the most, as they are higher than the ones at Qlab Loze. In the middle of these towers, there is a loggia consisting of four columns (Fig. 64). What is more, there is a circular window in the shape of a cross on each gable end. Yet, the apse is polygonal, seven-sided, and covered by a half dome. The ornamentation is similar to that of Bānqūsā Church.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 231

⁴⁷⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 129

⁴⁷¹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 387

⁴⁷² MacDonald, 1965, p. 26

⁴⁷³ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 130



A



B

Fig. 63 A. Turmānīn (Deir Turmanin) Church plan, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 59*). B. Exterior view reconstruction facing east, (*Lowrie, Monuments of the Early Church, 1906, p. 114*).

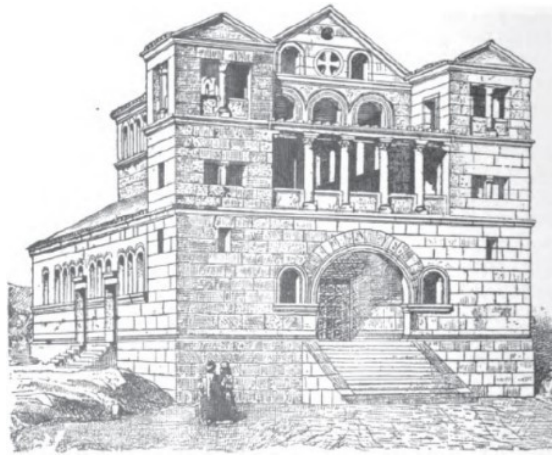


Fig. 64. Exterior view reconstruction facing west, (*Lowrie, Monuments of the Early Church, 1906, p. 112*).

- **Ḥass (Has)Church: southern church**

This church is deemed one of the greatest churches located to the south of Jabal Has. Based on its inscriptions, the church dates to the beginning of the fifth or fourth century. Still, it is believed that the style of this church dates to the sixth century. Moreover, compared to other regions of northern Syria, most of the churches in Jabal Rīḥā stand out for their simplicity, possibly due to the use of plain windows and frames linked to the previous date.⁴⁷⁴

Its layout clearly shows a nave, and two aisles divided into nine bays by two rows of circular columns. There is a bema, and a crypt positioned beneath it. Externally, the east end exhibits

⁴⁷⁴ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 130

a linear wall with an apse and two square side chambers. It is thought that the two side chambers comprise two stories (a high tower). The prothesis is placed on the upper level. Hence, access to the lower level was provided by two entrances on the eastern and southern sides (Fig. 65). The prothesis is additionally pierced by quite large openings on the southern side and another two resembling Gothic-style windows on the east. On the southern wall, there are two doors and nine large windows. Based on M. de Vogüé's view, there is a narthex preceding the western façade with eight columns.⁴⁷⁵



Fig. 65 Plan of Ḥass (Has) Church, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 27*)

- **Bāqirhā (Baqirha): western church and eastern church**

According to the Greek inscriptions, the eastern façade, apse, baptistry and southern aisle of the Western church are attributed to 501. While the destroyed northern and southern walls point to an earlier church from the fourth century. As a result, there are various remnants from the fourth and fifth centuries such as embellishments and the lintel of the doors.⁴⁷⁶

This church's design shows a basilica form with remains semicircular apse in the rectangular sanctuary. The windows on the east side are allocated as follows: two in the apse and two in each chamber.⁴⁷⁷ Three ornate reliquaries were discovered in the apse's southern chamber (martyrium) (Fig. 66).⁴⁷⁸

Concerning the Greek and Syriac inscriptions on the lintel of the western entrance, the eastern church dates to the sixth century. Syriac writings describe who designed the door,

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid, p.131

⁴⁷⁶ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 210

⁴⁷⁷ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 134

⁴⁷⁸ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī*(Vol. IV), 1997, p. 210

while the Greek texts reveal the period of construction, according to Butler, at the beginning of the fifth century with the year 546 indicating the reconstruction of the facade.⁴⁷⁹ The layout of this church consists of a nave and two aisles. It is divided into six bays by two rows of columns. The plan ends with a straight apse and two side chambers (Fig. 66) (Fig. 67).⁴⁸⁰

Not to mention that the western façade is considered one of the most splendid ones in Syria: it has three large windows at the same level as the internal arches and doors. The lower part of the doors is similar to those made by Markianos Kyris in Dār Qītā (Dar Qita) and Ksījāh (Kesejbe) churches.⁴⁸¹

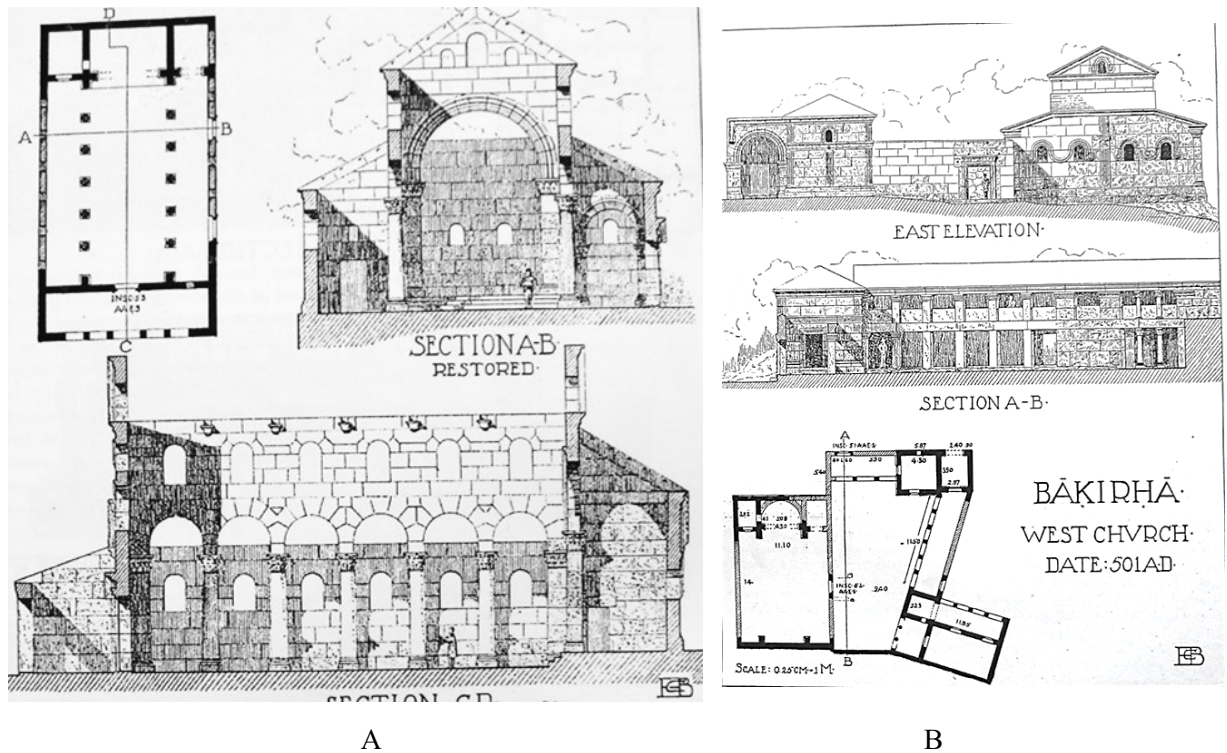


Fig. 66 A. East Church plan and section. A view facing west, (Butler, 1929, pp. 138-140). West Church plan of Bāqirhā, section and façade (Baqirha), (Butler, 1929, p. 133)

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid

⁴⁸⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 139

⁴⁸¹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārkihiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-milādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 214



Fig. 67A view facing the west of the Baqirha East Church (DGAM, Archive)

- **Dār Qītā (Dar Qita): St. Sergios Church**

St. Sergios Church is one of the largest churches in Dār Qītā.⁴⁸² The scheme of the church reveals a conventional basilica with a nave and two aisles. The east end of the plan shows a straight apse and two side chambers.⁴⁸³ The sanctuary manifests a rectangular shape flanked by one northern chamber diaconicon at two floors as a tower and the southern chamber is a martyrium.⁴⁸⁴ Furthermore, a baptistry is placed on the southeast side adjacent to the southern chamber. The western side of the church is preceded by a narthex (Fig. 68).⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 136

⁴⁸³ Makhūl, 2000, p. 179

⁴⁸⁴ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 286

⁴⁸⁵ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 136

The church's entrances are distributed as follows: two on the northern façade with porches, two southern doors preceded by a portico and one door on the western façade. It is worth noting that the decorations on the western façade resemble those on St. Paul and Moses Church (418) located in the same town.⁴⁸⁶

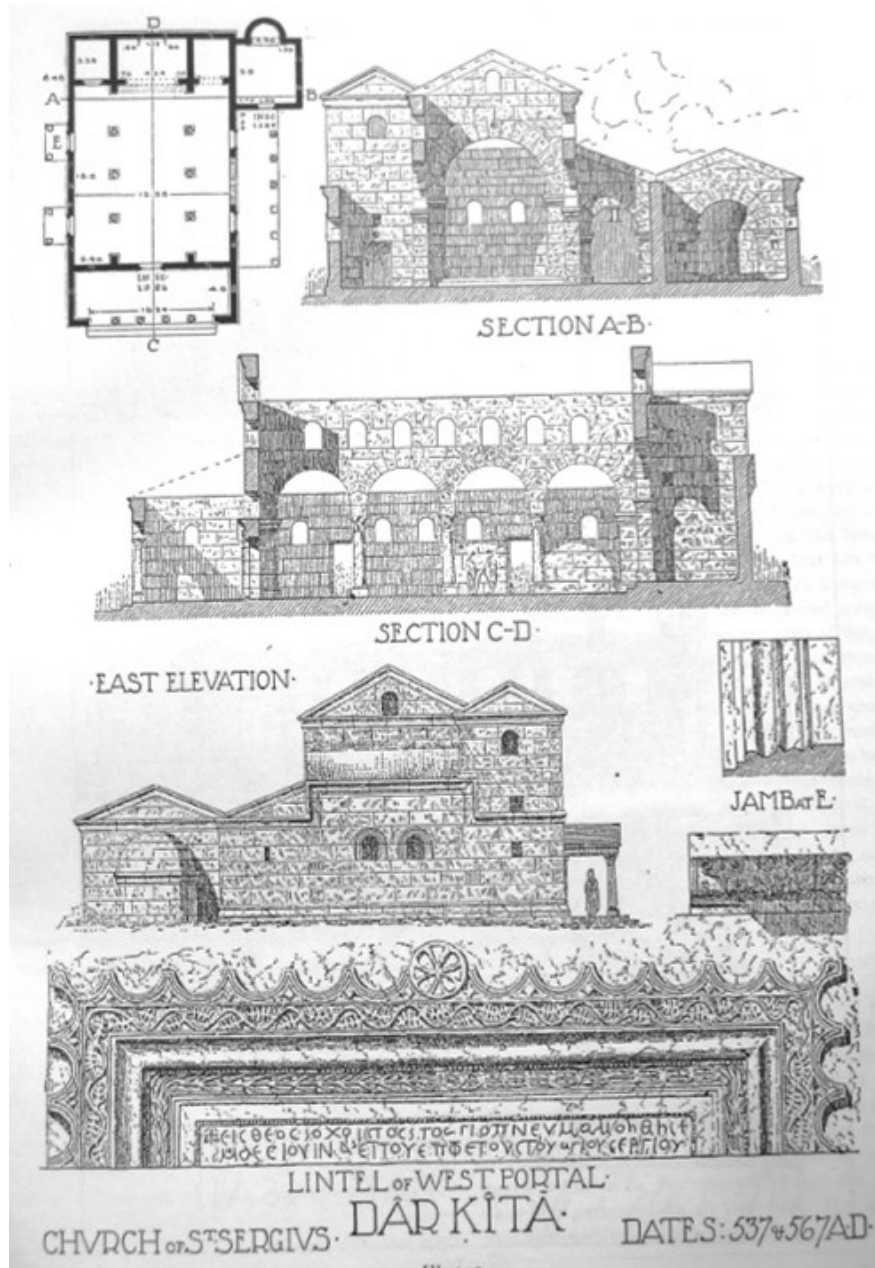


Fig. 68 Dār Qītā plan, two sections and East façade, (*Butler, 1929, p. 137*).

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid

- **Bashmīshlī (Bashmishli) Church:**

Bashmīshlī is located in Jabal Barisha.⁴⁸⁷ The church plan is split into a nave and two side aisles by two rows of piers. These two piers support three arches. The sanctuary is rectangular with a straight wall on the east end (Fig. 69).⁴⁸⁸ The apse is separated from the nave by a curtain wall resembling Bāmūqā (Bamuqqa) Church.⁴⁸⁹ It is believed, there was a porch that preceded the western façade. To the southeast of the church is a modest baptistery. There are three windows on the eastern side, as well as two entrances on the western and southern facades.⁴⁹⁰

It is interesting to note that there is a column on the western porch with spiral ornamentation which is unusual compared to other external decorations in Syria.⁴⁹¹

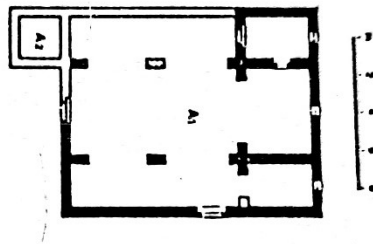


Fig. 69 Bashmīshlī Church Plan, (*Athanāsiyū*, 1997, p. 196)

- **Brād (Brad) Church: North church**

This church was built in 561, based on the engraving found on the lintel doorway of the prothesis chamber. Its blueprint illustrates an innovative use of massive piers that carry wide arches. Hence, it consists of a nave and two side aisles. The scheme concludes with a semicircular apse in the center and encircled by side chambers at two levels.⁴⁹² The aisle is accessible to the prothesis. The diaconicon, on the other hand, has two entrances to the apse and aisle (Fig. 70).

⁴⁸⁷ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 193

⁴⁸⁸ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 142

⁴⁸⁹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 196

⁴⁹⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 142

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*

⁴⁹² Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 494

The windows on the top level are notable for their great size and broad space between them. The apse is pierced with two windows that are separated by a tiny column. The church has two doors placed on the southern wall.⁴⁹³

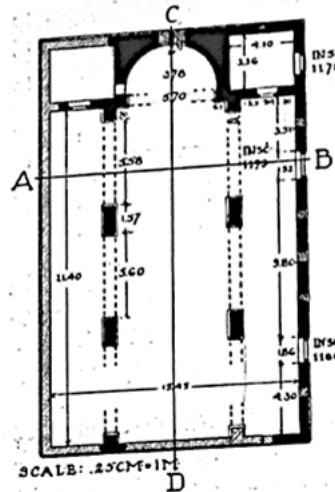


Fig. 70 Brād (Brad)) Church, (Butler, 1929, p. 142).

- **Bīzūs (Bissos) Church in Ruwayḥa:**

This church is regarded as one of the most important in Jabal Rīḥā. It is known as Bīzūs church according to an inscription referring to the builder's name of the church, (Bissos Pardos).⁴⁹⁴

This church's significance stems from its use of T-shaped piers and transverse arches, making it unique in the region.⁴⁹⁵ This shape of T piers could similarly be found in Brad and Rasafa.⁴⁹⁶ Its blueprint shows a central nave and two side aisles. These three transverse arches divide the nave into three rectangular bays. There is an upper gallery equipped with windows.⁴⁹⁷ The eastern end has a deep apse topped by a chancel arch that separates the nave from the altar. Externally, it exhibits a straight wall.⁴⁹⁸ Both sides of the apse have longitudinal side chambers. However, the center nave contains the ruins of the bema (Fig. 71).⁴⁹⁹ The roof structure is demonstrated by a gable roof.

⁴⁹³ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 142

⁴⁹⁴ Layla, 2010, p. 81

⁴⁹⁵ Kīfūrkiyān, 2002, pp. 68-69

⁴⁹⁶ Ghrūsman, 1976, p. 306

⁴⁹⁷ Stewart & Simpson, 1954, p. 40

⁴⁹⁸ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 145

⁴⁹⁹ Layla, 2010, p. 81

The church has thirteen big windows on the lower level and four windows on the clerestory located in the center of each transverse arch of the bays. The apse has three windows.⁵⁰⁰

In terms of entrances, it has seven entrances, two on each of the northern and southern walls and three on the west.⁵⁰¹

It is noticeable that there is a western narthex flanked by two side chambers (Fig. 72). However, due to the church's destruction, it was difficult to ensure that these two rooms took on the tower shape.⁵⁰² The narthex's central arch is large and lofty, while the side arches are small and show a horseshoe shape (Fig. 73). Furthermore, its narthex is comparable to St. Simonn Church but without the buttresses.

It is interesting to note that there are two tombs on either side of the church.⁵⁰³ The southern tomb is called *Bizūs*.⁵⁰⁴

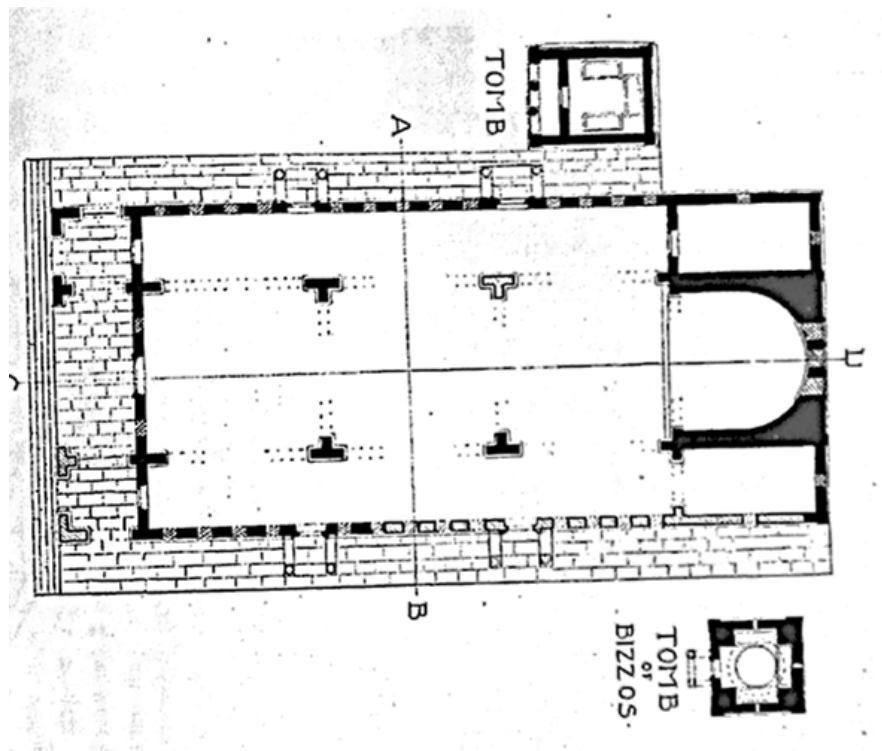


Fig. 71 Bīzūs Church plan, (Butler, 1929, p. 145).

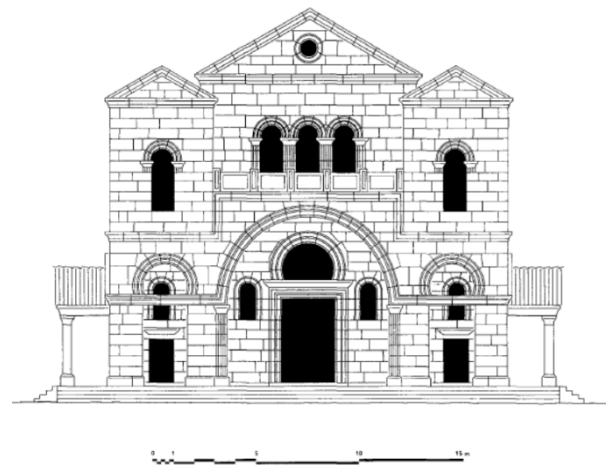
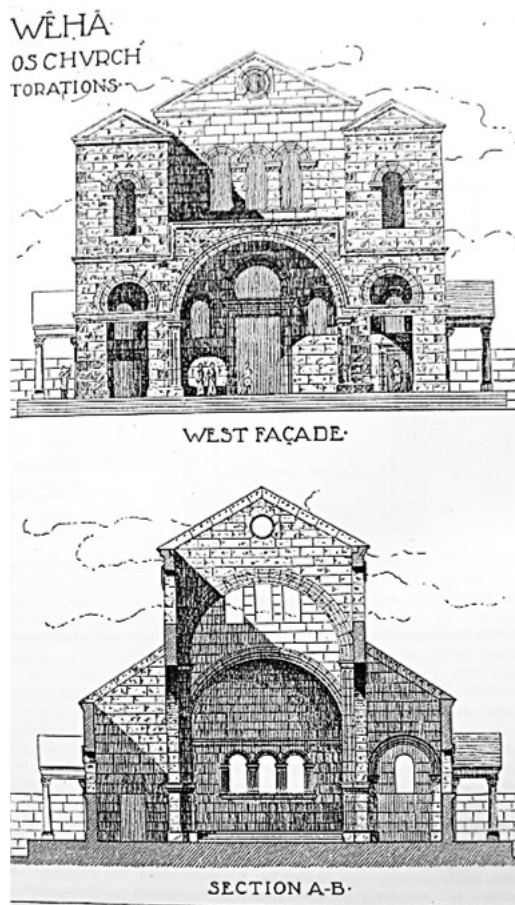
⁵⁰⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 145

⁵⁰¹ Layla, 2010, p. 83

⁵⁰² Kifūrkiyān, 2002, pp. 68-69

⁵⁰³ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 147

⁵⁰⁴ Makhūl, 2000, p. 19



A

B

Fig. 72 West façade of Bîzûs Church and section, (*Butler, 1929, p. 146*). B. West façade of the church, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 290*)

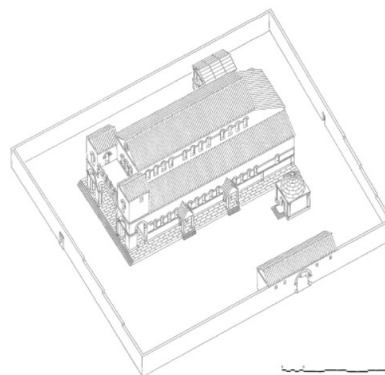
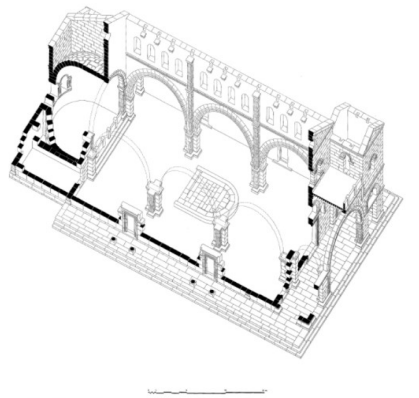


Fig. 73 Bîzûs Church Reconstruction model, (*Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, pp. 291-293*).

- **St. Sergios Church in Babsqā (Babisqa):**

This church dates back to 610 in Syria.⁵⁰⁵ It has a conventional and small basilica layout with a nave and two side aisles. The plan concludes with side chambers and an apse internally and externally straight wall (Fig. 74).⁵⁰⁶

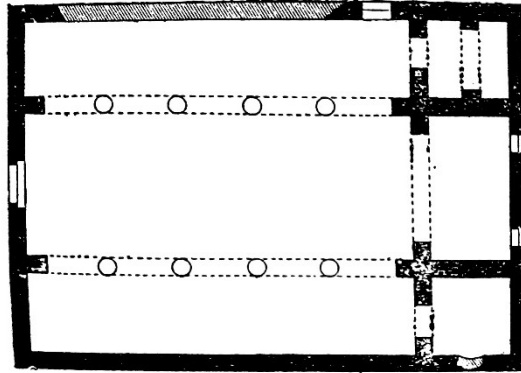


Fig. 74 St. Sergios Church of Babsqā plan, (*Athanāsiyū*, 1997, p. 178).

- **Chapels:**

Though diverse churches arose with distinct characteristics and decorations, chapels appeared in significant numbers during the sixth century. Some chapels are characterized by a plain scheme with a nave, such as Burj al-Dīrūnī (Burj al-Deiruni), Kfillūsīn (Kfillosin) and Qaṣr Iblīsū (Qaser Iblsyo). The plan of Khrāb Shams (Kharab Shams) and Kfr Nabū (Kafr Nabu) chapels terminates with a semicircular east end. The narthex of Baʿūda Chapel consists of two floors. Other chapels such as Sit al-Rūm (Sitt er-Rum), Kfr Lāb, Burjīh (Burjke), and Burj Ḥaydar (Burj Heidar) show a single nave ending with an east arch that is narrow than the entire east side followed by a small sanctuary. Most striking is that Suqāniā chapel has two side chambers. Remarkably, St. Simon Chapel is deemed the largest one belonging to this group (Fig. 75).⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. IV), 1997, p. 164

⁵⁰⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 141

⁵⁰⁷ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 149-150

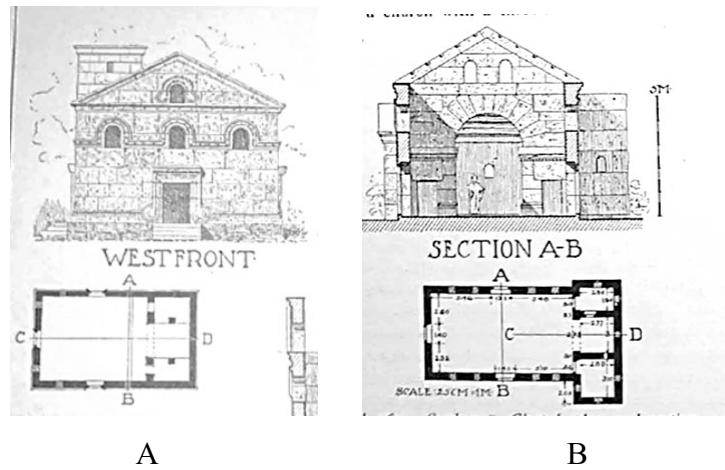


Fig. 75 A. Qaṣr Iblīsū chapel plan. B. Suqāniā chapel (*Butler, 1929, p. 148*).

III.3. Syrian Church Architecture over the Byzantine Period from the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries in Southern Syria

III.3.1. Preceding Church Architecture

According to Butler, the church buildings ascribed to the Pagan period are classified into four types giving a preliminary picture of the features of early churches in southern Syria.

- The first type presents the oldest and simplest ones, al-Qayṣariyya (Kaisariye) at Shaqqā (Shaqqā). It was originally a Roman palace composed of four halls in addition to a main wall. This building dates back to the second or third century detected by M. de Vogüé. The concerned hall is rectangular, directed to the East-West, with ten transverse arches which are underpinned internally by pilaster piers projecting from the wall. These arches are also supported externally by buttresses. Hence, it is considered one of the earliest samples using the system of transverse arches in Syria. The hall includes numerous small entrances distributed on both sides. The entire building is covered with flat stone slabs. The change to a church occurred presumably after Constantine's announcement⁵⁰⁸ by converting the deep east bay to a sanctuary and carving three crosses on the lintel of the eastern window.⁵⁰⁹ A similar example of the same type is the pagan building Dīr Simīdj (Deir Simydj). It is divided into ten bays by nine transverse arches (Fig. 76).⁵¹⁰

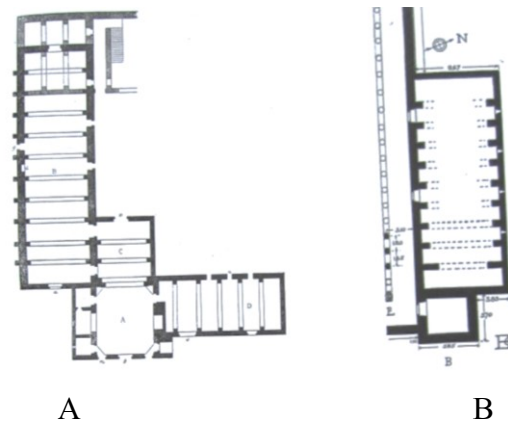


Fig. 76 A. al-Qayṣariyya at Shaqqā plan. B. Dīr Simīdj plan, (Butler, 1929, p. 13)

- The second type is displayed by Dīr al-Rāhib Baḥīrā (The Monastery of the Monk Bahira), representing a public audience, knowing that this type has a great influence on the

⁵⁰⁸ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 13

⁵⁰⁹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawṣūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 670

⁵¹⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 13

ecclesiastical architecture in Syria. This structure is thought to be from the fourth century: however, according to Butler's view, it dates to the third century.⁵¹¹

The basilica, resembling the typical basilica, is considered the oldest church in Bosra. The original plan depicts a single rectangular hall in its west end, opened to the street by a broad arch and terminated with a semicircular east apse.⁵¹² The two walls of the hall are pierced with high windows and bordered by two porches.⁵¹³ The most impressive feature of this church is the high elliptical arch of the altar with a basalt half dome of the apse. There are three entrances: two are positioned near the apse (north and south) and one is on the western side. The western entrance is surrounded by a large arch with three windows. Moreover, there are two massive columns on both sides of the arch (Fig. 77). Not to mention that the roofing method of the basilica was a gabled roof.⁵¹⁴ The building was converted to a church in the fourth century by blocking the arch at the western end.⁵¹⁵

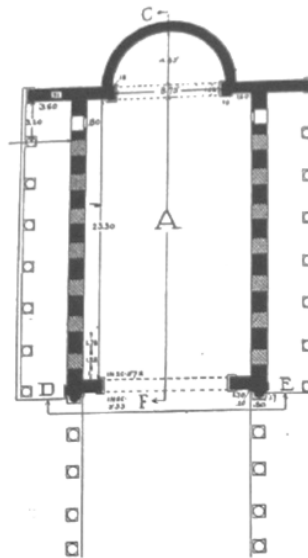


Fig. 77 Dīr al-Rāhib Baḥīrā plan, (Butler, 1929, p. 13).

- The third type of building is introduced through the Temple of Tyche at al-Ṣanammīn ascribed to a religious function in its origin. With regards to the engraving found

⁵¹¹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 526

⁵¹² Ibid, pp. 526-528

⁵¹³ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 14

⁵¹⁴ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 526

⁵¹⁵ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 14

on the northern lintel wall, it points out that the building was constructed in 191.⁵¹⁶ However, it turned into a Mosque in the Middle Ages.⁵¹⁷

The temple is preceded by a 'tetrastyle' portico carried by four columns and covered with a gable roof.⁵¹⁸ The plan consists of a small square terminated with a raised apse flanked by two side chambers at two levels.⁵¹⁹ One of these chambers is opened to the apse. Besides, there are four columns along the south wall. There are three entrances on the north wall, among which the middle one is the widest. This temple was roofed with slab stones and spanned by a transverse arch (Fig. 78).⁵²⁰

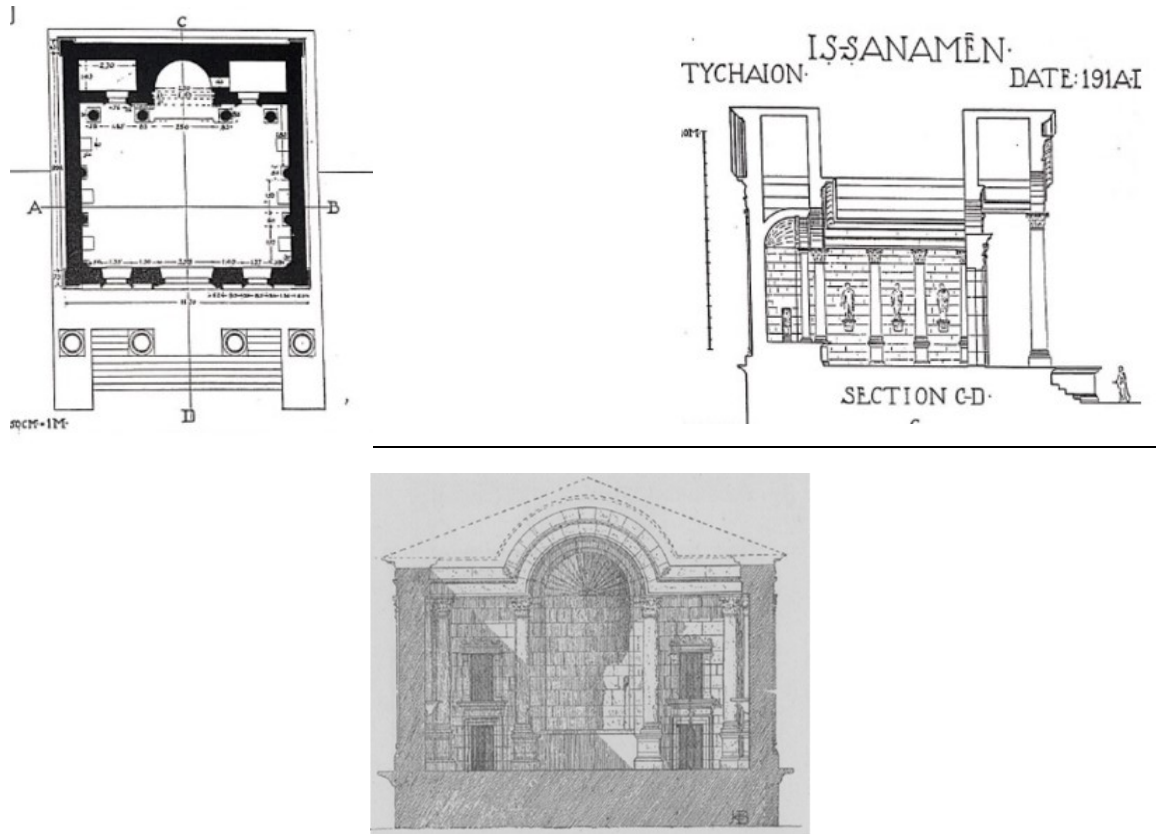


Fig. 78 Plan of Temple of Tyche at al-Ṣanammīn Plan and two sections (Butler, 1929, p. 14), (Butler, 1906, p. 415).

■ The fourth type of this period is Shaqqā basilica, considered the oldest church in the time frame between the end of the second century and the beginning of the third, as reported

⁵¹⁶ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-milādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 557

⁵¹⁷ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 15

⁵¹⁸ Ibid

⁵¹⁹ Butler, 1906, p. 414

⁵²⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 15

by de Vogüé.⁵²¹ It demonstrates a square basilica base split into three aisles through square piers, a wide central aisle and two narrow lateral ones.⁵²² The square piers, in turn, support wide and high transverse arches above the central aisle. The narrow ones are distributed over two stories of side aisles.⁵²³ Moreover, the side arches are also supported by rectangular columns projected from the wall. Additionally, the building has three entrances on both sides and is entirely covered by a slab roof. It is said, there is no proof that this building was serving Christian service (Fig. 79).⁵²⁴

It is worth noting that there are more structures of a similar sort in southern Syria with a triple division of the hall, for example, the temple at Slim or by its ancient Selmaema and two temples at Qanawāt (Qanawat). One of these temples is a part of the Sarāyā (Saraya) complex (ancient structure), while the other one is the temple of Zeus.⁵²⁵

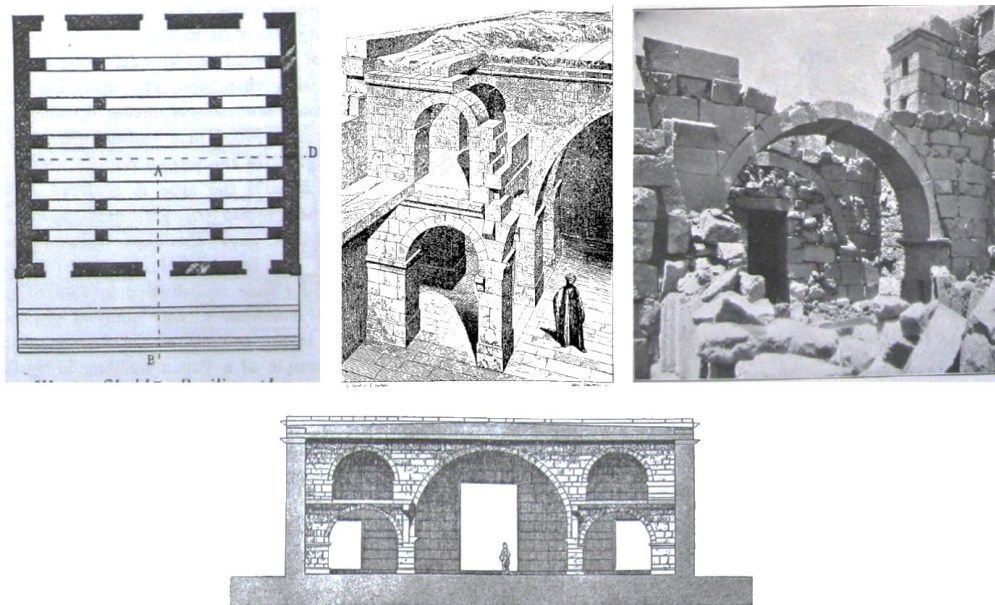


Fig. 79 Shaqqā Basilica plan, (Butler, 1929, p. 16). Reconstruction analysis, (Lassus, Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie, 1947, p. 50). Transverse arches of the north aisle, (Butler, 1903, p. 365). Section, (Athanāsiyū, 1997, p. 444).

III.3.2.Churches in the Fourth Century

- **ʿUmm al-Jimāl (Umm el-Jimal), Julianos Church:**

⁵²¹ ʿAmīn, 2015, p. 34

⁵²² ʿAbū ʿAssāf, 1997, p. 95

⁵²³ Ibid

⁵²⁴ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 17

⁵²⁵ Ibid, p. 15

Particularly, ḥumm al-Jimāl is deemed one of the most significant cities possessed by the Roman province of Arabia. Additionally, it represents both the central city and the metropolis of Christian-Arabic.⁵²⁶ It has around fifteen churches and monasteries in various styles such as a hall or a basilica type. These varied forms belonged to monasteries, or rather, as family churches distributed in several areas.⁵²⁷

Julianos Church is considered one of the earliest churches. It was constructed in 344 witnessed by the inscription on the lintel of the central south entrance.⁵²⁸ Butler suggested that, despite the disappearance of clear evidence showing it as a tomb, this church was presumably considered a memorial church.⁵²⁹

Remarkably, the plan of this church is based on the layout of Qayṣariyya at Shaqqā.⁵³⁰ This church represents one of the longest and narrowest single plan churches in southern Syria.⁵³¹ A rectangular single hall is shown on the plan with a semicircular apse elevated by three steps and covered by a half dome. The width of the apse is approximately the same as the width of the hall. Furthermore, this church utilizes a system of transverse arches, separating the nave into ten bays. Additionally, piers are arising out of the wall supporting the transverse arches. As for the openings, they are placed on the upper level of the church. A single window is installed above the altar (Fig. 8o). There are three entrances on the south side and one entrance on the western side, giving access to those coming from outside the district. Presumably, the southeast space was an atrium. The church is surrounded on the east and west by residential buildings that may be put to use by clergy or even as monastic buildings (institutions). The church was roofed with basalt stone slabs except for the apse, which was covered by a dome.⁵³²

⁵²⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 15-17

⁵²⁷ Kennedy, 2016, p. 23

⁵²⁸ Bernheimer, 1939, p. 660

⁵²⁹ Butler, 1913, p. 174

⁵³⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 19

⁵³¹ Kīfūrkiyān, 2002, p. 44

⁵³² Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 19

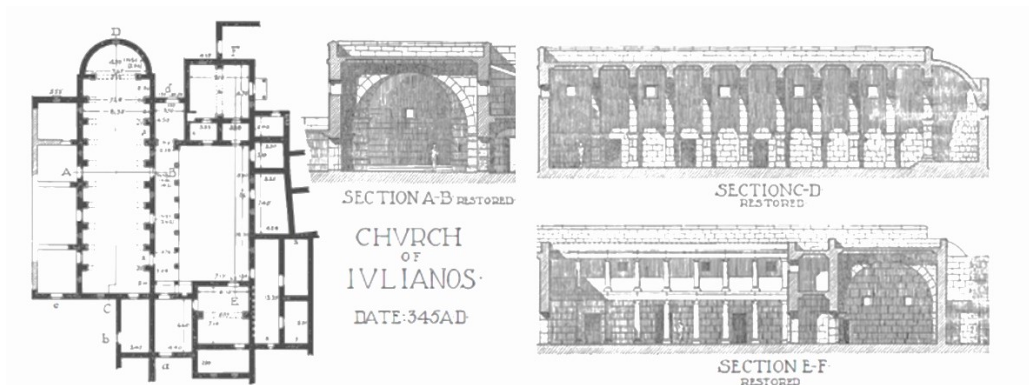


Fig. 80 Julianos church plan and three sections, (Butler, 1913, pp. 149-213).

• **‘Anz (Anz) Church:**

According to the engravings examined in the church, it was built in the first half of the fourth century.⁵³³ It should be emphasized that this church type relied on the Roman buildings in Hauran like Qayṣariyya at Shaqqā (Fig. 81).⁵³⁴ The church is distinguished by its small uncomplicated plan exhibiting a small church or chapel.⁵³⁵ It consists of a hall divided by three transverse arches into four bays completed by a straight square apse.⁵³⁶ The church is covered with a flat slab roof.⁵³⁷

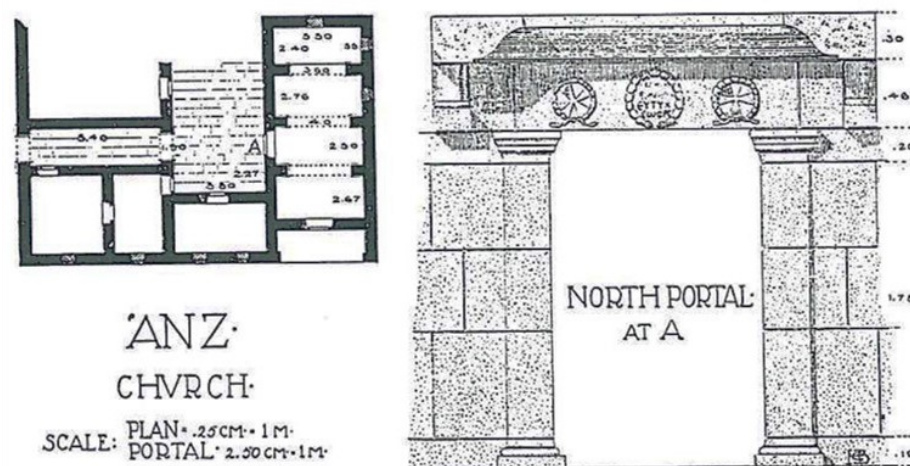


Fig. 81 ‘Anz Church plan and north portal, (Butler, 1913, p. 133).

⁵³³ Kīfūrkiyān, 2002, p. 40

⁵³⁴ Butler, 1913, p. 173

⁵³⁵ Ibid: 172.

⁵³⁶ Kīfūrkiyān, 2002, p. 40

⁵³⁷ Butle, 1903, pp. 132-133

- **Church of Masechos in ʿUmm al-Jimāl (Umm el-Jimal):**

It is located in the southeast part of the town to the south of the east gate of ʿUmm al-Jimāl.⁵³⁸ Masechos Church belongs to the fourth century.⁵³⁹ The plan illustrates a rectangular hall terminated with a deep apse connecting two cramped rooms on two stories. The prothesis chamber, located to the south, had an east door that connected the church to the town. Furthermore, the hall is divided by six transverse arches. The altar is positioned on a raised platform by three steps and opened to the nave by a narrower arch than the latter.⁵⁴⁰ The western facade of the church is preceded by a portico, where two symmetrical doors and another entrance are located on the south side.⁵⁴¹ It is presumed that there was once a connection with the next house (house of the bishop). In the west, merely three windows are to be found (Fig. 82).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this church has similarities on the one hand with Shaqqā basilica, regarding the long hall with the transverse arches and on the other hand with Tyche at al-Ṣanammin (Al-Sanamayn) concerning the apse with side chambers.⁵⁴²

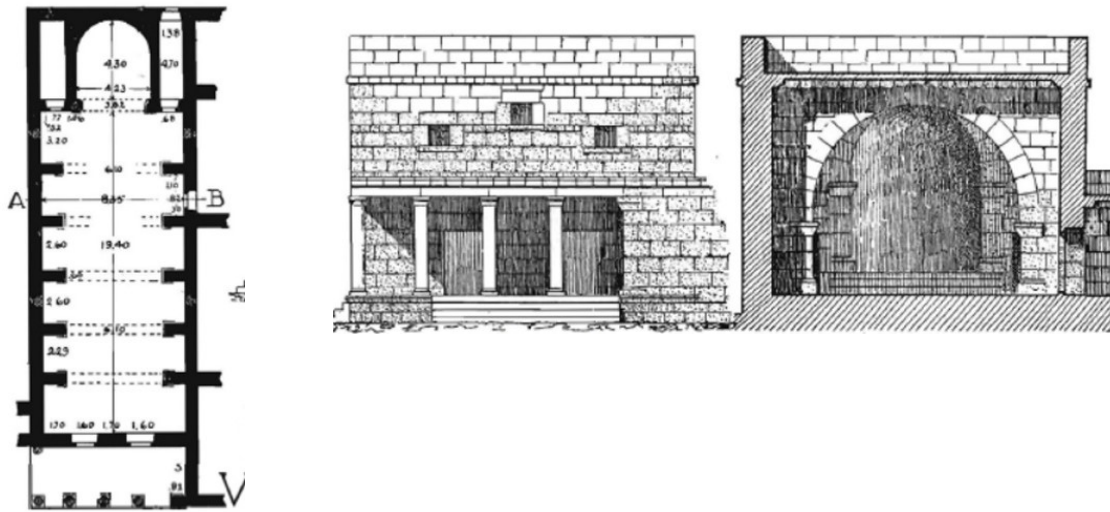


Fig. 82 Masechos Church plan and main facade and section, Butler, 1913, p. 176

⁵³⁸ Butler, 1913, p. 176

⁵³⁹ Kīfūrkiyān, 2002, p. 38

⁵⁴⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 20

⁵⁴¹ Kīfūrkiyān, 2002, p. 38

⁵⁴² Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 20

- **Ṭafḥā (Tafha) Church:**

The church is located near Shahbā city.⁵⁴³ It is considered one of the historic samples associated with the basilica type equivalent to the one at Shaqqā whereas only Ṭafḥā has an apse.⁵⁴⁴ In accordance with the layers of the northern wall, it is considered to have previously been an ancient temple before it was converted into this church. ⁵⁴⁵

The plan presents an almost square hall illustrating a wide nave with two narrower aisles divided by two rows of columns.⁵⁴⁶ Following the method of the church in southern Syria, there were no longitudinal linking arches, only transverse arches (Fig. 83).⁵⁴⁷ The church is completed with a projecting elliptical east apse with three windows. The church has a western door and another one on the northern side. What is more, it includes a small rectangular room on the western side opened to another room having a window. It is assumed that the purpose of these rooms was to serve the vestry or baptistery. A slab stone roof covered the church altogether.⁵⁴⁸

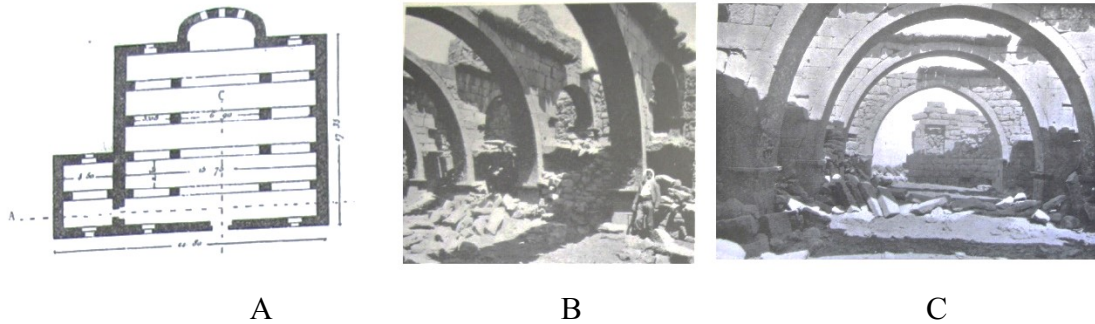


Fig. 83 Ṭafḥā church plan, (Athanāsiyū, 1997, p. 445). B. Transvers arches, (Butler, Architecture and other arts, 1903, p. 410)

- **Nimrah Church:**

The church was established in the fourth century.⁵⁴⁹ It depicts a rectangular basilica form with a wide nave and two narrower aisles. The hall is ended with an apse surrounded

⁵⁴³ ṬAbū ṬAssāf , 1997, p. 72

⁵⁴⁴ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ṬAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-Ṭathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-Ṭalf al-Ṭawal al-mīlādī (Vol. V), 1997, p. 670

⁵⁴⁵ Butle, 1903, p. 409

⁵⁴⁶ ṬAbū ṬAssāf , 1997, p. 72

⁵⁴⁷ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 22

⁵⁴⁸ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭrakiyyat ṬAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-Ṭathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-Ṭalf al-Ṭawal al-mīlādī (Vol. V), 1997, p. 651

⁵⁴⁹ Kīfūrkiyān, 2002, p. 53

by two side rooms on two levels.⁵⁵⁰ Due to the transverse arches, the nave is separated into six bays. A flat roof covers the nave and the aisles (Fig. 84).⁵⁵¹

Fig. 84 Nimrah Church plan and section (Butle, Architecture and other arts, 1903, pp. 123-133).

- **Lubbin, Agrarian Church 417:**

Its plan manifests a prolonged hall concluded with a protruding horseshoe apse,⁵⁵⁴ which is elevated by three steps. The entire nave has four transverse arches.⁵⁵⁵ The most conspicuous feature in this church is the western square narthex found in the middle between two chambers as towers.⁵⁵⁶ Conversely, the employment of these two chambers is dissimilar to the ordinary, still-existing ones in northern Syria, which typically have access to the nave

or the apse. Given this, the western façade of this church exhibits exceptional merit compared to the churches in southern Syria. What is more, it is notable that the apse was not roofed with a half dome, but with flat slab stones like the whole church (Fig. 85).⁵⁵⁷ Regarding the entrances, there are two doors: one on the south, which is supposedly meant for the clergy and the other on the west wall. Apart from a particular window installed in the apse, all the windows are placed on the upper level of the church. The church shows a lack of ornaments.⁵⁵⁸

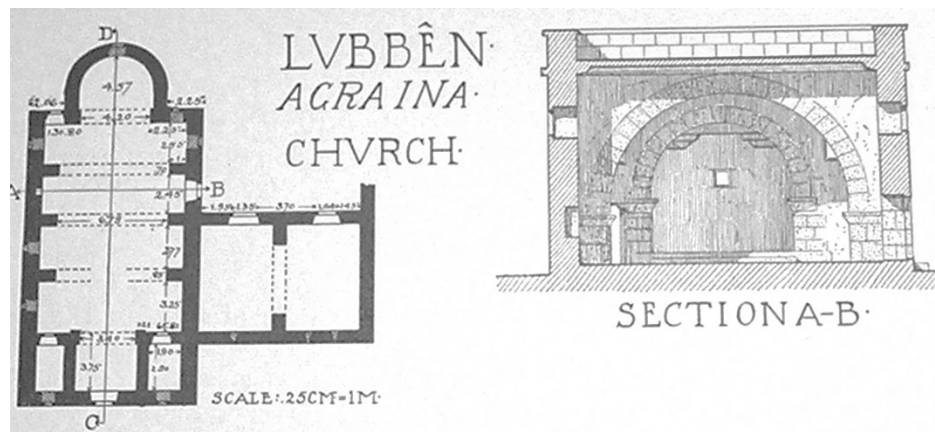


Fig. 85 Agrarian church plan 417 and section, (Butler, 1929, p. 42)

- **Şabḥah (Sabha) Church:**

This simple church emerged as a place of worship without any connection to another group of buildings or even a chapel in the monastery. The plan illustrates a hall ending with a semicircular apse. It has three bays due to the transverse arches. Remarkably, the internal extent of the apse is wider than the chancel arch, while appearing externally as a straight wall. A small chamber opened up to the apse through a door and linked to another room extending throughout the entire western wall of the church. (Fig. 86)⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁷ Butle, 1919, p. 419

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁵⁹ Butler, 1913, pp. 113-114

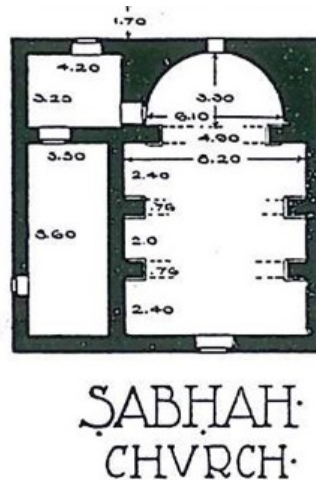


Fig. 86 Şabḥah Church plan, (Butler, 1913, p. 114).

- **ʿUmm al-Kuṭṭen (Umm il-Kutten):**

A total of four churches existed in this area: one linked with a large monastery, another one with a tomb beneath, as well as two chapels.⁵⁶⁰

The South Church: The church's plan essentially represents a rectangular hall split into four bays and terminated with a semicircular apse which is perceived outwardly as a linear wall.⁵⁶¹ A small room with access to the apse also appeared on the plan. Furthermore, the church acquires two entrances: one to the south and the other to the west (Fig. 87).⁵⁶² Noteworthy, this church is assumed to be a memorial one, owing to a square tomb located south in the second row of the bays.⁵⁶³ This tomb was probably built before the church construction in a style quite resembling the Nabatean style.⁵⁶⁴

Accordingly, the church with its simple plan is based upon public buildings under the Roman Empire, or it is an advanced form of *Tyche at al-Şanammīn*.⁵⁶⁵

The second example, East church exhibits an unpretentious nave ending with a deep prominent apse (Fig. 87).

⁵⁶⁰ Butler, 1913, p. 137

⁵⁶¹ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 42

⁵⁶² Butler, 1913, p. 138

⁵⁶³ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 42

⁵⁶⁴ Butler, 1913, p. 138

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid

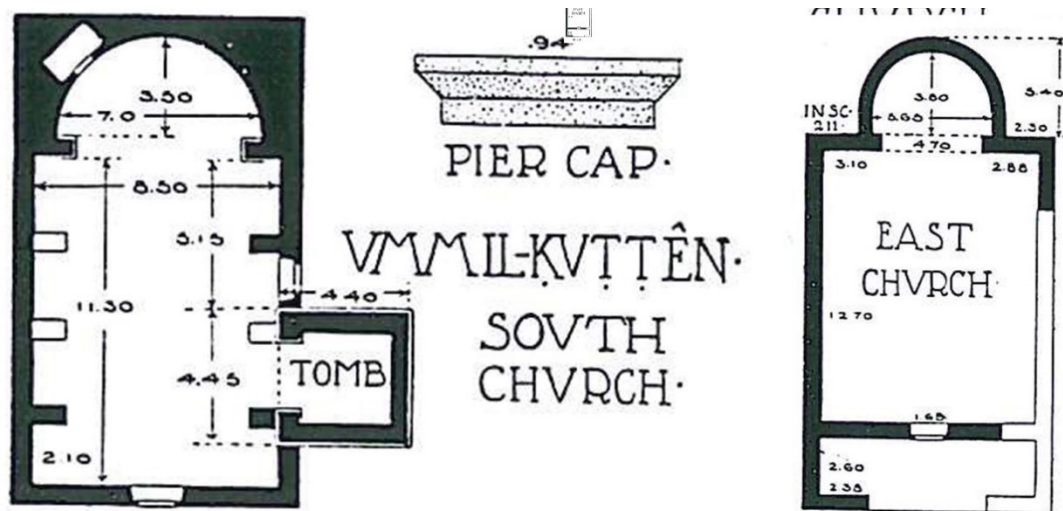


Fig. 87 South and East 'Umm al-Kuṭṭen church plans, (Butler, 1913, p. 114)

- **Southwest church in 'Umm al-Jimāl (Umm el-Jimal):**

The church shows a basilica plan with a nave and two side aisles that are equally divided and a protruding apse. ⁵⁶⁶ Most discernible in this church is the use of a longitudinal arch system.⁵⁶⁷ The church has several entrances including one positioned on the east side leading to the aisles (Fig. 91). The church shows a basilica plan with a nave and two side aisles that are equally divided and a protrusive apse. Most discernible in this church is the use of longitudinal arches system. The church has several entrances including one positioned on the east side leading to the aisles (Fig. 88).

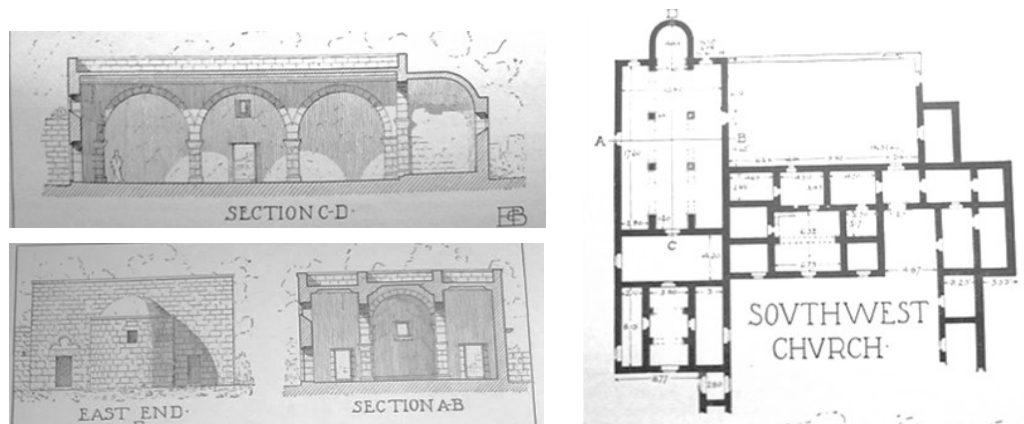


Fig. 88 Southwest Church plan of 'Umm al-Jimāl, (Butler, 1913, p. 44)

⁵⁶⁶ Kīfūrkiyān, 2002, p. 61

⁵⁶⁷ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 45

- **The Klāwdyānūs (Claudianus) Church:**

The plan consists of a nave and two side aisles and is distinguished by a narrow deep apse surrounded by two chambers.⁵⁶⁸ Two parallel aligned lines of columns divide the nave and carry the longitudinal arches. Noteworthy, while the prothesis positioned to the north is opened to the aisle by an arch, the diaconicon chamber has a door. Besides, there is a western porch; a narthex precedes the main entrance on a raised platform with four columns.⁵⁶⁹ Generally, these columns are discernible in a Doric style. The entire roof presented a flat stone slab. Additional buildings surround the church which might have been used as a small monastery (Fig. 89).⁵⁷⁰

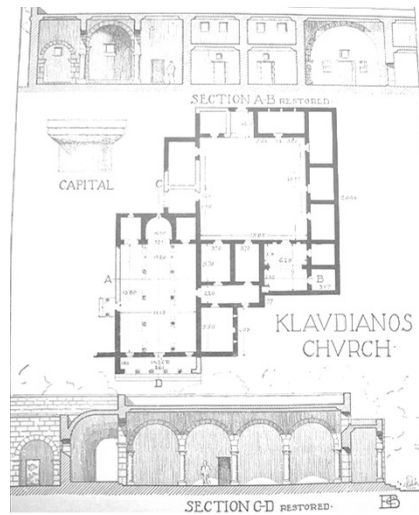


Fig. 89 Klāwdyānūs Church plan, (Butler, 1929, p. 46).

- **The great basilica of al-Suwaydā' (Al-Suwaydah):**

This church is considered one of the most immense churches in Syria.⁵⁷¹ It is said that the church was built between the fifth and sixth centuries. Its huge size and location near the city center (al-Suwaydā'),⁵⁷² reflect the great Christian congregation in this area. It is thought that this church belongs to the monastery called Dīr Saint John, dating back to the fourth century.

⁵⁶⁸ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 45-46-47

⁵⁶⁹ Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie*, 1947, p. 27

⁵⁷⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 45-46-47

⁵⁷¹ Makhūl, 2000, p. 95

⁵⁷² Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 610

This plan merges the Roman basilica's features and the Hauran style's locality.⁵⁷³ The church displays an extraordinary basilica plan consisting of five aisles.⁵⁷⁴ The use of four rows of columns instead of piers to separate the nave is most notable. It shows western towers extended to three stories. The plan ends with three apses (Fig. 90).⁵⁷⁵ The middle apse appears externally semicircular, while the two narrower chambers that flanked the apse present a semicircular form inwardly and a linear wall outwardly. All aisles have access to the narthex, the diaconicon and prothesis flank the apse.⁵⁷⁶ Seven windows are installed at both side facades. There are two entrances distributed on the north and south walls, besides the ones in the western façade. The main façade of this church is considered similar to Qalb Loze and Tūrmānīn in northern Syria.⁵⁷⁷ The pavement of the church was decorated with a wonderful mosaic discovered in 1928.⁵⁷⁸ The writings of this pavement are seen “*Here Sirkīs al-Ḥay*”, which probably is considered evidence that this church belongs to him, or rather “*Saluma for Salma mother of bishop George*”, who seems to have been the benefactor.⁵⁷⁹



Fig. 90 The great basilica of al-Suwaydā', (Lowrie, 1906, p. 103)

⁵⁷³ Makhūl, 2000, p. 95

⁵⁷⁴ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. V), 1997, p. 445

⁵⁷⁵ 'Abū 'Assāf, 1997, p. 90

⁵⁷⁶ Makhūl, 2000, p. 95

⁵⁷⁷ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. V), 1997, pp. 613-614

⁵⁷⁸ Makhūl, 2000, p. 95

⁵⁷⁹ 'Abū 'Assāf, 1997, p. 90

III.3.4. Churches in the Sixth Century:

- **West Church 'Umm al-Jimāl (Umm el-Jimal), and 'Cathedral' 557:**

The church was built in 557, based on the inscription found on the piers of the apse.⁵⁸⁰ The plan clearly demonstrates a nave and two aisles divided by two rows of piers. Four broad arches rest on these square piers.⁵⁸¹ Additionally, an apse is placed on the east end with two chambers surrounding it. The exterior of the apse and side chambers shows a straight wall. Remarkably, this church has a narthex in the west ending with two towers positioned on both sides. These towers were seemingly added later. A high clerestory is situated on the upper level, pierced with rectangular windows for illumination. Whereas round arched windows are placed on the western side (Fig. 91). The covering of the nave presents a gable roof (double), yet the aisles are covered with slab stones.⁵⁸² The apse's roofing is characterized with a half dome built of concrete and volcanic scoriae. It is worth noting that the manner of roofing this church resembles the Qalb Loze church situated in northern Syria. Similarly, the arch placed between the two western towers reminds of Qalb Loze church.⁵⁸³

Most striking, there was a 'cathedral' in 'Umm al-Jimāl following the same plan as the West church. However, the western towers disappeared and were replaced by a narthex, with three doors leading to the church.⁵⁸⁴ There was a small room attached and positioned on the north wall with an entrance to its aisle. A wooden roof was used to cover the nave, while the stone was employed for the side aisles (Fig. 92).⁵⁸⁵

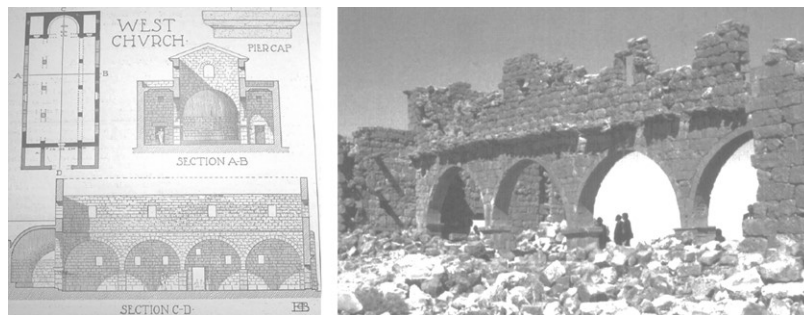


Fig. 91 Plan and section of West Church, (Butler, 1929, p. 115), a view facing south-east, (Kennedy, 2016, p. 20

⁵⁸⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 115

⁵⁸¹ Butler, 1913, p. 187

⁵⁸² Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 115

⁵⁸³ Butler, 1913, p. 187

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁸⁵ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 115

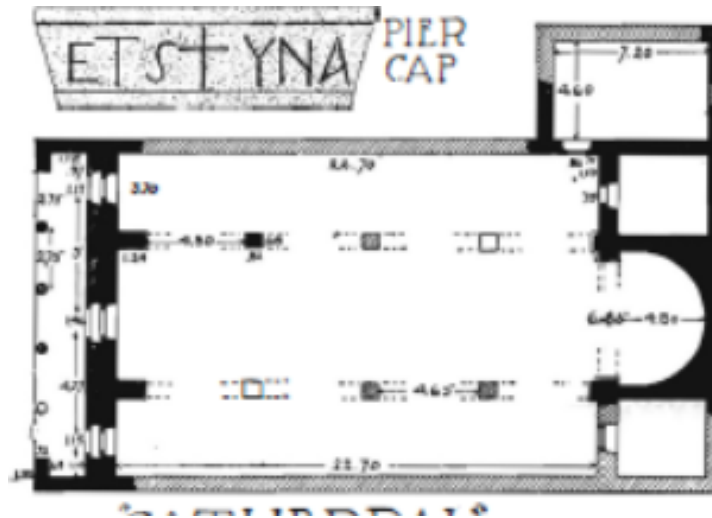


Fig. 92 cathedral' in 'Umm al-Jimāl plan, (*Butler, 1913, p. 183*)

- **'Umm al-Jimāl. Church of Numerianos:**

The church of the monastery was built around the same period in 557.⁵⁸⁶ Based on Butler's view, it is called Numerianos, built as a vow by Numerianos, Maria and Johannes.⁵⁸⁷ It has the same internal arrangement regarding the apse and chambers; however, the nave is divided into three bays. According to Butler: 'The other significant difference is on the upper floor of the north aisle, where the apertures are converted into gallery windows, a strange order that was apparently replicated on the southern side and that he felt was not originally intended for the church'. Furthermore, the main entrance is an extraordinary one preceded by a colonnaded portico consisting of six Doric columns with an architrave resting on them. In particular, the arch propped with tiny columns with rectangular windows makes the western façade attractively distinctive in southern Syria. The covering forms a gable roof. It is believed that the disposition of windows on the higher level on the western side of the church is taken from the Renaissance designs.⁵⁸⁸ On the other hand, the windows placed in the apse have been concealed at the time of the Muslim conquest by building a wall (Fig. 93).⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 115

⁵⁸⁷ Butler, 1913, p. 191

⁵⁸⁸ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 115-116

⁵⁸⁹ Butler, 1913, p. 191

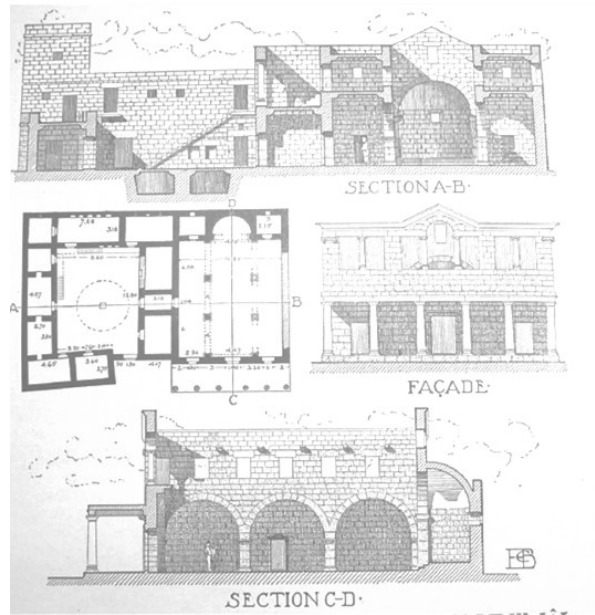


Fig. 93 Church of Numerianos plan, sections and façade, (*Butler, 1929, p. 118*)

- **Bosra Churches: two churches**

This edifice with a large basilica plan located in Bosra shows a nave with two narrow side aisles terminated with a wide apse, which is flanked by two rectangular chambers. The curve of the apse is pierced by five windows.⁵⁹⁰ Furthermore, as mentioned by Butler, there are two speculations regarding the western part of the church: either the west end has a narrow arch on both sides, as many churches in northeast Syria, or a narthex shows this part. The church has merely one door. The covering shows a slab of stone (Fig. 94 A).⁵⁹¹

The second church is exposed to more destruction, and it shows newness in its interior design. The plan presents a basilica, and it has two rows of five columns akin to the ones in northern Syria. The second bay from the east end features two cruciform piers which were possibly erected as replacements, and two pilaster piers situated on the wall with three transverse arches resting on them (Fig. 94 B).⁵⁹²

⁵⁹⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 116

⁵⁹¹ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 116

⁵⁹² Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʾawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 520

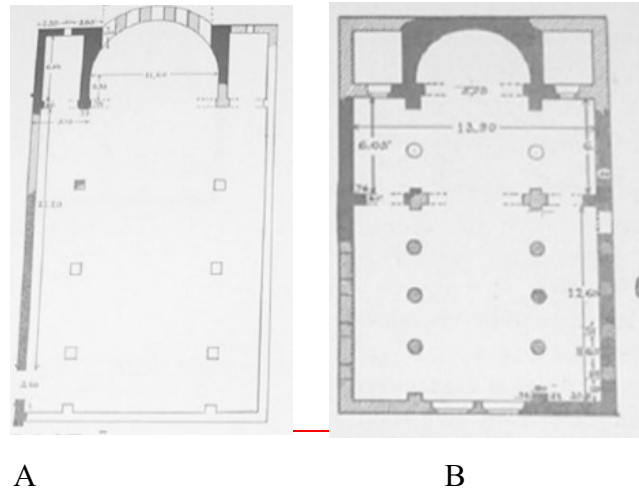


Fig. 94 Bosra Church plan with curved apse, Second Church plan of Bosra, (*Butler, 1929, p. 119*)

- **Simīdj church:**

The plan describes a single hall terminating with three apses. It is interesting to note that this church with its three apses resembles the one at St. Simon. Simīdj Church illustrates two maintained half domes covering the two smaller apses and outwardly a straight wall, whereas the middle apse presents externally a polygonal form. Despite the claim of many scholars, the emergence of three apses in the churches in Syria was probably an indication of the eastern arrangement, nonetheless, it is important to note that this arrangement appears only in five churches out of two hundred and fifty in Syria. There is a temple square on the west end of the central aisle, which in its form is ascribed to the Nabataean period (Fig. 95). It is thought that some modifications were carried out during the Christian period such as an upper level to the temple and a tower at the west end of the middle aisle.⁵⁹³



Fig. 95 Simīdj Church plan, (*Butler, 1929, p. 119*)

⁵⁹³ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 119

- **al-ʿUbirī (el-Uberi) Chapel:**

This small, perfectly preserved church is situated close to al-ʿUbirī monastery. It displays an almost square plan with three similarly sized divisions through two wide arches. Its layout ended with a square apse, while the side chambers disappeared in this church. The church is roofed with flat slab stones (Fig. 96).⁵⁹⁴

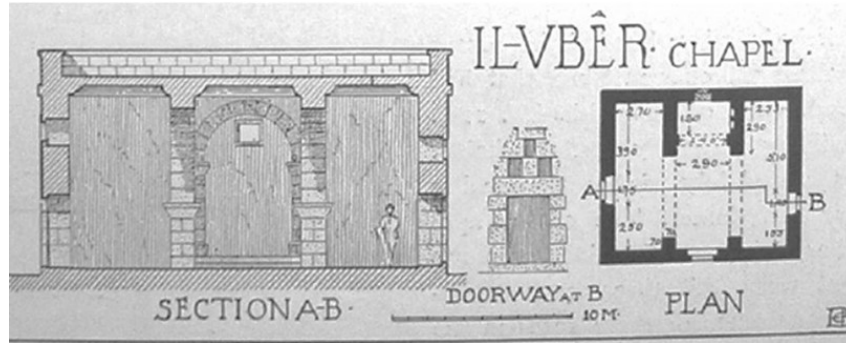


Fig. 96 al-ʿUbirī Chapel plan and section, (Butler, 1929, p. 120)

- **Dīr al-Juwānī (Deir al-Juwani):**

It is also located in al-Lijāt representing a church in a convent. Its distinguished plan shows five aisles divided by individual arches and ending with a protruding deep apse. It is worth mentioning that the projecting apse is placed crossways to the nave and the construction of the transverse arches is quite distinguished compared to other churches.⁵⁹⁵ It is interesting to note that the two transverse arches separate the narthex space. A slab roof is the following method to cover the entire church (Fig. 97).⁵⁹⁶

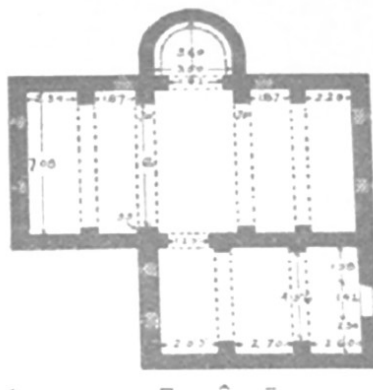


Fig. 97 Dīr al-Juwānī Church plan, (Butler, 1929, p. 121)

⁵⁹⁴ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 120

⁵⁹⁵ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 121

⁵⁹⁶ Butler, 1913, p. 436

- **Bosra Cathedral:**

First and foremost, Bosra is famous for its ecclesiastical organization and its diocese associated with the Patriarchate of Antioch, as well as being a metropolitan center and the capital of the Arabian Byzantine.⁵⁹⁷

The centralized plan of this cathedral resembles Apamea Church, Rasafa Church and the Great Church in Aleppo.⁵⁹⁸ Hence, Bosra Cathedral stands out as one of the most distinctive centralized churches (martyr-shrine) in southern Syria. It is characterized by its enormous mass and big dome.⁵⁹⁹ The cathedral of Bosra was dedicated to SS Sergius, Bacchus, and Leontios by Bishop Julian (512-513).⁶⁰⁰ A Greek engraving on the west doorway was discovered by Waddington, seen translated:⁶⁰¹ “*Under the most God-beloved and most holy Iulianos, archbishop, was built and completed the holy church of Sergios, Bacchos and Leontios, martyrs, victorious and triumphed gloriously. In (the) year 407, (the)sixth*”.⁶⁰²

Despite the absence of epigraphic evidence, it is still logical to suggest that this building was used as a cathedral. On the other hand, the existence of another central-plan church to the south of the building imposes two hypotheses: Due to the first one, one of these churches was not cathedral; rather, it played a role as a large pilgrimage church. While the second is more possible hypothesis is that both churches were used as cathedrals, the first one is Chalcedonian, and the other one is dedicated to the Monophysite because of the considerable presence of the Monophysites Ghassanids over the sixth century.⁶⁰³ Undoubtedly, this cathedral (tetraconch) of Bosra was identified as a cathedral for the local bishop.⁶⁰⁴

The architectural plan of Bosra Cathedral depicts an external square surrounding an internal circle and ends with a prominent East apse: a circular tetraconch.⁶⁰⁵ The apse is flanked by two oblong side chambers (northern and southern ones) pierced with three

⁵⁹⁷ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū‘at batrakiyyat ‘Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-mīlādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 505

⁵⁹⁸ Makhūl, 2000, p. 99

⁵⁹⁹ Kwākbī, 1982, p. 130

⁶⁰⁰ Kennedy, 2016, p. 20

⁶⁰¹ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 125

⁶⁰² Krautheimer, 1986, pp. 229-230

⁶⁰³ Kennedy, 2016, pp. 21-22

⁶⁰⁴ Krautheimer, 1986, pp. 229-230

⁶⁰⁵ Balderstone, 2007, p. 37

windows.⁶⁰⁶ Those smaller chambers terminate as square externally and semicircular internally (Fig. 98).⁶⁰⁷

Besides, there are four exedras pierced with windows and four doorways occupying the four corners.⁶⁰⁸ The centralized plan consists of a quatrefoil with four L form piers which are presumably carrying a dome. In addition, it is assumed that an ambon and a bema served the liturgy.⁶⁰⁹ It has three entrances except on the eastern side. The church followed with these types of covering: the centre of the plan shows a massive hemispherical dome drum, a vault for the bema, and the apse with a half dome. Whereas a slab of stone covers the aisles (Fig. 99).⁶¹⁰

All things considered, it is mentioned that Bosra Cathedral reveals an integration between the Byzantine style and Syrian features which are represented by the employment of the rectangular form outwardly.

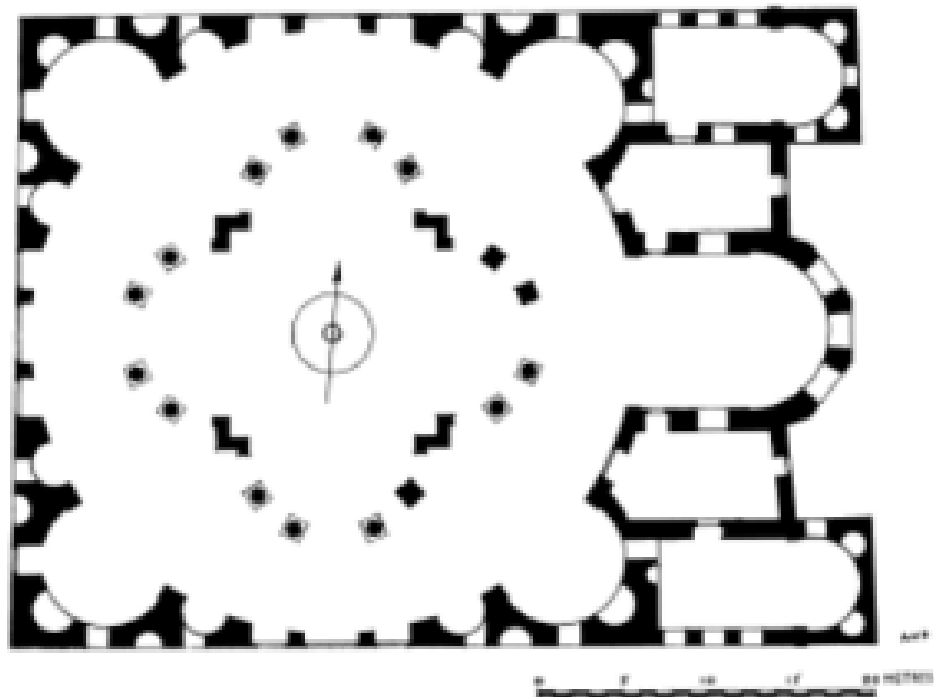


Fig. 98 Bosra Cathedral plan, (*Kleinbauer, 1973, p. 118*).

⁶⁰⁶ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 125

⁶⁰⁷ Milburn, 1988, pp. 125-126

⁶⁰⁸ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 125

⁶⁰⁹ Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 1985, p. 52

⁶¹⁰ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 125

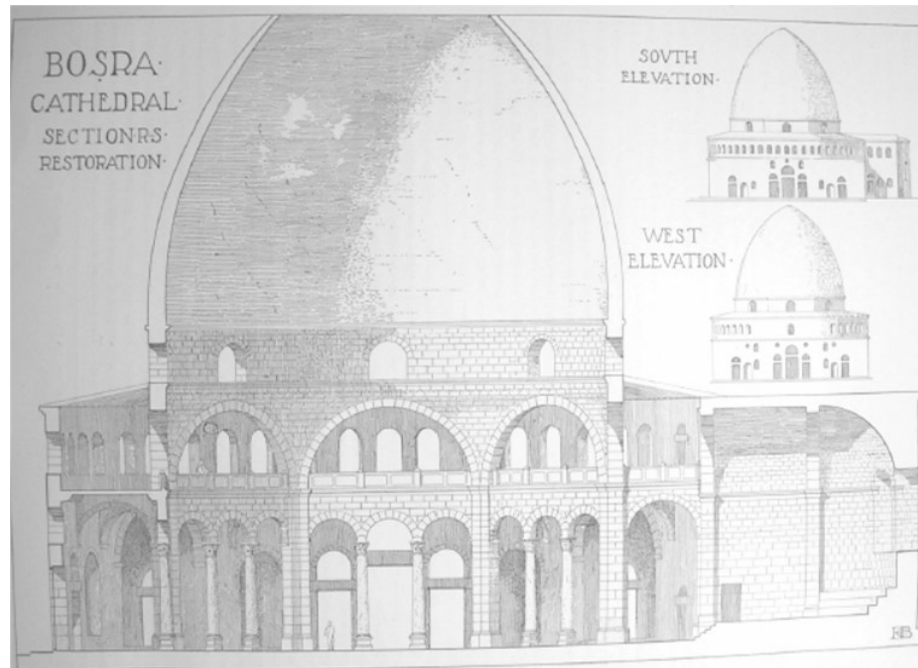


Fig. 99 South and West facades of Bosra Cathedral and section, (*Butler, 1929, p. 126*).

- **St. Elias Church:**

The church located in Izraa city is in perfect condition and belongs to the Greek Catholic denomination. It is noteworthy that this church resembles Saint George Church which is dedicated to the Greek Orthodox, located in the same city.⁶¹¹ According to several references, the church was constructed in 542 or 515-415 and restored in 1889. It is one of the most important churches (shrines) in southern Syria due to several aspects including the spectacular plan with a dome, as well as the presence of inscriptions with different symbolism. The engraving above the door indicates that Izraa represented an episcopal city. Moreover, several Greek Christian writings are witnessed in the courtyard and inside the church. In addition, there are other writings on the outer wall of the apse, followed by the symbol of the cross (Fig. 101,102).⁶¹²

The general plan clearly shows a cruciform system. Externally, it takes the form of a square. It leans a little towards the east-west axis.⁶¹³ The plan ends with an elongated prominent

⁶¹¹ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAntākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. V), 1997, p. 551

⁶¹² DGAM Archive

⁶¹³ Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie*, 1947, p. 148

deep east apse. It is followed by one module in the west, two on each side and another one perpendicular.

The iconostasis divides the nave from the altar, followed by three doors (Fig. 101). The western entrance of the church leads to a square room with four huge supportive pillars. The center of the cross has three broad arches resting on huge jambs.⁶¹⁴ There are five windows in the apse, while three other windows pierce the entrance (Fig. 101).

Regarding the entrances, there are two doors on the western wall and the southern one respectively. The significant western door is characterized with decorative carvings such as cross symbols and other plant forms similar to those on the southern door. Solely the central square is covered with a dome, while other parts of the church are covered by slab stones (Fig. 03, 104).⁶¹⁵

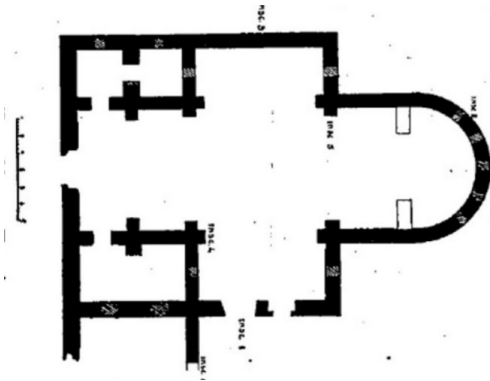


Fig. 100 St. Elias Church plan, (Lassus, Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie, 1947, p. 148)



A

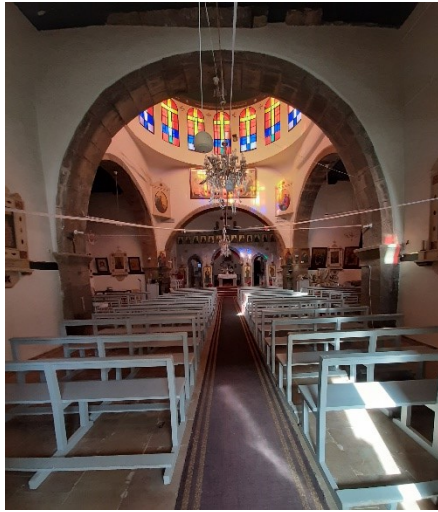


B

Fig. 101 A. Interior view facing East. B. Centralized dome of church, 2019, taken by the author.

⁶¹⁴ DGAM Archive

⁶¹⁵ DGAM Archive

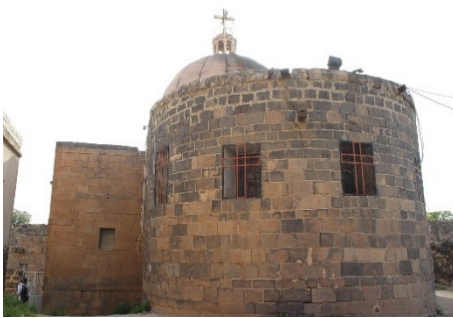


A



B

Fig. 102 A view showing arches from West. B. Interior view showing apse, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B



C

Fig. 103 A. Exterior view showing East apse. B Exterior view from North-West. C. Western main entrance of the church, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 104 Exterior view facing South, 2019, taken by the author.

- **Shaqrā (Shaqra) church:**

The plan presents an irregular construction. Precisely, this church is composed of a cruciform inside a square. A dome covers this central square. The central pillars supporting the arches are cruciform shaped (Fig. 105). This is a type of martyr Christian monument built in accordance with the liturgical practices simultaneously with local traditions in these areas.⁶¹⁶

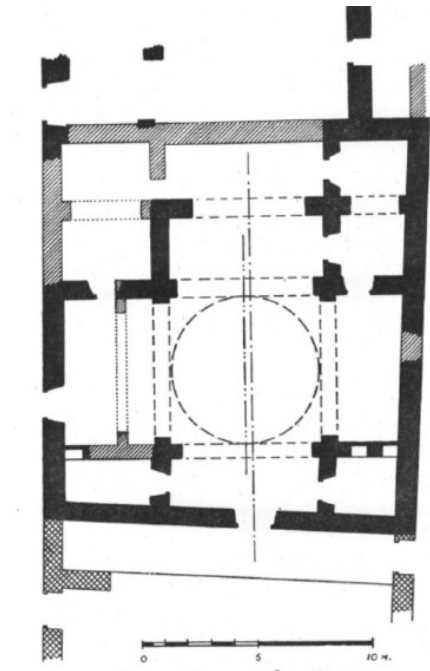


Fig. 105 Shaqrā Church plan, (Lassus, 1931, p. 24)

III.4. Churches over the Crusader period between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries

- **The Cathedral of Our Lady of Tortosa or Notre Dame de Tortosa**

In the year 346, this cathedral was built upon the foundations of an earlier smaller chapel. In addition to the name Our Lady Church, it was also known as the Church of the pilgrims due to its altar and icon which were the only surviving remnants following an earthquake in 387.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁶ Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie*, 1947, p. 147

⁶¹⁷ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsūʿat batrakiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī* (Vol. I), 1997, pp. 547-556

There were numerous Christian churches in Tartus including one that housed the icon of the Virgin Mary and St. Peter's altar until approximately 1220, when it was merged with the cathedral. The cathedral was completed in the middle of the 12th century. The western façade was finished by the middle of the thirteenth century.⁶¹⁸

The church layout depicts a basilica with a nave and two aisles. It is divided by two rows of cruciform piers with columns and has four bays. Each aisle is terminated by an east semicircular apse (Fig. 106, 107, 108). The two side apses are supported by two protrusive rectangular towers.⁶¹⁹ Most striking, the influence of the Gothic style is shown in the decoration of the capitals of the columns and the western facade. It is notable that the lower northern part of the church differs in its construction. It is presumed that it was a door placed for pilgrims' entry because the Virgin Mary shrine is located on the north side of the nave. The church has three entrances distributed on the main western façade and two on the northern and southern facades. In terms of openings, they are distinguished by pointed arch windows illuminating the side aisles and the nave. In addition, there are three windows on the eastern side. The nave has a barrel-vaulted ceiling with a pointed arch (Fig. 109, 110).⁶²⁰ It is worth mentioning that today, this cathedral is used as a museum in Tartous.

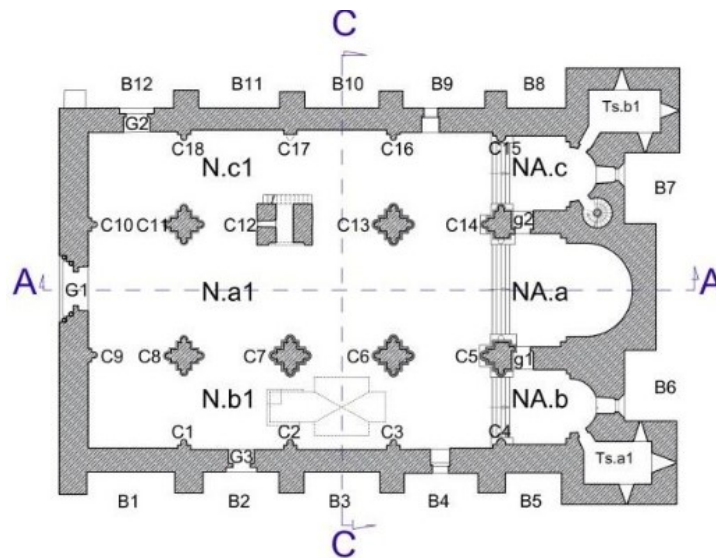


Fig. 106 Cathedral of Our Lady plan, dawn by Marwān Ḥasan.

⁶¹⁸ Ḥasan, DGAM Archive

⁶¹⁹ Ibid

⁶²⁰ Ibid

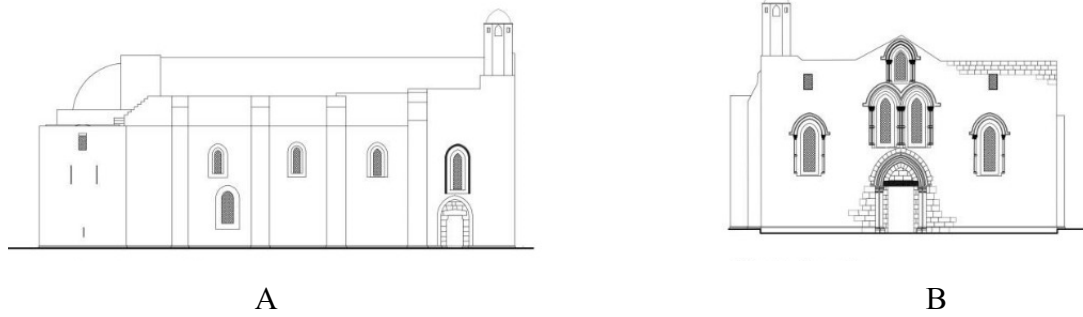


Fig. 107 A. North façade. B. West façade, drawn by Marwān Ḥasan.

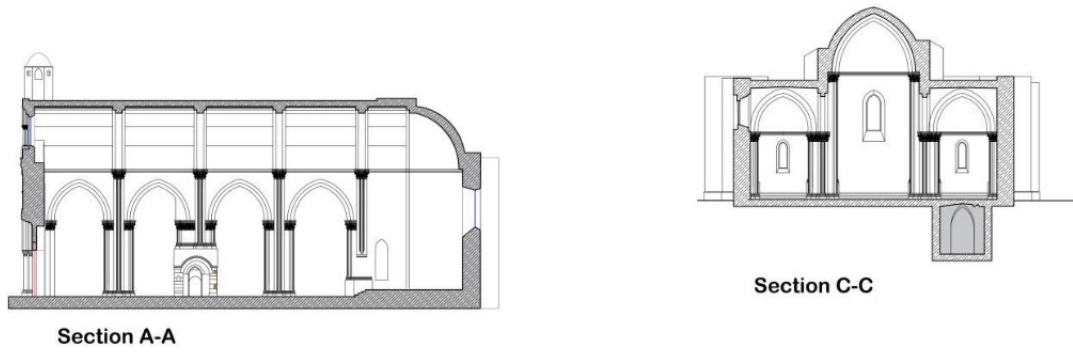
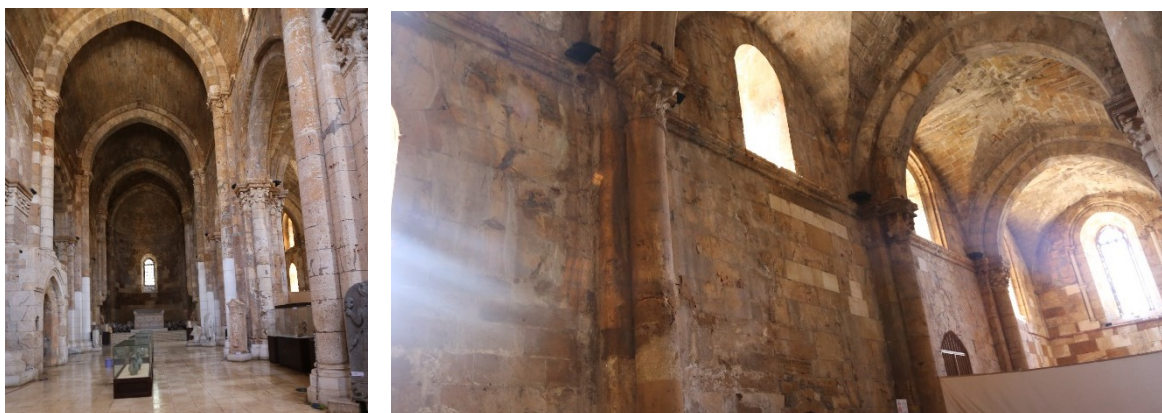


Fig. 108 Two sections of cathedral, drawn by Marwān Ḥasan.



Fig. 109 Exterior view of cathedral, by DGAM archive.



A

B

Fig. 110 A. Interior view facing East. B. Interior view showing the roof and windows, 2019, taken by author.

• **The Patriarchal Monastery of St. George**

The three-story St. George monastery near Homs exemplifies the historical and modern edifice located in the valley of Wādī al-Naṣāra (Wadi al-Nasara) between Tartus and Homs.⁶²¹

This monastery was established under the reign of Emperor Justinian I. It was built over a cave that was initially devoted to a pagan god and later utilized by hermits, as were other nearby caves. The current monastery's cellar has old cells used by monks before to the Byzantine period.⁶²²

The monastery is notable for its large size with four stories, two churches and fifty-five rooms used as cells, reception rooms, dungeons, storerooms, and stables.⁶²³

The old monastery is occupied on the ground floor by a church from the 12/13 century (Crusading period).⁶²⁴ Its design has a single nave supported by three ribbed vaults.⁶²⁵ It is believed that a wooden latticework barrier separated the east used by men, from the west used by women. The plan ends with an east apse. The iconostasis divides the nave from the altar. This iconostasis was decorated in three phases: the bottom section in the seventeenth century, the top part of the royal entrance in the nineteenth century and the third component

⁶²¹ Trübbū, 2001, p. 220

⁶²² Ibid

⁶²³ al-Hilū , Samīn, Qasāṭlī , & O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 74

⁶²⁴ Makhūl, 2000, pp. 34-35

⁶²⁵ al-Hilū , Samīn, Qasāṭlī , & O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 74

is supposed to be the remains of an old church iconostasis (Fig. 111, 112).⁶²⁶ There are two entrances to the church. It features historic small windows and a modern large one near the iconostasis.⁶²⁷

The contemporary church monastery is located on the upper level and was built between 1857-1863.⁶²⁸ The basilica layout with a nave and two side aisles is separated by two rows of ten columns. The church's design shows that the columns belong to the Gothic style and the windows and doors are attributed to the Byzantine style.

Iconostasis carries icons were created by the Jerusalem School between 1866 and 1870.⁶²⁹ Remarkably, the two stone columns placed in the entrance date back to the seventh century.⁶³⁰



A



B

Fig. 111 A. Church of old monastery, (*al-Ḥilū* , *Samīn*, *Qasāṭlī* , & *O'Sullivan*, 2007, p. 112 B. Iconostasis of church, taken by Khūrī, R.

⁶²⁶ Makhūl, 2000, pp. 34-35

⁶²⁷ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-milādī* (Vol. I), 1997, p 564

⁶²⁸ *al-Ḥilū* , *Samīn*, *Qasāṭlī* , & *O'Sullivan*, 2007, p. 76

⁶²⁹ Makhūl, 2000, pp. 34-35

⁶³⁰ Athanāsiyū, *Mawsū'at baṭrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-milādī* (Vol. I), 1997, p 568



Fig. 112 Exterior view of Patriarchal Monastery of St. George, (*al-Ḥilū , Samīn, Qasāṭlī , & O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 13*).

III.5. Conclusion of the Chapter

In examining the development of **churches in northern Syria** from the fourth to the sixth centuries, it is evident that architectural evolution was closely tied to liturgical needs and theological considerations. The church models mentioned above provide valuable insights into this development, illustrating how architectural forms adapted to the practices and rituals of early Christian worship.

Hereunder are the general and salient characteristics of church architecture, derived from these examples, which reflect the interplay between liturgical requirements and structural design:

- Churches are characterized by their small scale owing to the use of large white limestone stones. The church plan shows a basilica with a single nave or a nave with three aisles. It ends with a straight wall or semicircular apse between two side chambers.
 - Two middle-height towers flank the western façade.
 - Most of these churches are distinguished by a gable roof.
 - Churches in northern Syria exhibit elaborate ornamentation. These embellishments split the facades into horizontal sections. The ornaments of wavy stripes connect the windows on the facades as well as the apse.
- Based on the case studies mentioned above, eleven churches, despite their relatively small number, shared distinct architectural characteristics that reflect the broader trends of

early Christian architecture in northern Syria.⁶³¹ **In the fourth century**, early Christian churches in northern Syria were characterized by their small scale, limited height, and minimal windows (Fig. 113), (Table. 1). Architecturally, these structures were indistinguishable from the surrounding residential buildings of the region, exemplified by the Qirqbīza (Qirqbize) Church. The only architectural element that identified these simple edifices as churches was the protruding apse. This suggests that these buildings were initially intended for assembly rather than exclusively for religious purposes. Furthermore, this architectural simplicity reflects the size of the local Christian community, their economic status, and the availability of resources and existing structures during this period.

After the edict of Milan (313), the basilica plan emerged as a prominent architectural form, incorporating a larger nave and two aisles to accommodate new liturgical requirements. It is remarkable that three of the eleven church examples examined, accounting for about 26%, stood out for incorporating distinctive features such as the bema, shrines, the founder's tomb, a baptistery, and a martyr chapel. The adoption of the basilica form was not solely driven by liturgical needs but also by the increasing number of believers, as previously mentioned.

According to the Apostolic Constitutions, specific guidelines were established for constructing new churches. These included an eastward orientation, the bishop's seat at the center of the nave, side chambers flanking the apse, a martyr chapel on the south of the apse, and a diaconicon or vestry positioned to its north.⁶³² These principles reflect functional and symbolic considerations in early Christian architecture.

Furthermore, among the eleven church examples studied, seven churches, representing approximately 64% of the fourth-century examples, were found to include a bema. It is interesting to note that about 32 to 40 churches were found in northern Syria.⁶³³

Remarkably, the arrangement inside the church is based on the Teaching of the Apostles (Syrian document): It is mentioned that the men took the first place at the front, while the women were behind: *“On the East side of the room the priests, and in the center of these,*

⁶³¹ Estimates by Butler and other scholars, including Techalenko, place the number of churches in northern Syria during the fourth century at over 25, though this total may not reflect the full scope, as further research could uncover additional examples

⁶³² Pena, 1997, p. 64

⁶³³ Loosley, 2017, p. 110

the bishop, will be seated on their seats. In the middle of the nave, the men, and behind them, the women".⁶³⁴ Moreover, around the bema, the children sat '*So that they did not cause in trouble*' based on the Apostolic Constitution (VII, 11.10).⁶³⁵

In terms of architecture, the basilica plans depend on a longitudinal supporting system. Hence, the columns play a significant role in supporting the arcades and the clerestory. The apse in these churches comes in two forms: a protruding semicircular apse, observed in just one church about 9 %, and a straight wall apse, which is predominant and found in ten churches, representing approximately 91% of the total examples.

Regarding the entrances, most church plans from the early fourth century feature two southern entrances, one designated for men and the other for women, resembling the layout of local residences.⁶³⁶ This design reflects the common practice in Syrian dwellings, which typically employed an east-west orientation with openings and doors on the south side for heating and lighting.⁶³⁷ Western entrances, however, are less common and are found in only four churches, which accounts for approximately 35% of the total examples.⁶³⁸ This scarcity may be attributed to the conversion of certain pagan temples into churches, where the original structural framework was preserved by architects, potentially retaining the essential structure such as Banqusa church and Brad cathedral. Furthermore, based on *Testamentum Domini*, a Syrian work dating back to the fourth century, the entrances are defined as follows: "The room will have two doors, to the right and left for men and women". Additionally, the entrances of some parish and shrine churches are accompanied by porches, offering shelter from the elements. This characteristic is found in four churches, representing about 35% of the total. By the end of the fourth century, approximately 35% of the church examples featured a western façade with an entrance used by the clergy during processions.

Over this time period, the windows are rectangular in shape distributed on the two side walls and at times in the apse found. Approximately 55% of the churches have rectangular

⁶³⁴ Pena, 1997, p. 72

⁶³⁵ Ibid

⁶³⁶ Pena, 1997, p. 69

⁶³⁷ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 127

⁶³⁸ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 142

windows, and about 35% have arched windows. Notably, some churches incorporate both types of windows.

Lastly, the churches in this region typically incorporate three types of columns. Notably, some churches display styles such as Doric and Ionic in approximately 35% of church examples. In some cases, all three forms of columns are present within a single church, which occurs in about 18% of the fourth-century churches. Regarding ornaments, there is a notable absence of exterior engravings.

In terms of roofing, a gabled wooden roof was the predominant type of covering (Table. 2).

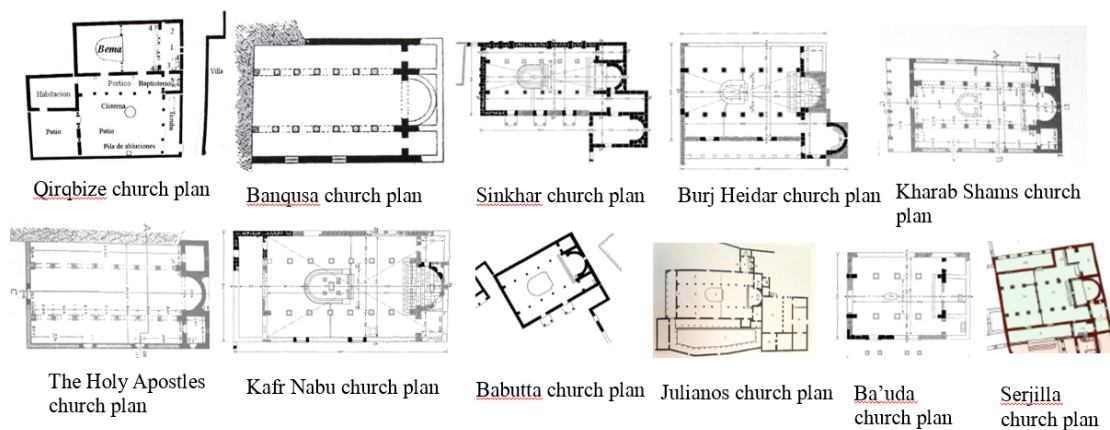


Fig. 113 Church Plans in the Fourth Century in Northern Syria, by the author

➤ The church examples studied in the fifth century total 15, encompassing churches and chapels.⁶³⁹ Compared to the fourth century, the church architecture of the fifth century shows a greater variety in the church examples mentioned above (Fig. 114), (Table. 1). This is evident in the basilica plans, which align with the previous century, about 34 % of the total church studied. However, significant changes in church layouts are observed toward the end of the fifth century, particularly in the widening of the central nave and the reduced narrowing compared to those at the beginning of this century, accounting for about 27 % of the total. The design of the apse exhibits significant variation among churches from this period. Notably, approximately 27% of the churches studied, or about four examples,

⁶³⁹ Scholars such as Butler and Techalenko estimate that northern Syria had more than 55 churches during the fifth century, although this figure may not be comprehensive, as further surveys may reveal additional examples.

feature a projecting semicircular apse flanked by two side chambers. In contrast, approximately 72% of the churches, totalling around 11 examples, feature a straight apse end externally. Meanwhile, the bema emerges as a consistent architectural element in about 27% of the churches studied, appearing in four instances. Notably, the narthex is present in approximately 27% of the churches studied, or about four examples. This century is also marked by the initial integration of baptisteries into church designs, observed in around 20% of the total church examples. Additionally, some churches exhibit distinctive western façade features, including western towers and an open loggia with a wide central arch, found in about 20% of the cases, or three churches.

A special approach appeared in the middle of the fifth century at St. Simon Church with its special cruciform scheme. It is considered that the cruciform church plan represents a symbol by assuring the nature of Christ over the fifth century. Also, the triple apses emerged to assure the concept of the Trinity “Trinity as three in one”.⁶⁴⁰ It is thought that in the second half of the fourth century, some bishops endeavoured to set a new approach to the church building precisely under the orthodox ruler emperor Theodosius I, who rendered the orthodox basilica ending with three semicircular apses. These apses link with Chalcedonian Orthodox, such as in Palestine, Cyprus, and southern Arabia. On the other hand, in Syria, Christian basilicas ending with three apses were rarely shown, compared to those in Egypt, which have different forms of triconch sanctuary.⁶⁴¹ In Syria, the single apse is more commonly seen in churches.

Notably, in a few churches, columns were replaced by square pillars, which served to separate the nave from the aisles and support wide arches in one instance, accounting for about 7% of the total church examples. This architectural adaptation resulted in a more spacious interior compared to churches that used a larger number of columns. This technique had been previously used in southern and eastern Syria, leading some scholars to propose that it originated in the eastern region of Syria before being adopted by architects in northern Syria.⁶⁴²

Additionally, chapels of various designs have been identified throughout the region.

⁶⁴⁰ Balderstone, 2007, pp. 43-44

⁶⁴¹ Balderstone, 2007, p. 13

⁶⁴² Butler, 1929, p. 70

By the end of the fifth century, the western door had become a prevalent feature, often decorated with distinctive elements and ornamentations, appearing in approximately 52% of the churches studied, or eight examples.

Additionally, some churches feature a northern entrance, which helps accommodate the pilgrims during the holy days of the Patron Saint,⁶⁴³ observed in approximately 32% of the total church examples.

It is noted that a gabled roof is used to cover the side doors in about 27% of the churches studied (Fig. 114), (Table. 2).

At the beginning of the fifth century, churches typically featured larger arched or round windows, often located on the upper level, found in approximately 67% of the cases. As a result, rectangular windows became less frequent, while arched lintels and round windows gained prominence.

During this century, there was a gradual and persistent evolution of decoration, especially at the end of the century, thus becoming essential in churches (Table. 1).

It is also striking that the architect and priest Markianos had a more significant influence on the group of four churches Bābsqā, Ksījah, Saint Paul and Moses Church at Dār Qītā, and the Great Convent at Qaṣr al-Banāt than the patron. According to Tchalenko, Markianos, in his dual role as "priest and architect," demonstrated a comprehensive vision encompassing both ecclesiastical matters and architectural design. He adhered to the local building traditions while respecting the Orthodox church architecture of the Antioch diocese.

While patrons were involved in church construction, their participation was contingent upon adhering to the conditions and strategies established by the bishop and diocese.⁶⁴⁴ This collaborative process underscores that the development of church architecture during this period resulted from cooperation between architects, local Syrian builders, and bishops, who collectively contributed to the design and adornment of these sacred structures.

⁶⁴³ Loosley, 2017, p. 9

⁶⁴⁴ Loosley, 2017, pp. 43-58

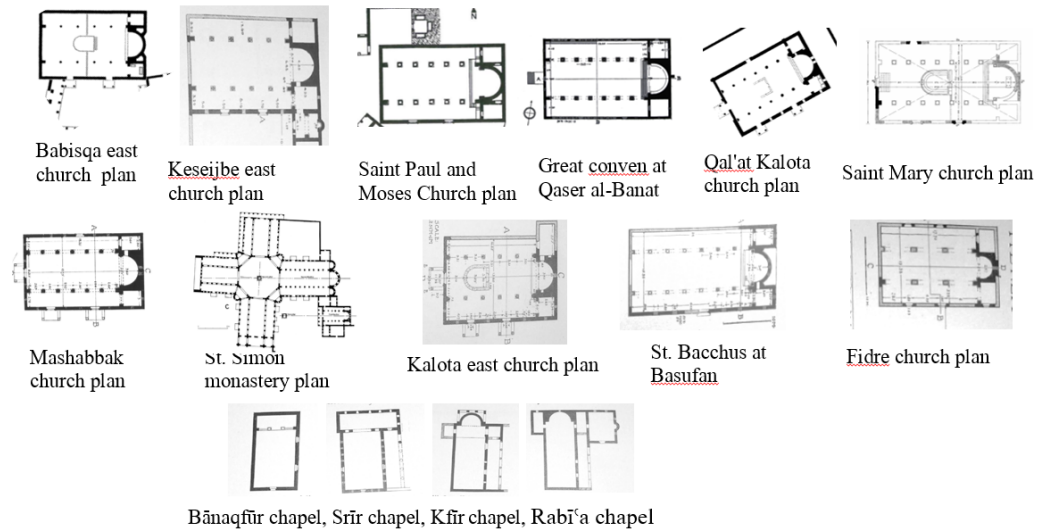


Fig. 114 Church Plans in the Fifth Century in Northern Syria, by the author

➤ **In the sixth century**, the current analysis includes 13 selected examples of churches.⁶⁴⁵

Overall, the basilica plan is similar to those from the fourth and fifth centuries, but it differs in the length of the nave and the eastern end (Fig. 115), (Table. 1). Most church plans end with a straight eastern wall, which is seen in about 85% of the churches, specifically in around 11 of the examples mentioned. In contrast, a smaller number of churches have a projecting semicircular apse, which is found in about 14% of the examples, or two churches. On the other hand, many churches have an apse that is square on the inside and has a straight wall on the outside. This design is seen in about 47% of the church examples studied, which is approximately six churches out of the thirteen churches.

It's observed that about 77% of the churches were built on elevated platforms, which means around ten out of the thirteen churches. A significant number, about 62%, included a narthex, which is about eight churches. In contrast, only about 23% used piers instead of columns to support large arches, which is roughly three churches.

Most striking, owing to the use of piers in Ruwayḥa Church, arranged in a "T" form, allowed for a broader central nave compared to churches with traditional columns. This design not only created a more expansive interior space but also provided the congregation with an

⁶⁴⁵ Scholars like Butler and Tchalenko estimate that northern Syria had at least 44 churches, or potentially more, during the sixth century. However, this number may not be exhaustive, as further surveys could uncover additional examples.

uninterrupted perspective, minimizing visual obstructions. Approximately 23% of the churches have western towers. This means about 3 churches out of the 13 have this feature.

It is also notable that in a limited subset of examples, comprising approximately 8% of the total churches studied, the prominent southern chamber was assigned the function of a baptistery (Fig. 115), (Table. 2).

As a result, the richness of buildings peaked in the second part of the sixth century. Church buildings are defined by their distinctive western towers, porticos, courtyard, baptistery, and superb martyrium. Noteworthy that the function of these towers is supposed to be bell towers but based on the Syrian rituals at that time the bells were not used. It is perhaps referring to Strzygowski, ascribed to the rite of incubation ‘inmbatio’ healing: one is dedicated to men and the other to women.⁶⁴⁶ However, it is believed at times they represent as bell towers.

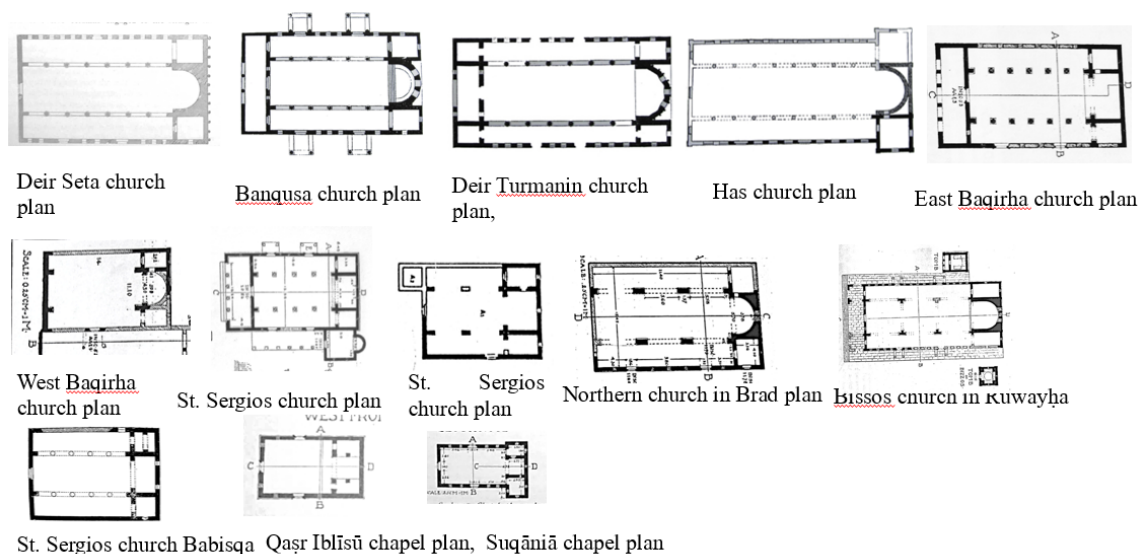


Fig. 115 Church Plans in the Sixth Century in Northern Syria, by the author

⁶⁴⁶ Pena, 1997, p. 148

Church Name	Category	Site Location	Period	Style	Architectural elements	Decorative elements	Structural elements	Other elements	Notes	References
1. Church of St. George	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2. Church of St. Basil	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3. Church of St. John	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4. Church of St. Peter	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5. Church of St. Paul	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6. Church of St. James	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7. Church of St. Andrew	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8. Church of St. Mark	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9. Church of St. Luke	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
10. Church of St. Philip	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
11. Church of St. Timothy	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
12. Church of St. Titus	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
13. Church of St. Phileas	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
14. Church of St. Gerasimos	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
15. Church of St. Paphnutius	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
16. Church of St. Ammon	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
17. Church of St. Athanasius	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
18. Church of St. Isaac	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
19. Church of St. John the Evangelist	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
20. Church of St. John the Baptist	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
21. Church of St. John the Apostle	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
22. Church of St. John the Virgin	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
23. Church of St. John the Evangelist	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
24. Church of St. John the Baptist	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
25. Church of St. John the Apostle	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
26. Church of St. John the Virgin	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
27. Church of St. John the Evangelist	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
28. Church of St. John the Baptist	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28
29. Church of St. John the Apostle	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
30. Church of St. John the Virgin	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
31. Church of St. John the Evangelist	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31
32. Church of St. John the Baptist	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
33. Church of St. John the Apostle	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33
34. Church of St. John the Virgin	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
35. Church of St. John the Evangelist	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
36. Church of St. John the Baptist	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
37. Church of St. John the Apostle	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37
38. Church of St. John the Virgin	38	38	38	38	38	38	38	38	38	38
39. Church of St. John the Evangelist	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39
40. Church of St. John the Baptist	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
41. Church of St. John the Apostle	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
42. Church of St. John the Virgin	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
43. Church of St. John the Evangelist	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43
44. Church of St. John the Baptist	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44
45. Church of St. John the Apostle	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
46. Church of St. John the Virgin	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46
47. Church of St. John the Evangelist	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47
48. Church of St. John the Baptist	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
49. Church of St. John the Apostle	49	49	49	49	49	49	49	49	49	49
50. Church of St. John the Virgin	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
51. Church of St. John the Evangelist	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51
52. Church of St. John the Baptist	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52
53. Church of St. John the Apostle	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53
54. Church of St. John the Virgin	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
55. Church of St. John the Evangelist	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55
56. Church of St. John the Baptist	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
57. Church of St. John the Apostle	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57
58. Church of St. John the Virgin	58	58	58	58	58	58	58	58	58	58
59. Church of St. John the Evangelist	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	59	59
60. Church of St. John the Baptist	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
61. Church of St. John the Apostle	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61
62. Church of St. John the Virgin	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62
63. Church of St. John the Evangelist	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63
64. Church of St. John the Baptist	64	64	64	64	64	64	64	64	64	64
65. Church of St. John the Apostle	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
66. Church of St. John the Virgin	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
67. Church of St. John the Evangelist	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
68. Church of St. John the Baptist	68	68	68	68	68	68	68	68	68	68
69. Church of St. John the Apostle	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69
70. Church of St. John the Virgin	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
71. Church of St. John the Evangelist	71	71	71	71	71	71	71	71	71	71
72. Church of St. John the Baptist	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72	72
73. Church of St. John the Apostle	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73
74. Church of St. John the Virgin	74	74	74	74	74	74	74	74	74	74
75. Church of St. John the Evangelist	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
76. Church of St. John the Baptist	76	76	76	76	76	76	76	76	76	76
77. Church of St. John the Apostle	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77
78. Church of St. John the Virgin	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	78
79. Church of St. John the Evangelist	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79
80. Church of St. John the Baptist	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
81. Church of St. John the Apostle	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81
82. Church of St. John the Virgin	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
83. Church of St. John the Evangelist	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83
84. Church of St. John the Baptist	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
85. Church of St. John the Apostle	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85
86. Church of St. John the Virgin	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	86	86
87. Church of St. John the Evangelist	87	87	87	87	87	87	87	87	87	87
88. Church of St. John the Baptist	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
89. Church of St. John the Apostle	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89
90. Church of St. John the Virgin	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
91. Church of St. John the Evangelist	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91
92. Church of St. John the Baptist	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92
93. Church of St. John the Apostle	93	93	93	93	93	93	93	93	93	93
94. Church of St. John the Virgin	94	94	94	94	94	94	94	94	94	94
95. Church of St. John the Evangelist	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
96. Church of St. John the Baptist	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
97. Church of St. John the Apostle	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97
98. Church of St. John the Virgin	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98
99. Church of St. John the Evangelist	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
100. Church of St. John the Baptist	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 1 Architectural elements of Churches in Northern Syria (4th to 6th Centuries), by the author

Church development **in southern Syria** during the fourth to sixth centuries is marked by several general and notable architectural features, specifically:

- Churches differ in scale, and some are larger. Basalt stones are typically used in their construction.
- The church layout depicts a basilica with a single nave or three aisles, or a centralized plan. Most of these layouts end with a protruding semicircular apse. Furthermore, some church designs demonstrate a linear terminal apse. The side chambers did not always exist.
- In terms of roofing, churches in southern Syria utilize a different system than churches in northern Syria: slab ceilings and domes.

➤ In brief, the plan will be further explained to give a clear picture of church forms in the **fourth century** in southern Syria.

Church architecture exemplifies a local type derived from private or public buildings. Hence, Christian architects got used to establishing churches consistently with architectural precedents of those linked with local traditional heritage, whether in hall or basilica form. In other words, the church models in this area had not been imported, yet architects insisted on utilizing the available structures, alluding to special technical features in these buildings. Furthermore, many researchers called these churches of this region Ḥawrānī model.⁶⁴⁷

At the beginning of this century, a group of buildings shows four types of architectural ascendants which constitute a starting point for the layout of the early churches. This occurred due to the exigency of having the available structure for Christian prayer

⁶⁴⁷ 'Abū 'Assāf, 1997, p. 72

displaying varied designs of Christian churches during this period. One of these churches served religious purposes and the other three were mainly dedicated to civil objectives such as public audiences such as al-Qayṣariyya (Kaisariye) at Shaqqā was a Roman palace, Dīr Simīdj (Deir Simyḏj) was a Pagan building, Dīr al-Rāhib Baḥīrā (The Monastery of the Monk Bahira) was a public audience, Temple of Tyche at al-Ṣanammīn belongs to a religious function, Shaqqā basilica. These structures were exploited to be reused as churches.

In the fourth century in southern Syria, the case study includes about 5 churches.⁶⁴⁸ These churches continue to show similar architectural features as those from earlier periods. Notably, the plans of these churches have become wider and longer compared to previous designs (Fig. 116) (Table. 2).

The church plans are mainly simple single halls, making up about 60% of the examples, which is three churches. The remaining 40%, or two churches, are basilicas with a central nave and two side aisles, featuring a system of transverse arches. The arches over the central nave are wider and taller, while those above the side aisles are narrower and shorter, forming a two-story structure. This design was inspired by ancient residences in southern Syria.

Both types of church plans end with an apse. There are two main types of apses: one with a straight wall, found in about 60% of the churches (three examples), and the other with a projecting apse, found in about 40% (two examples). Additionally, about 40% of the total churches (two examples) has apses surrounded by side chambers, which suggests a specific liturgical practice.

As for the entrances, they are positioned on the southern and western facades and sometimes on the northern ones. In addition, the narrow windows are located on the upper level. Overall, there was a lack of ornaments.

A special feature of the roofing of churches in southern Syria is the slab roof, but these two examples used gable roofs: The Temple of Tyche at al-Ṣanammīn and Dīr al-Rāhib Baḥīrā.

⁶⁴⁸ Scholar Butler studied 12 churches in southern Syria. However, additional case studies may have been conducted later by other scholars

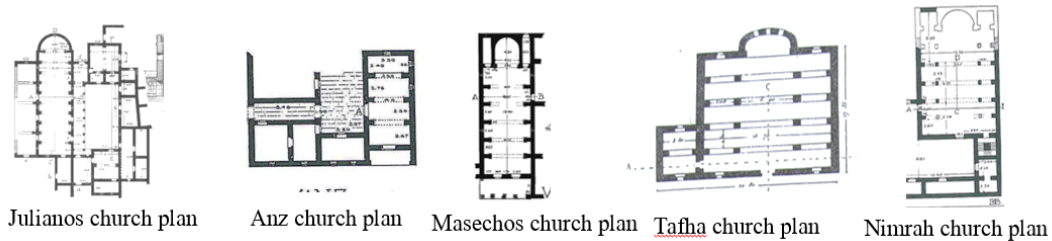


Fig. 116 Church Plans in the Fourth Century in Southern Syria, by the author

➤ **In the fifth century**, the case study includes about seven churches the architectural features of churches continued to include a single hall, a basilica layout, and a system of transverse arches, as seen in the fourth century.⁶⁴⁹ On the other hand, the single hall plan with transverse arches tends to be shorter and wider than earlier examples. This design is seen in about 57% of the case studies, which is four churches.

Toward the end of the fifth century, some churches started using a longitudinal system with columns, in addition to the transverse system. This longitudinal system was different from the one used in northern Syria and was seen in about 43% of the churches, which is three examples. The difference likely came from influences from central and eastern Syria, as well as Roman-Hellenistic towns, which spread through trade routes. The church designs of the Ḥawrānī style underwent a subtle modification by incorporating columns instead of piers,⁶⁵⁰ reflecting the broader architectural exchanges and adaptations that characterized this period (Fig. 117) (Table. 2).

These designs show two main types of apses on the outside. About 43% of the churches, which are three examples, have a straight wall at the east end. The other 57%, or four churches, feature a projecting semicircular apse.

Side chambers in churches in southern Syria are less common than in northern Syria. They are found in only about 29% of the churches, just two examples.

During the fifth century, the narthex became more prominent as a colonnaded portico on the western façade. This design was seen in about 72% of the churches studied, which is five examples. Some church designs include galleries. Entrances were usually on the

⁶⁴⁹ Scholar Butler conducted extensive research on more than 20 churches and monasteries in southern Syria. Subsequently, this may have conducted further case studies to expand upon his findings

⁶⁵⁰ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 141

western and southern sides, with some on the northern side. Basic windows were typically placed high up on the buildings. Additionally, four churches had windows in the apse. Notably, the western façade of the Agrarian Church features two towers, an uncommon architectural element in southern Syria. Most churches from this period were covered with slab roofs, reflecting a consistent approach to roofing design across the region.

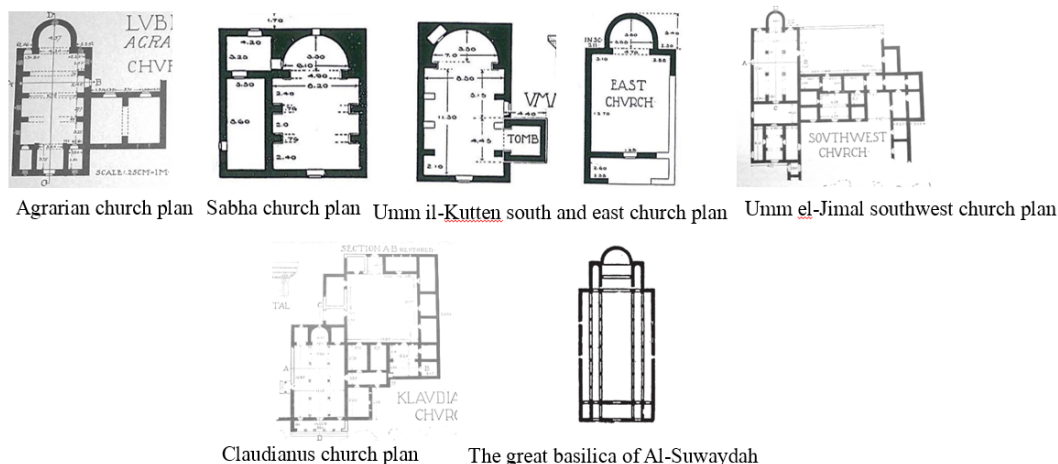


Fig. 117 Church Plans in the Fifth Century in Southern Syria, by the author

➤ **In the sixth century**, eleven church examples were studied. The basilica layout became more common, often using a longitudinal arrangement, which was seen in about 35% of the churches, or four examples. Most of these plans ended with a straight wall, found in about 62% of the churches (seven examples), while a projecting semicircular apse was observed in about 38% (four churches). Additionally, side chambers surrounding the apse were a typical feature in many churches during this period (Fig. 118) (Table. 2). During this period, some churches had a less organized plan, seen in two examples, which ended with either a straight wall or a projecting apse. Most apses had just one window. The entrances were usually on the southern and western walls, showing a consistent pattern in church design at that time.

In the mid-sixth century, a distinctive architectural trend emerged with the introduction of centralized church plans featuring domed roofs, which is about 26% of the examples studied. The adoption of domes during this period reflects the economic prosperity of the century. Furthermore, as discussed in the preceding chapter, the dome served not only as an architectural innovation but also as a symbolic element within ecclesiastical design.

In summary, churches in southern Syria use different roofing and construction methods compared to those in northern Syria, including a flat roof, a gable roof (two churches), and domes.

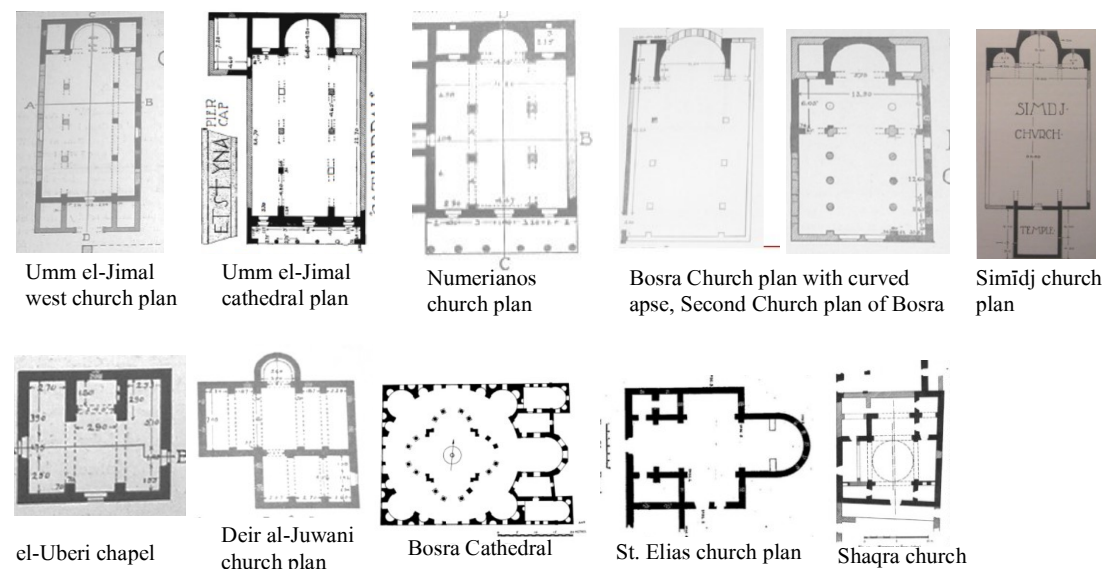


Fig. 118 Church Plans in the Sixth Century in Southern Syria, by the author

Church Name	Location	Period	Plan Type	Roof Type	Construction Material	Foundation	Wall	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
Umm el-Jimal West Church	Umm el-Jimal	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
Umm el-Jimal Cathedral	Umm el-Jimal	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
Numerianos Church	Numerianos	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
Bosra Church	Bosra	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
Simīdj Church	Simīdj	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
el-Uberi Chapel	el-Uberi	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
Deir al-Juwani Church	Deir al-Juwani	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
Bosra Cathedral	Bosra	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
St. Elias Church	St. Elias	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes
Shaqra Church	Shaqra	6th c.	Rectangular	Flat	Brick	Foundation	Brick	Column	Apse	Chancel	Transept	Steeple	Staircase	Entrance	Interior Decoration	Exterior Decoration	Notes

Table 2 Architectural elements of Churches in southern Syria (4th to 6th Centuries), by the author

Finally, churches in the Crusader period show a mixture of the Western architectural style with a few Byzantines. In other words, the Western style manifests itself using more gothic style and Romanesque in the openings, pointed arch windows, and coverings with groin vaulted bays like in St. George monastery and Cathedral of Tartous.

IV.THE ANCIENT AND CONTEMPORARY CHURCH ARCHITECTURE IN DAMASCUS

Overview:

As previously mentioned, the third chapter, which focuses on Syrian church architecture during the Byzantine and Crusader periods, serves as a core phase of this study. Thus, this chapter became important in setting the stage for church architecture in Damascus and how it relates to the ancient churches discussed in it. This chapter, along with the first two chapters on history and liturgy, provides a clear understanding of how historical contexts and liturgy influence architectural developments in different periods and regions.

This fourth chapter is divided into four main subsections. The first subsection clarifies the reasons for choosing the Damascene churches in two regions: old Damascus and al-Mīdān (Al-Midan) regions located in Damascus. In a defined archaeological period, from the second and fourth centuries to later periods, the recent past from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, and the twentieth century, the second subsection sheds light on these churches located in these two regions aiming to give answers to these questions in order to draw a simple conclusion regarding these two regions:

- Do Damascene churches have relevance to the ancient churches, including the western twin towers and Syrian sanctuary representative the main characteristics of Syrian churches?
- What are the most essential elements that Damascene Christian churches emphasized, specifically in old Damascus and al-Mīdān (Al-Midan) regions? What are the reasons for the emergence of these characteristics?
- What are the similarities between Christian denominations, and how about the differences in architectural design? Do liturgical changes account for this or other reasons correlating to historical factors or to the architectural fabric's nature have an impact in these regions?

In order to answer these questions, the elaborate description has been followed in three key points:

- History and time trajectory.
- Architectural description.
- Special characteristics with reasons.

The third subsection aims to focus on the Greek Orthodox Churches, following the same articulation as in the previous churches but in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Furthermore, field visits and interviews have drawn a special attention to the mechanism of church buildings in the fourth subsection regarding the main participants (decision-makers) in carrying out church construction (bishop, diocese, architects, benefactors). To achieve the goal of these two subsections, hereunder are hypothetical questions:

- Over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, are there any special features or common characteristics in the Greek Orthodox churches? Is there a continuity of these features? What are the constant and variable elements in the contemporary church architecture of this denomination such as the Western tower, narthex, iconostasis, or the apse? Are these churches compliant with traditions and liturgy?
- How and what was the mechanism of these church buildings in carrying out over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? Is it different from the past? Who is the decision-maker in designing churches? What are the challenges during church building?

Other leading questions spring to mind. If the architect is responsible for setting up the church plan, what are the fundamental issues imposed upon the architect? Which phase of church construction is allowed the architect to decide? How should the architect deal with churches as worship places or as artwork of contemporaneity? Does the architect pay attention to the liturgical needs or the Christian community?

IV.1. Introduction to Damascene Churches in Old Damascus and al-Mīdān (Al-Midan) Areas

Damascus characteristically displays rich and diverse patterns of church architecture through the ancient and contemporary historical periods inside and outside the wall of old Damascus. Furthermore, the presence of multiple Christian denominations, including the Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Syriacs, Chaldeans, Latin, and Maronite denominations, makes the region special. As mentioned in Chapter One, after the takeover of Antioch, the Patriarch of Antioch and the Rest of the Levant set their headquarters in the old Damascus (Mariamite Cathedral) at the end of the fourteenth century. Subsequently, in 1724, the headquarters for the Greek Catholic Patriarchate was established, followed by the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate in 1950 in Damascus. Over the years, it became a center for four dioceses: Syriac Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, and Maronite denominations.⁶⁵¹

It is imperative to acknowledge that the observed temporal discrepancy between the construction date of the earliest and subsequent churches can be attributed to the following factors:

According to documented sources, Damascus had 45 Christian churches until the Muslim conquest (635) dating back to the periods between the second and fourth centuries. Most of these churches belonged to Melkite (Chalcedonian), two churches to the Nestorians, and two churches to the Jacobites. Ibn 'Asākir, Historian of Damascus, mentioned 35 churches located outside and inside the wall of old Damascus.⁶⁵²

After the Muslim conquest, some churches in Damascus were relinquished, with 26 of them converted into mosques, such as the Umayyad Mosque, which was originally the Church of St. John the Baptist. Of the churches within the wall of old Damascus, only 15 remained intact: seven located south of "Straight Street" and eight to the north. These churches date back to periods ranging from the second and fourth centuries to later periods, the recent past from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, and the twentieth century. Unlike those

⁶⁵¹ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 20

⁶⁵² al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, pp. 19-29

transformed into mosques, these churches were refurbished, restored, and expanded following the events of 1860, as detailed in the first chapter (Fig. 119) (Fig. 120).⁶⁵³

Thus, it is difficult to determine the construction date and pre-restoration appearance of these churches due to the absence of documents. In other words, it is unknown whether these churches were before the Muslim conquest or after. In addition, if it was possible to find church records, they were destroyed in the aftermath of the 1860 event. It is believed that it is necessary to refer to the Ottoman archives, i.e., the archives of Damascus, with the Ottoman documents in Istanbul. This may be helpful for additional information about churches.⁶⁵⁴

Accordingly, the description of these churches date to 1864 and later. During the reconstruction, numerous structures were added or demolished, as indicated by the historical framework of churches in the following subsection.

It is important to mention that churches situated outside the wall of Old Damascus were not included in the compact of Khalid ibn al-Walid, believed that they were converted into mosques.⁶⁵⁵

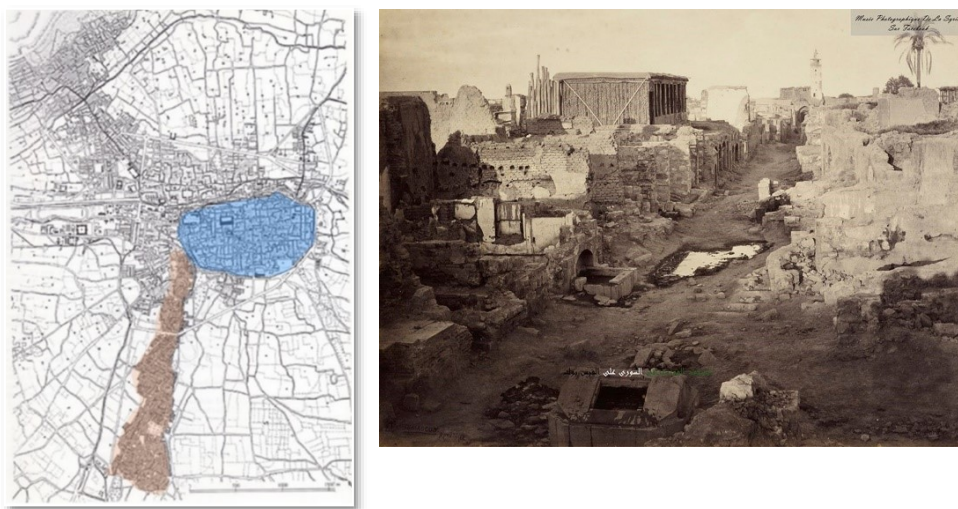


Fig. 119 A Map showing two regions in Damascus: old Damascus and al-Midān to the south, by the author after (Yves Roujon Luc Vilan, 1997, p. 12.). The “Straight Street” towards Bab-Sharqi after the 1860 event. Photos: Francis Bedford in 1862, (Khūrī, 2018, p. 27)

⁶⁵³ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, pp. 19-29

⁶⁵⁴ Būlād, 2019

⁶⁵⁵ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, pp. 19-29

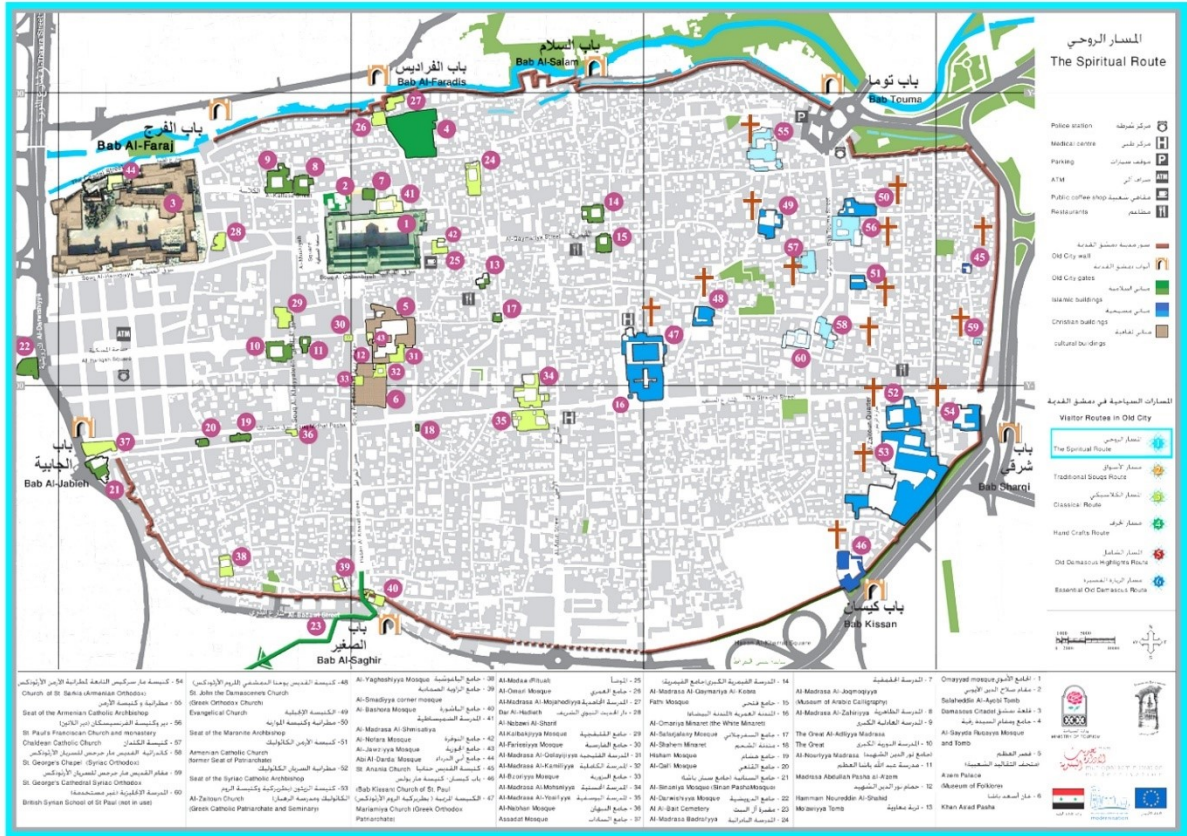


Fig. 120 A map showing sites of Damascene churches in old Damascus, by the author after (DGAM archive).



Fig. 121 A map showing sites of churches in al-Midān area: 1. Saint Ananias Apostle Church for the Greek Orthodox denomination. 2. The Cathedral of Our Lady for the Greek Catholic denomination. 3. Saint George church for the Greek Catholic denomination, by the author after (DGAM archive).

List of Christian churches inside wall of Damascus:⁶⁵⁶

Church Name	Date of construction or reconstruction	Period	Denomination
St. Ananias Chapel	2nd -4 th	Byzantine	The Latin
The Mariamite Cathedral	395-401	Byzantine period	The Greek Orthodox
St. Sarkis Cathedral	635-1866	Ottoman period	The Armenian Orthodox
St. Paul Church	1662-1848	Ottoman period	The Syriac Catholic
St. Paul Cathedral	1718-1930	Ottoman-French periods	Latin
Our lady of The Dormition Church	1834-1865	Ottoman period	The Greek Catholic
St. Vincent Church	1835-1866	Ottoman period	The Latin
The Sultana of the World Cathedral	1860-1863-1930	Ottoman French periods	The Armenian Catholic
St. Anthony Cathedral	1864	Ottoman period	The Maronites
St. John of Damascus	1864	Ottoman period	The Greek Orthodox
The Presbyterian Evangelical Church	1866	Ottoman period	The Protestant
St. Paul Church on the wall	1885-1924	Ottoman period	The Greek Catholic

⁶⁵⁶ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005

The Nazarene Church	1920	French period	The Evangelicalism
St. Theresa Church	1941	French period	The Chaldean Catholic
St. George Cathedral	1951	Contemporary	The Syriac Orthodox

Table 3 A. table showing Damascene churches in old Damascus, by the author (al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005)

List of Christian churches in al- Mīdān (Al-Midan) district:

Church Name	Date of construction or reconstruction	Period	Denomination
Saint Ananias Apostle Church	1815- 1983	Ottoman period	Greek Orthodox
Saint George church	1836- 1949	Ottoman period	Greek Catholic
The Cathedral of Our Lady	1836	Ottoman period	Greek Catholic

Table 4. A table showing Damascene churches in al- Mīdān (Al-Midan) area, by the author after (Būbis, 2014, pp. 98-102).

In the nineteenth century, approximately 20% of Christians were Maronites and Latin, while the remaining 80% were members of the Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Evangelical Christian communities.⁶⁵⁷ The approximate number of Christians of each denomination in Damascus during this time frame was between twenty and twenty-five thousand individuals. According to embassies and consulates, there were approximately 80,000 to 90,000 Muslims. In the meantime, approximately 70% of Christians belonged to the Greek Orthodox faith (Fig. 122).

⁶⁵⁷ Būlād, 2019

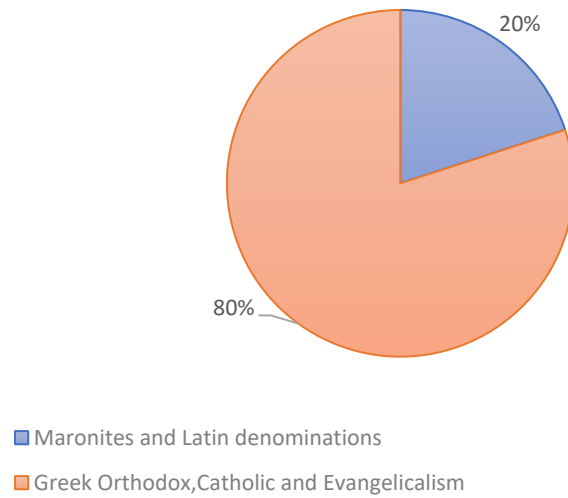


Fig. 122 A chart showing Christian denomination in the nineteenth century, by the author

In the wake of 1860 event, all Christian denominations decreased from 20% to 10%. Due to Christian migration from suburbs such as Ḥarrān and eastern Ghūta, the proportion of Christians rose to 20 % by the end of the century (Fig. 123).

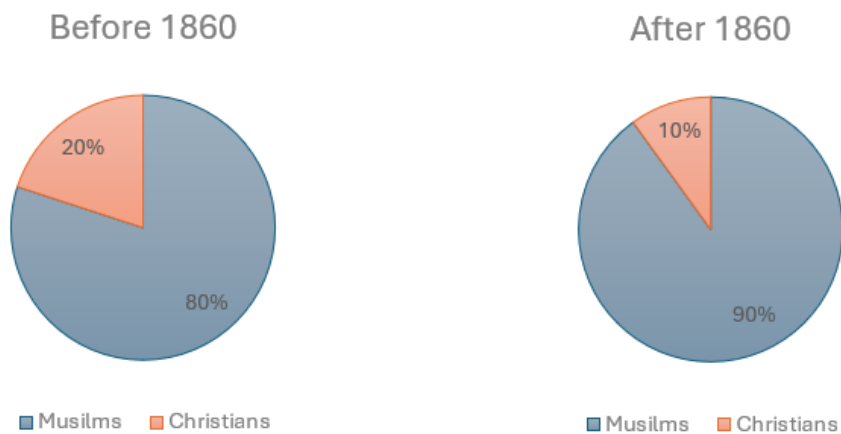


Fig. 123 A chart illustrating the percentages of Christian denominations before and after 1860, by the author

Hereunder, a part of data regarding Christian denominations in Syria in the twentieth century:

Denomination	1934 ⁶⁵⁸	1956- 6591950	⁶⁶⁰ 1990	2000, achieve of DGAM.
The Greek Orthodox	89918	181750	400000	545250
The Armenian Orthodox	65567	114041	150.000	342123
The Syriac Orthodox	36581	55343	50000-80000	166029
The Greek Catholic	33389	60124	125000 -127000	180372
The Armenian Catholic	12421	20637	20000-225000	61911
The Syriac Catholic	12211	20716	30000	62148
Protestant	7506	12535	10000	37605
The Maronites	4839	19291	20000	57873
Latin	3929	7097	3000	21237
Chaldean	3049	6723-5732	5000-7000	17169

Table 5 Population of Christian denominations in Syria, organized by the author.

To sum up, two primary rationales for selecting these two districts, al-Midan and Old Damascus, are the presence of considerable variety and percentage of Christian denominations and the churches' historical significance in Damascus.

Therefore, the stylistic criteria for the selection of these churches are as follows:

- Geographical and urban significance:

The integration of these churches into the urban fabric, their placement within Old Damascus, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, show their importance in the city's historical urban layout.

- Historical significance and diversity of Christian denominations:

The history of old Damascus is evident in its churches, some of which originate from the early days of Christianity, such as St. Ananias Chapel, the Mariamite Cathedral. Churches in old Damascus date back to periods ranging from the second and fourth centuries to later

⁶⁵⁸ 'Abda, 2000, pp. 46-82

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁶⁰ Valognes, 1994, p. 60

periods, the recent past from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, and the twentieth century. Hence, these churches serve as important historical and cultural landmarks. Despite the absence of clear documentation regarding the restoration or the date of the building, as previously indicated, the continuous utilization of these churches, which have persisted through historical turbulence, serves as a testament to the resilience of Christian traditions.

- Architectural integration:

Churches often show a combination of architectural styles that are influenced by more than one culture, thus showing Byzantine, Islamic, and Ottoman influences. The way in which these cultural influences are shown in the restoration and rebuilding of these churches is of particular interest. Some Christian denominations have been able to keep their traditions in the construction of their churches, while others have not been able to keep their identity, as mentioned at the end of this chapter. Also, the architectural and artistic value of churches is often shown in special architectural elements, such as iconostasis, dome, and western towers.

The churches are central to the identity of Christian communities in Damascus, reflecting their social, cultural, and religious roles over centuries. They are not merely relics of the past but continue to serve as active places of worship, maintaining their relevance in contemporary times.

IV.2. Damascene Churches in Old Damascus and al-Mīdān Areas

Hereunder, Damascene churches in old Damascus.

➤ **St. Ananias Chapel**

▪ History and time trajectory:

The St. Ananias Chapel stands on Straight Street near Bab Sharqi (the Eastern Gate) in old Damascus and is believed to be the site of Ananias's home. The historical records indicate that the chapel exists since the 4th century yet archaeological findings from 1921 revealed a Byzantine church structure which dates to either the 5th or 6th century. Historians have differing opinions regarding whether the chapel was once converted into a mosque during its history. The local Christian community denies the mosque conversion theory, while others believe this transformation took place. The chapel received major reconstruction work after the 1860 events in 1867, before undergoing additional renovations in 1973.⁶⁶¹

▪ Architectural description:

Before entering the chapel, there is a small courtyard where a statue of St. Ananias is placed. From there, stone stairs lead down to the underground chapel, reflecting early Christian architectural simplicity (Fig. 124). The chapel consists of two small rooms with stone walls and openings in the roof for light (Fig. 125, 126).

Inside the chapel, there are several religious icons depicting the life of St. Paul.

This chapel serves as both a religious sanctuary and a historical testament to Damascus's role in the spread of Christianity.⁶⁶²

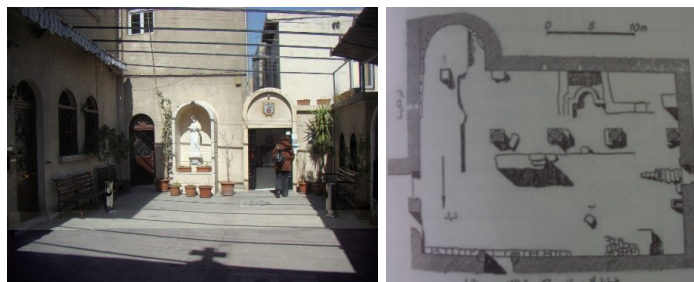


Fig. 124 The main entrance of the chapel, taken by Salāmī, M, an old plan of the chapel, (*Lutfī*, 2011, p. 484).

⁶⁶¹ al-Shihābī, 1988, p. 80

⁶⁶² al-Shihābī, 1988, p. 80



A



B

Fig. 125 *A.* The altar of the chapel, *B.* the roof of the chapel taken by (Salāmī, M)



Fig. 126 The entrance of the candle room, taken by (Salāmī, M)

➤ **Mariamite Cathedral: The Greek Orthodox denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

The cathedral lies near the victory arch in the middle of Bab Sharqi Straight Street. Mariamite Cathedral is the seat of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. Some references claim that the cathedral was built in the second century. In contrast, others suggest that its construction occurred between the fourth and fifth centuries when it was renovated under Theodosius' reign.⁶⁶³ It should be noted that the Mariamite Cathedral was replaced by St. John Church, which recently is the Umayyad Mosque in old Damascus under the ruler al-Walīd ibn ʿabd al-Malik (Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik).⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶³ Yūsif , 2019, pp. 17-23

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid

It went through different historical phases and suffered from several destructions and looting of its priceless treasures starting from the Muslim conquest (635), Mamluk occupation (Hulagu) in 1258, Taimur Lank in 1404, along with the natural disasters such as earthquakes.⁶⁶⁵ Consequently, many restorations and renovations were carried out from the seventh century up to the twentieth century (636,1009,1260,1400,1524,1759,1777, and 1953).⁶⁶⁶

Based on many written sources regarding its history, the cathedral basically comprises three churches. The first one was St. Mary Church and the second was St. Nicolas, built by Theodosius. In addition, there was another church considered as the third church Saints Kībrīānūs and Yūstīnā (Saints Cyprian and Justina). Due to the events in 1860, St. Mary Church underwent reconstruction, and the square of St. Kībrīānūs and Yūstīnā Church (Saints Cyprian and Justina church) was incorporated into the design Between 1885 and 1950. Concurrently, St. Nīkūlās (St. Nicolas) Church was deemed unnecessary and subsequently removed under the direction of Patriarch Iīrūthyūs Thyāthūkhūs I (Hierotheos I). Ultimately, all three churches were assembled to form one Cathedral.⁶⁶⁷

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

The plan of the cathedral exhibits a conventional rectangular basilica form with a nave and two side aisles. It is divided into six bays by two rows of circular columns. The scheme concludes with a sanctuary (liturgical space and altar) representing three apses oriented to the East and raised on a platform with three steps. The middle apse is broader to the lateral apses, and it is built with alternating white and brick color stones, following the Damascene traditions. Not to mention that the east side shows a straight wall outwardly (Fig. 127) (Fig. 128).

The iconostasis, separating the nave from the altar, is made up of marble and ornaments. In addition, the second row of columns is flanked by two pulpits. Except for the east side, the cathedral's three upper sides are occupied by a gallery (Fig. 129).

Regarding entrances, there are five doors distributed as follows: three on the western façade, two on the southern and northern facades. As for openings, the arched windows are

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid, pp.18-19

⁶⁶⁶ al-Shihābī, 1988, p. 67

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid

distributed on the upper and lower levels of the church. To the East, there are seven small windows located merely on a higher level (Fig. 130).

What is more, the roof of the nave is constructed by a barrel vault, while the two aisles are flat or straight. Externally, the covering is a gable roof (Fig. 130, 131, 132).

Façade:

One of the most striking features is that the complete church layout is located on a lower level of the ground. In other words, there are three steps down when entering the church's western courtyard from the main street.

The western entrance triggers a profound impression of a cathedral. The upper level of the western facade is distinguished by the presence of three circular windows, with the largest situated in the center. Moreover, a bell tower is located southwest of the cathedral. All in all, the church is encircled on three sides by three external porticos supported by semicircular arches (Fig. 133, 134).

▪ Special characteristics with reasons:

The church's interior is characterized by all the essential elements dictated by liturgical requirements, including a nave, iconostasis, and an altar, alongside three prominent eastern apses. However, the narthex has disappeared, reflecting significant shifts in liturgical practices as the catechumens and penitents have been absent.

From an architectural point of view, the cathedral emerges as a uniquely significant structure within the ancient fabric of old Damascus. Its design and spatial configuration not only reflect the prevailing architectural trends of its time but also exhibit a nuanced integration of cultural and religious influences. This distinction is amplified by its ability to convey symbolic meaning through form, materiality, and ornaments, setting it apart from other historical structures in the city. The cathedral represents the connection between architectural innovation and historical continuity while serving as a physical and religious landmark in the urban layout.

The absence of the twin towers stands out as a distinctive feature because traditional Syrian church architecture typically includes them. This omission can be critically examined in light of the constraints imposed by the dense and intricate urban fabric of old Damascus,

which might have made traditional architectural elements impractical to implement. In addition, the departure from traditional architecture may indicate historical, cultural, or socio-political influences that have directed the city's architectural development while demonstrating how religious buildings adapt to changing historical circumstances.

A critical analysis of these aspects shows how liturgical evolution and urban constraints affected the architectural identity of the church. The reduction or omission of certain elements, such as the narthex ceased to be apparent due to the changes in the liturgy rituals (catechumens and penitents disappeared). Simultaneously, the distinctive exterior design underscores the challenges of preserving architectural continuity within the dynamic and often restrictive urban fabric of Old Damascus. This interplay between adherence to tradition and the necessity for adaptation offers valuable insight into the church's architectural heritage and its role within the evolving historical and cultural landscape of the city.

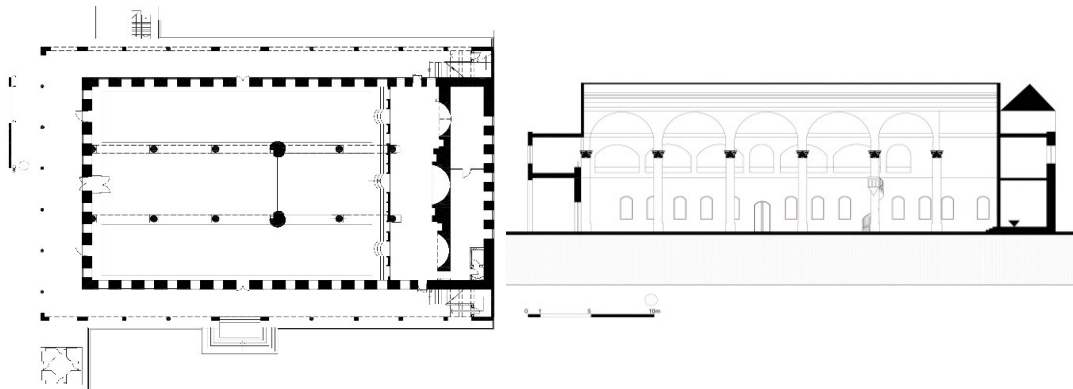


Fig.

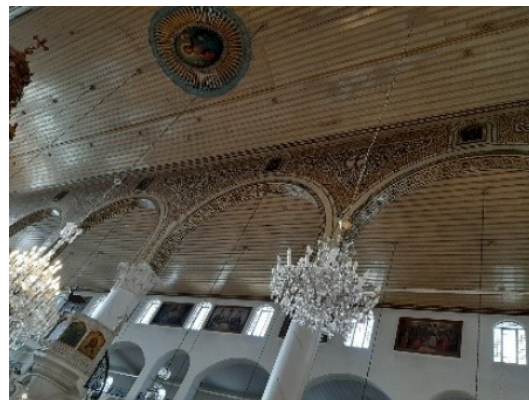
127 Mariamite Cathedral plan and section, drawn by the author after (Greek orthodox patriarch archive).



Fig. 128 Interior view facing East, Interior view facing West, 2019 taken by the author.



A



B

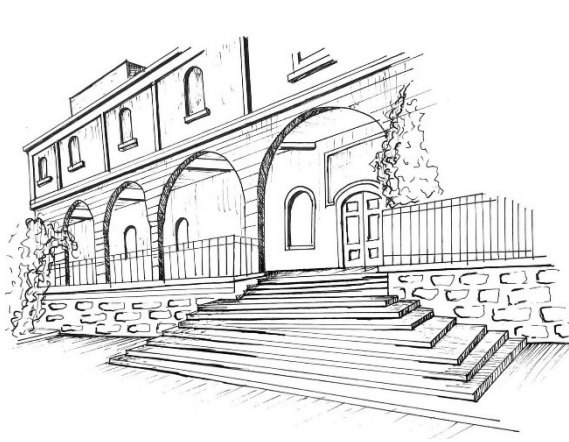
Fig. 129 A. Interior view facing South, B. A barrel vault roof of the nave and slab one of the aisles, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 130 A. The altar, B A view showing North ambo, 2019 taken by the author



Fig. 131 Exterior view facing west main façade and east façade showing straight wall, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 132 A. A view facing South. B. A view facing north-west, sketch by the author.

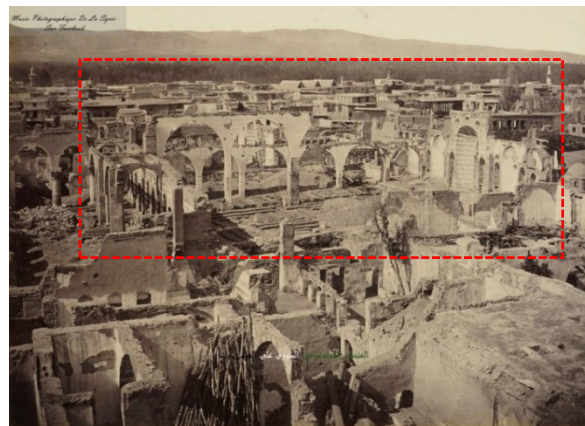


Fig. 133 The destruction of the altar and the nave of Mariamite Greek Orthodox Cathedral due to 1860 event. (*Khūrī*, 2018, p. 21).

➤ **St. Sarkis Cathedral: The Armenian Orthodox denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

It is mentioned that prior to the Muslim takeover of Damascus, there was a monastery and church in old Damascus attributed to the Syriac Orthodox and called Saints Sirgyūs and Bākhūs (Sergius and Bacchus). Over the Mamluk period in the fifteenth century, the Syriac and the Armenians shared this church for practicing their rituals due to their united doctrine. Later, the Syriac conceded this church to the Armenians.

Not to mention that St. Sarkis Church had several renovations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was burned in the wake of 1860 events, renewed in 1866, taking a cruciform plan which is covered by a dome.⁶⁶⁸

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

The church is flanked by two courtyards: the first is at the church's entrance, and the second is at the back of the church, leading to the monastery building. The blueprint of the church illustrates a square form (cruciform) without columns. The altar, oriented to the east, is on an elevated platform, where the altar is located and terminated with a semicircular apse. The nave is separated from the altar by a low marble barrier. The gallery is situated on the upper level of the western side and pierced by three windows. Furthermore, the windows are distributed on lower levels in the northern and southern facades.

The central nave is topped by a pendentive dome, which features a drum adorned with twelve arched windows. These windows facilitate the access of natural light into the church (Fig. 134, 135, 136).

Façade:

The church's primary entrance is preceded by a portico with a gable roof, a design element that is noteworthy for its aesthetic and functional significance. Two arched windows flank the main door. To the immediate left of the entrance, memorial monuments dedicated to Armenian martyrs stand, erected in 1915 to commemorate their sacrifice. (Fig. 137).⁶⁶⁹

▪ Special characteristics with reasons:

⁶⁶⁸ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, pp. 59-60

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid

In this context, the presence of the cruciform design and drum dome underscores the church's historical roots and aesthetic intentions, still the low barrier suggests an evolving interpretation of liturgical space. This alteration of iconostasis reflects the Armenian Orthodox denomination in dogmatic and theological perspectives, indicating a shift in the understanding of spatial relationships. Overall, despite the church structure being situated within the ancient fabric of Old Damascus, the Armenian Orthodox denomination maintains using the essential elements of the church such as the nave and the altar. Not to mention, the church shows a clear identity by using a drum dome and cruciform layout. It could be stated as a remarkable building.

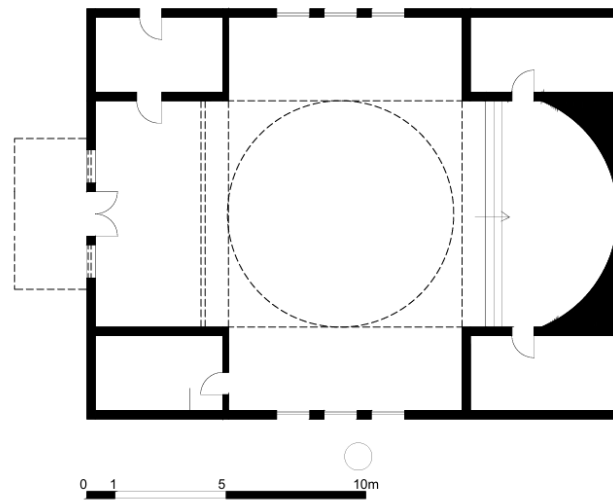


Fig. 134 St. Sarkis church plan, by the author, St. Sarkis Church plan, drawn by the author, based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio



Fig. 135 Interior view facing East, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.



A



B

Fig. 136 A. Interior view facing. B. The gallery of the west, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.



A



B



Fig. 137 A. Exterior view facing west, 2020, taken by Ḥannā, J. B. A sketch of north-west drawn by the author. Central dome, 2020, taken by Ḥannā, J.

➤ **St. Paul Cathedral: Syriac Catholic denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

The church is located on the so-called “Straight Street” of Bab Sharqi dedicated to the Syriac Catholic denomination. It is a compound building comprising an archbishopric and a church. Concerning its history, it is believed that “this cruciform plan was the second of the fourth churches which Walīd ibn ‘abd al-Malik (Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik) gave up in order to get the western half of the Umayyad Mosque.”⁶⁷⁰

The Syriac had an old church in Damascus after a dispute occurred over the possession of this church between the Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholic denominations in 1662. As a consequence, the bishop was responsible for both Orthodox and Catholic at times.

Furthermore, with the conversion of Grīgūryūs Y‘qūb Ḥilīānī (1876-1824) to Catholicism, many bishops and Syriac Orthodox followers converted to Catholicism in 1829.

This church was characterized by a modest plan, named Mūsa al-Ḥabashī (Musa al-Habashi). The southern side of the church, which was demolished during the 1860 events was rebuilt in 1863 and the church took Saint Paul as patron.⁶⁷¹

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

Approaching the church from a square courtyard hosting a fountain in the middle, a portico precedes three steps leading to the church. Oriented towards the east, the church's design is based on a basilica plan with a larger nave and two side aisles separated by two rows of three columns (Fig. 129). It features three doors on the west façade and two doors on each of the north and south facades. To the left of the nave, there is an ambo (pulpit) accessible through a spiral wooden staircase and a confessional chair next to it. The altar is separated from the nave by two marble steps terminating in a semi-circular apse with a circular glass window. The church misses an iconostasis. It is covered by a simple flat roof (Fig. 138, 139, 140).

Façade:

⁶⁷⁰ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 54

⁶⁷¹ Ibid

The church is elevated on a platform with two steps. A portico with five columns and four similar-sized semicircular arches resting on them and one smaller-sized arch precedes the western main entrance. As already mentioned previously, the building comprises the church and the archbishop's living place. In other terms, the ground floor hosts the church, and the first floor is used by the archbishop. The main entryway is topped by a pointed arch hosting a niche with the Virgin Mary statue, surrounded by five pointed windows and two smaller empty niches. The church is topped by a bell tower with a hexagonal plan (Fig. 141).

▪ Special characteristics with reasons:

In the light of examining this church, it is found that the façade of the church reflects the Syriac denomination's integration of distinctive elements characteristic of old Damascus, particularly through its use of color and ornaments, which are evident throughout the structure. or statues.

However, based on the liturgy of the Syriac Catholic denomination a significant aspect of this church is the absence of an iconostasis, which traditionally serves as a visual and liturgical arrangement between the nave and the altar.

The juxtaposition between traditional architectural elements and contemporary modifications invites critical analysis of how cultural identity and religious beliefs shape architectural expressions. The church's façade not only serves as a visual representation of its heritage and transformations during the years but also reflects broader theological traditions within the Syriac community, highlighting the balance between maintaining the essential elements, nave, altar, and semicircular apse in old Damascus's fabric.

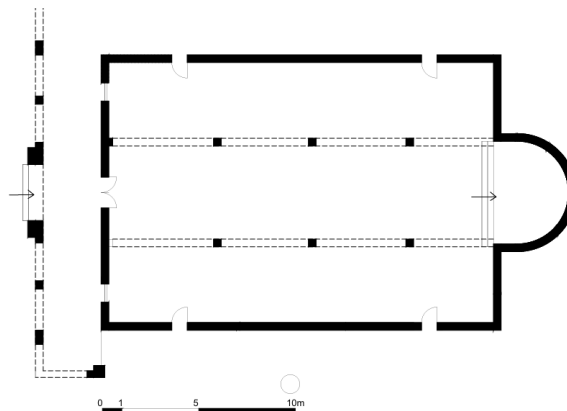
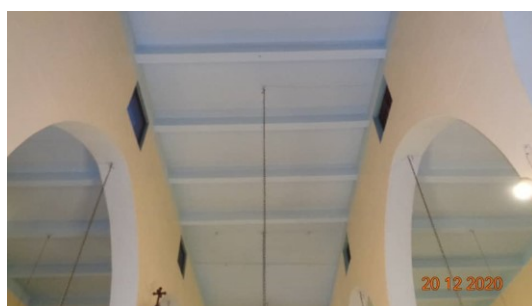


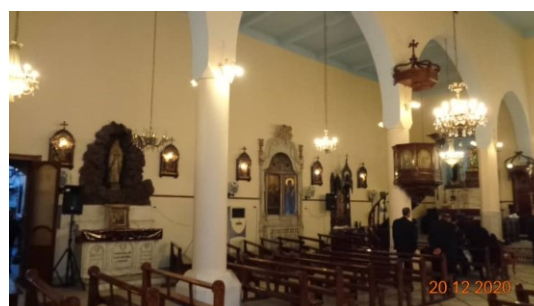
Fig. 138 St. Paul Cathedral plan, drawn by the author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio



Fig. 139 Interior view facing East, 2020, taken by Ḥannā, J.



A



B

Fig. 140A view showing a flat roof and arches. B. A view facing north and showing the aisle and ambo, 2020, taken by Ḥannā, J.



Fig. 141 Exterior view facing west main façade, 2020, taken by Ḥannā, J.

➤ **St. Paul Church: Latin denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

St. Paul church is located close to a Franciscan cloister in Bab Tuma district and was built in 1930.⁶⁷²

The Latin arrived at Damascus in 1233 and stayed in Bab Tuma. Then, the Maronites offered their church located in the same district to the Latin in order to practice their rituals in 1608. Then, they used the church until 1718. In this year, the Latin built their church, cloister, and school. The cloister was a center of Arabic language education for the Western hermits, particularly the Spanish.⁶⁷³ However, the church and cloister were ruined like many other churches, because of the events of 1860, they were renovated in 1864 then in 1930. In the southwest of the church a colorful mosaic of the Franciscan martyrs of 1860 is placed having their reliquaries preserved in a glass box underneath it.⁶⁷⁴

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

The layout of St. Paul church is split into six bays with five square columns on each side. The plan of the church ends with an east altar elevated on a platform of three steps. The church has three aisles, with the central aisle being both the widest and the highest. It is covered by a groin vault featuring transverse ribs, while the lateral aisles have the same type of vaulting. In addition, a pendentive dome is used to roof the central nave. The gallery is located merely on the upper level of the western part of the church.

As for openings, rows of four arched windows on the upper level, to the north and south directions illuminate the church. Furthermore, there are eight arched windows in the drum of the dome and one circular on the west façade, a common feature in many Latin churches (Fig. 142, 143, 144).

Façade:

The church's site is situated at ground level. The western facade is notable for its discernible manifestations of Latin style. The architectural design of the structure exhibits a symmetrical composition. Positioned at the center, the entrance is accompanied by two

⁶⁷² al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 73

⁶⁷³ Ibid

⁶⁷⁴ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 74

smaller arched windows on either side. The door is crowned by a modest pediment supported by two medium-height columns. The upper facade is pierced by a central circular window, with four lower arched windows positioned on either side. (Fig. 145, 146). A bell tower is located on the top of the church.

▪ Special characteristics with reasons:

From a critical and analytical perspective, the altar's orientation and design reflect key aspects of Latin doctrine and its liturgical practices. Positioned to face the nave, the exposed altar emphasizes the direct engagement between the clergy and the congregation, it is an indication of Latin Church traditions. In other words, the east apse is devoid of an east window or iconostasis. The natural fabric of old Damascus could be the reason for the absence of a semi-circular apse. Furthermore, the rich decorative program, characterized by statues and icons, underscores the visual and symbolic prominence of the Latin tradition. This is exemplified by the imposing statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul flanking the nave, which not only reinforce the church's doctrinal identity but also assert its connection to key figures of Christian theology.⁶⁷⁵

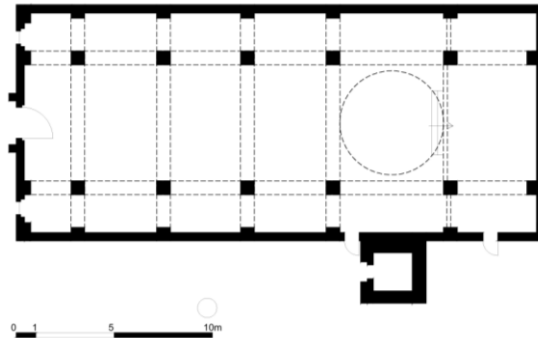
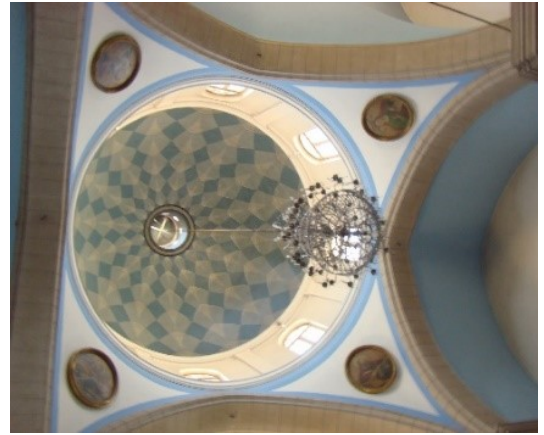


Fig. 142 A. St. Paul Church plan, drawn by author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio

⁶⁷⁵ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 74



A

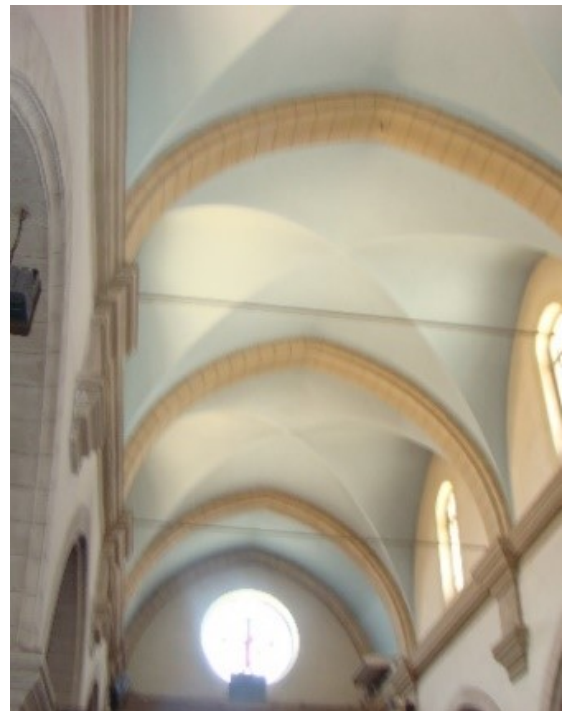


B

Fig. 143 A. Interior view facing East, B. A dome, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.



A



B

Fig. 144 A. Interior view facing south. B. A gothic vault with transverse ribs, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.



Fig. 145 A. The main entrance of the church. B. Exterior view showing the dome, 2017 taken by Salāmī, M.



Fig. 146 Façade of St. Paul monastery, 2017 taken by Salāmī, M.

➤ **The Sultana of the World Cathedral: The Armenian Catholic denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

To start with, the Armenian Catholic denomination has a historic church with the same name al-^ʿĀzariyya (Al- Azariya) district neighbourhood which was destroyed in 1860 and rebuilt in 1863 and 1911.

In 1959, they relocated to the church in Qināyt al-Ḥaṭab in the old Damascus region. It was built in 1930 by Jesuits and the architect Khalīl Shīnyāra. The plot of land is dedicated to a cathedral and a diocese.⁶⁷⁶

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

The cathedral is accessible directly from ground level, and the plan depicts a basilica design oriented eastward. The nave is divided into three parts by four piers carrying semicircular arches, and the plan forms a cruciform shape. The nave is elevated by two steps and separated from the altar by a low marble rail, and the Holy of Holies is located two steps away. The apse is straight-end directed to the East, with two chambers surrounding it. Furthermore, the gallery occupies merely the western façade.

The light comes through windows distributed on the upper and lower levels of the northern and southern façades. Regarding the exterior, the main roof is a gable roof while interiorly is a barrel-vaulted covering the different heights of the naves. (Fig. 146, 147, 148).

Façade:

The southern main entrance is decorated by a prominent arch carried by two columns and a small gable roof (pediment). The Arminian cross surmounts the center of the façade, an explicit indicator of the Armenian Catholic denomination. The colorful windows allow the light rays to enter the church. (Fig. 149).⁶⁷⁷

▪ Special characteristics with reasons:

Owing to the close relationship between the Armenian Catholic Church and the Catholics in Rome, this church shows a significant number of icon paintings and statues. Additionally, the circular window on the main façade, adorned with a Cross, distinctly

⁶⁷⁶ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 61

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid

underscores the Armenian denomination. As for the iconostasis, it is represented by a low rail that serves as a base for displaying icons, blending functionality with religious symbolism.

The whole structure of the church illustrates modern Western characteristics, simultaneously blending in with the natural fabric of old Damascus.

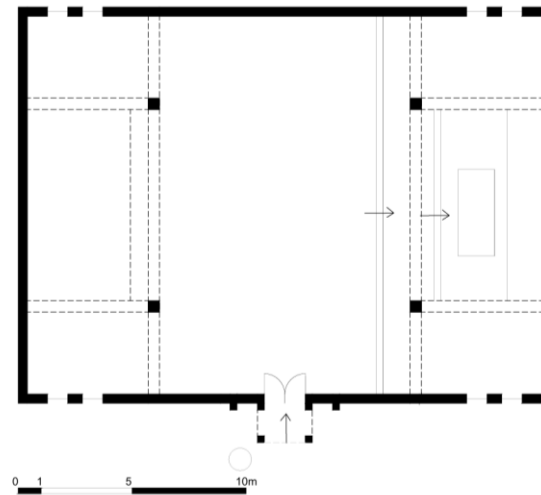
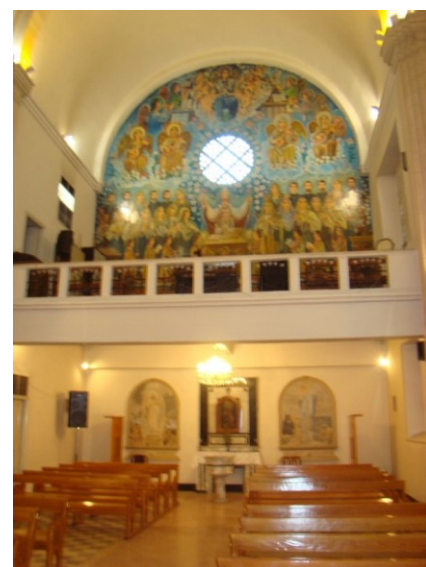


Fig. 147 Sultana of the World Cathedral plan, drawn by the author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio



A



B

Fig. 148 A view facing East, B. A view facing West, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.



A Fig. 149 Exterior view facing main southern façade, A view showing columns and roof, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.

➤ **Saint John of Damascus Church: The Greek Orthodox denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

Saint John of Damascus church is located approximately 50 meters from the al-Mariamite Cathedral in the al-Āsiyya district (Al- Assiya). It dates back to 'Irīthyūs (Irithious) Patriarch in 1864. This church is regarded as one of the most beautiful and historic Orthodox churches, with a particular damascene and architectural style, besides its magnificent interior design. It is also mentioned that this church was a house of St. John for a long time. During the Ottoman period, it served as a residence for the Russian consul in Damascus, who later sold it to the Ottoman government. Subsequently, in response to the Antioch Patriarch 'Irīthyūs' request, the Ottoman ruler authorized the construction of the church. Hence, the Russians contributed to the building of this church.⁶⁷⁸

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

⁶⁷⁸ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 85

Despite the Church's location in old Damascus and prior usage as a residence, the church's orientation remains to the East. Its plan illustrates an equivalent basilica type. It is divided into a nave and two aisles by two rows of circular and square columns. Basalt is used for these columns as well as the arches. The east altar is positioned on an elevated platform separated from the assembly space (nave) by wooden iconostases. This iconostasis is made by the local Damascene Christian. The altar features three apses, the biggest is in the middle. The apse is designated as a prothesis located on the southeast side. A gallery occupies the church's western, northern and southern sides.

Because of the varying heights of the roof, natural light may enter through the ranks of windows on the gallery level to the ground floor. The apse has seven windows. Moreover, three doors are positioned on the west, north and south sides. It is worth noting that the church has a flat roof; the roof of the main nave is higher than the two lateral aisles, pierced by windows (Fig. 150, 151, 152, 153, 154).

Façade:

Despite the prevailing architectural characteristics of ancient Damascus, the church is built on an elevated platform, with its five-step entrance considered a unique distinction within the locality. The western façade of the church is a monolithic form with the nature of Damascene houses through alternating rows of basalt and white stones. The church is surrounded by three porticos extended to the northern, western, and southern façades, supported by basalt and limestone columns surmounted with arches. Particularly, the main entrance façade is preceded by a portico of four-square columns bearing semicircular arches. These arches are ornamented with arabesque patterns, following Islamic artistic traditions. Furthermore, the bell tower lies on the southeast façade.

▪ Special characteristics with reasons:

The external elements of the church present a remarkable composition that harmonizes the distinctive character of Old Damascus with the traditional architectural features of ecclesiastical design. The entrance steps unmistakably signify the building's identity as a church. The presence of three apses stands out prominently. However, the absence of the western twin towers detracts from the otherwise cohesive architectural narrative and creates a noticeable departure from conventional church design. The roof is similar in nature to the style used in old Damascus (Fig. 155).

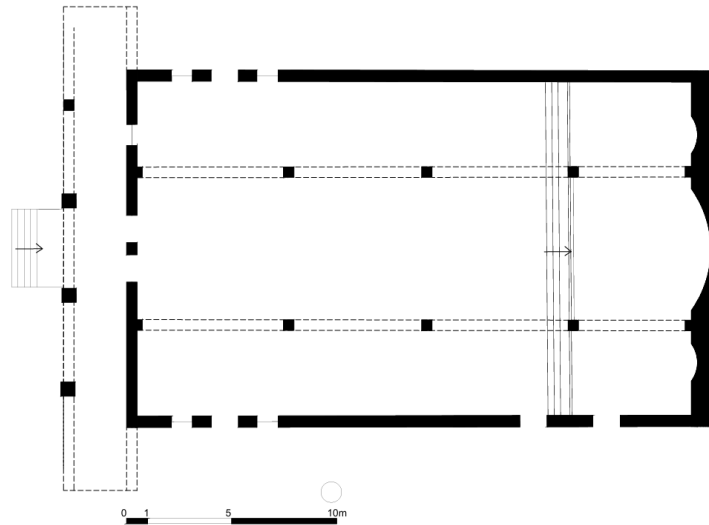


Fig. 150 Saint John of Damascus plan, drawn by the author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio



Fig. 151 Interior view facing East, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 152 A. A view facing South. B. A view facing West, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 153 The east altar. Two western doors of the main façade, 2019, taken by the author.

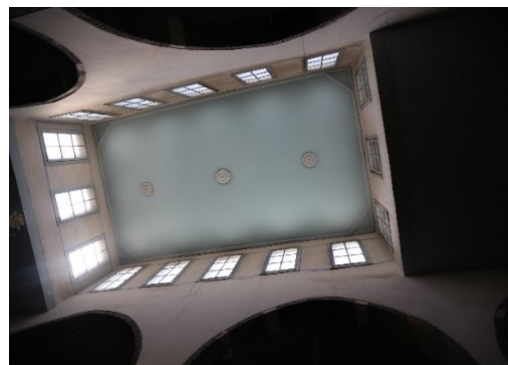


Fig. 154 The roof of central nave, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 155 A. The main western façade of the church, 2019, taken by the author.

➤ **St. Anthony Cathedral: The Maronite denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

St. Anthony Cathedral is located in al-Dir district of Bab Tuma accompanied by a diocese, a celebration hall, and a supplementary building. This cathedral was at first named “The Transmission of the Virgin” in 1864.⁶⁷⁹ The main renovation of the diocese and its cathedral was in 1865 and 1992, respectively. The Cathedral contains reliquaries of three saints who were martyred in the events of 1860, which are still preserved until today in this church.⁶⁸⁰

The Maronites had a small old church before 1616, which did not have any description of its characteristics before 1860. The church was demolished due to the events in 1860 like most churches in old Damascus.⁶⁸¹

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

The church is oriented to the East like any conventional church. Its scheme is a rectangular basilica type with a central nave and two aisles through two rows of four-square

⁶⁷⁹ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 52

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid

⁶⁸¹ Ibid

columns. The square columns divide the nave into five bays. The gothic-style arches, three-pointed arch, rest on columns. The altar is on a raised dais by two steps. The church is accessed through three doors located on the western façade.

The gallery occupies merely the church's western upper level, accessed by a staircase located to southwest of the church. The church roof is a groin vault. Natural light is provided by elevated arched windows to the north, south, and west sides of the church (Fig. 156, 157, 158, 159, 160)

Façade:

The main entrance of the church resembles the Damascene houses. The church is simply on a similar level to the ground floor. The western façade is preceded by a portico with five columns supporting six semicircular arches. It is remarkable that the door's frame shows rows of black basalt stones with a yellowish stone called Ablaq.⁶⁸²). The top and bottom of the door are decorated with different ornaments, such as a picture of Jesus's baptism of angels, and floral decorations.⁶⁸³ While the upper level of the façade is pierced with two arched windows.

▪ Special characteristics with reasons:

In the Maronite cathedral, the liturgical space is characterized by a rectangular altar oriented to the east and directly exposed to the nave, eliminating the visibility of the traditional iconostasis or low barrier. This cathedral serves as an authentic representation of the Maronite denomination as a Western church, reflected through its internal layout and the inclusion of statues alongside icons. Moreover, the church embodies a fusion of local Damascene and Western influences, as evidenced by the use of ablaq in the door frame and the Gothic-style arches. This blending of styles likely results from the interaction between the natural urban fabric of old Damascus and Western architectural elements.

⁶⁸² Ablaq: the decorative technique of alternating layers of black and orche stone on facades, doorways, and other structural elements for visual contrast

⁶⁸³ Ibid

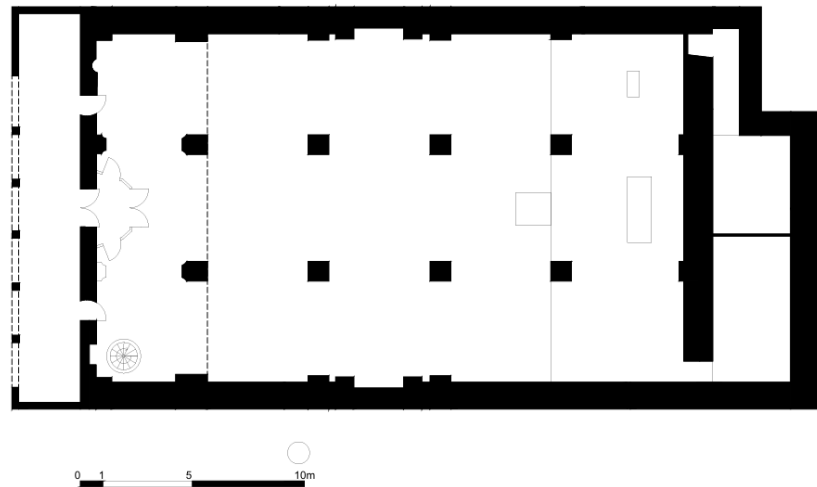


Fig. 156 St. Anthony Cathedral plan, drawn by the author. based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio



A



B

Fig. 157 A. A view facing East altar. B. A view showing West main entrance and gallery, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.

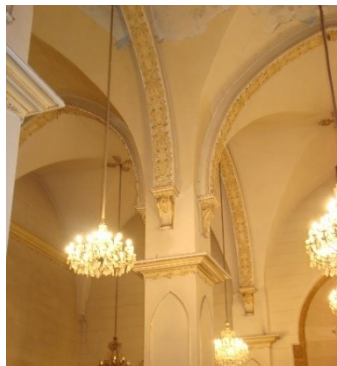


Fig. 158 A view showing gothic-style arches on the columns and groin vault roofing, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.



A



B

Fig. 159 A view showing main façade of the church and the dome of St. Paul Latin Church. B. The main western door, 2017, taken Salāmī, M.



Fig. 160 A view facing West, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.

➤ **St. Theresa Church: The Chaldean denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

The church is situated in Būlād district -Bab Tuma. According to written inscription on marble panels: “This church was built in 1941 by the donor Būluṣ Ḥajār and other benefactors like Mary Nāsh Fūrd in 1948 and refurbished by benefactors in 1968-1978”. The entrance of the church was resorted and renovated in 1981; a further renovation was carried out in 1979.⁶⁸⁴

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

The plan depicts a simple single hall directed to the south. The altar is separated from the nave by three steps and a marble wall. It is surrounded by statues and icons placed on top. The apse manifests a semicircular, flanked by two side chambers (prothesis and diaconicon). Moreover, there is a gallery on the southern side accessed by a spiral staircase (Fig. 161, 162). The church has two entrances on the northern and western sides. As for the openings, six windows characterized with Gothic style and distributed on the eastern and western sides. The roof is a simple flat and a quarter dome covers the apse.⁶⁸⁵

Façade:

Although the church is modest with its small-scale form, the façade depicts distinguishing aspects that allow one to vividly recognize it as a church. The main façade is simple with a wooden entryway and two of three pointed arches of windows similar to the ones at the entry. Furthermore, the entrance is topped by a circular multi colored glass window with a white cross in the center. Despite the façade is visualized as a gable form, the roof is flat. (Fig. 163).

▪ Special characteristics with reasons:

The church’s exterior façade prominently shows Gothic pointed arch elements, reflecting strong Western architectural influences. In contrast, the interior adopts a simpler design, characterized by a plain hall structure, creating a deliberate juxtaposition between the ornate exterior and the understated interior. Furthermore, as previously noted, the inclusion of saint statues alongside icon paintings particularly those depicting Darb al-Ṣalīb

⁶⁸⁴ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 78

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid

themes demonstrates the Catholic Chaldean Church's alignment with Roman traditions, highlighting its gradual adaptation to Western liturgical practices.⁶⁸⁶

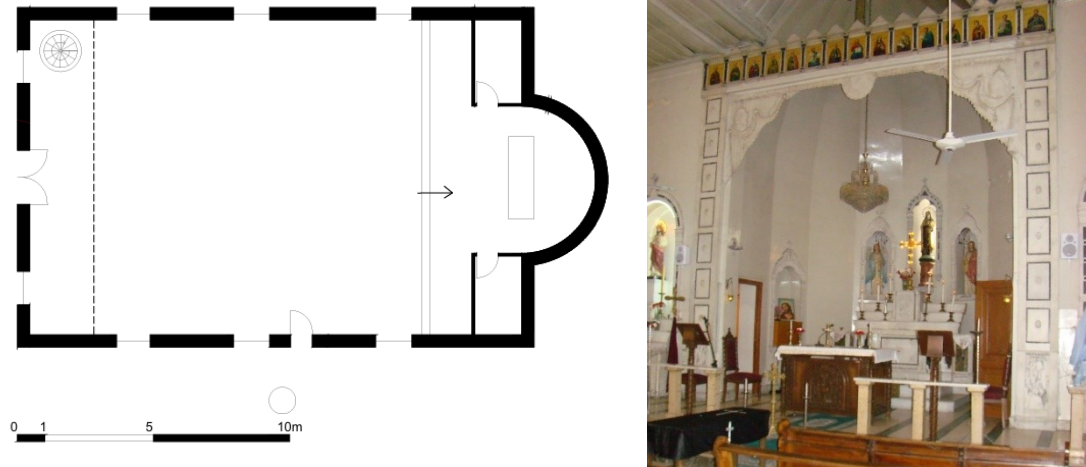


Fig. 161 St. Theresa Church plan, drawn by author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio. B. A view facing south, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.



Fig. 162 A. A view facing North, 2016. B. A view facing South Ḥannā, J.

⁶⁸⁶ al-Shīhābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 78



Fig. 163 Exterior view facing North, 2017, taken by Salāmī, M.

➤ **St. George Cathedral: The Syriac Orthodox denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

The Syriac Orthodox St. George Cathedral is located in Bab Tuma area and was built in 1951, with the patriarchate and additional structures to the southeast.⁶⁸⁷

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

Its plan is distinguished by a small simple basilica oriented to the East. The scheme clearly exhibits three aisles with two rows of three circular columns. It terminates with an apse on an elevated platform. The iconostasis appears in the church. The openings are covered by curtain walls. The upper gallery occupies the western and southern sides. Not to mention that on the western facade, there is a main entrance to the church and another door on the patriarchate side. As for the openings, they are distributed on the upper and lower levels. Except for the middle of the nave, which is roofed with a squinch dome, the aisles show a flat roof (Fig. 164, 165, 166).

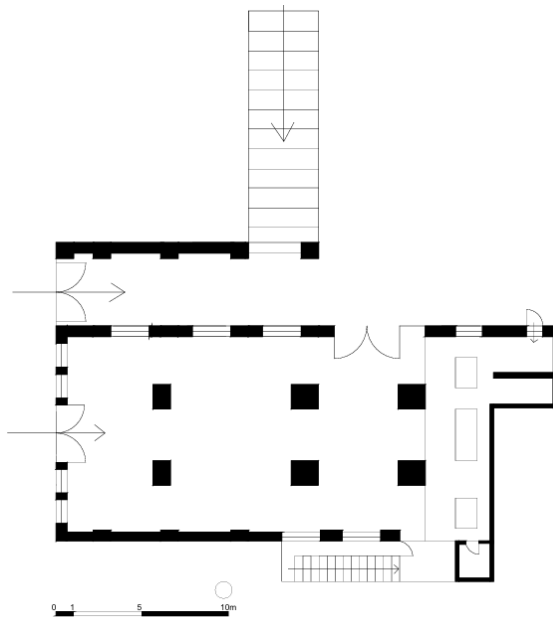
Façade:

⁶⁸⁷ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 57

The church has a wooden door in the middle of the façade, encircled by two arch windows on the lower level, and two rectangular ones are placed on the upper level. The columns extend along the façade and divide into three equal parts. A pediment roof appears on the western main façade, giving the impression of a gable roof (Fig. 167).

- Special characteristics with reasons:

The Syriac Orthodox denomination asserts its identity through both the design of its façade and its architectural expression, emphasizing traditional elements that reflect its religious heritage. Notably, the use of the dome as a central roofing feature serves as a focal point, symbolizing the continuity of its liturgical and cultural significance. This architectural choice reinforces the denomination's distinct identity while maintaining its historical and spiritual traditions.



A



B

Fig. 164 A. St. George Cathedral plan, drawn by the author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio. B. Interior view facing East, 2019 taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 165 A. A view facing East. B. A view facing West, 2019 taken by author.



A



B

Fig. 166 A. Interior view facing East, B. Exterior facing the main façade, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 167 A view showing the dome, Sketch of the main facade of church, drawn by the author

Below are the two Damascene churches in the al - Mīdān region.

➤ **Saint Ananias Apostle Church: The Greek Orthodox denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

It is considered the second oldest church after Mariamite Cathedral and one of the most picturesque heritage damascenes. Saint Ananias Apostle Church is located in al-Qūrashī of al-Mīdān-waṣṭānī, one of the historical Christian districts in al-Mīdān.

The church's doors bear two different construction dates in 1815 and 1860. Consequently, two main hypotheses are assumed:

- Saint Ananias Apostle church was a house and then it turned into a church during the Ottoman period due to the Christian exodus in the wake of the 1860 events.
- There is a manuscript showing the church's renovation in 1715 which was discovered in al-Assad library. It is presumed that this church was a monastery or a church in a convent. The confirmation of this concept is supported by the fact that several monasteries have proliferated in Damascus and its surrounding areas, particularly in the southern section of the city from the sixth century, as noted in the first chapter. Thus, there were two basic possibilities: a church or a monastery since 517.⁶⁸⁸

Notably, approximately one hundred Orthodox Christian families reside in this area and are accustomed to praying.

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

⁶⁸⁸ Zaytūn, 2018, p. 5

The church is situated between these two courtyards, on the southern and northern sides, which are linked by a portico that precedes the courtyard (Fig. 157).

The church is oriented eastward. Its blueprint shows a basilica plan a nave with two aisles divided by two rows of columns. The altar is located on a raised platform and terminates with a single apse. It is reached by a single step that runs the width of the church. To the south of the altar, there is a diaconicon chamber. The presence of a gallery surrounding the northern, southern, and western parts of the church is accessible through a staircase in the northern portico (Fig. 154). This gallery is alleged to have been dedicated to praying women, particularly during the Ottoman rule. In terms of roofing, the church has a flat roof while the middle of the nave roof is higher than the other parts. Given the sanctity of the space for the past 20 years, Holy oil appears from the church pavement of the aisle (Fig, 168, 169, 170, 171).

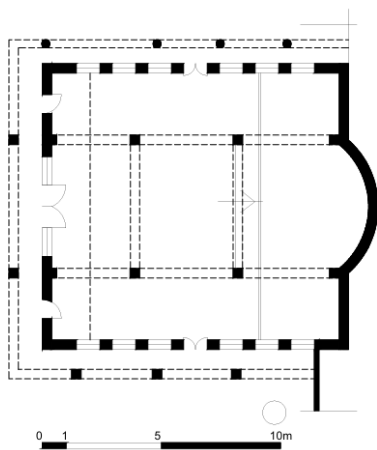
Façade:

Externally, the characteristics of Saint Ananias church resemble those of any damascene dwelling in al-Mīdān. The primary entry is simply a door leading to the southern patio. The western façade has three major entrances, the largest located in the middle.

▪ Special characteristics with reasons:

The observation that the church is "indistinguishable from the surrounding lodging" suggests a deliberate or circumstantial integration with the urban fabric. On the other hand, the main elements of the church are exposed through the nave, two aisles, and iconostasis that separates the nave from the altar

This blending could reflect a historical necessity for discretion, possibly influenced by historical and cultural factors in this region. It raises questions about the role of identity and visibility in religious architecture. Was this design a conscious choice to avoid attention, or does it reflect an adaptive reuse of space dictated by urban constraints?



A



B

Fig. 168 St. Ananias Church plan, drawn by the author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio. B. A view facing East, 2019 taken by the author.



A



B



C

Fig. 169 A. The altar. B. A view showing the East apse. C. A view showing the gallery and arches, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 170 A roof of the central nave. B. A view facing West, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 171 A. A view showing the South courtyard of the church. B. A view showing the main entrance, 2019, taken by the author.

➤ **The Cathedral of Our Lady: The Greek Catholic denomination**

▪ History and time trajectory:

The church is located in the al-Qūrashī (Al-Qurashe) district in the al-Mīdān (Al-Midan) area. Because the Christians wanted to perform their rituals, the church began as a home and was later transformed into a small church. When the Christian community in this neighbourhood increased considerably, they purchased an extra plot of land to expand the church.⁶⁸⁹

The Cathedral of Our Lady was the primary Greek Catholic Cathedral before it was abandoned and moved to Old Damascus (Cathedral of Our Lady of the Dormition) between 1833 and 1840.⁶⁹⁰

▪ Architectural description:

Plan:

The church is built on a raised platform with two stairs leading up to it. The church is oriented to the East. It depicts a basilica plan nave and two aisles with two rows of square columns carrying semicircular arches. The altar is elevated on three steps and separated from the nave by a marble iconostasis with five doors. Furthermore, the iconostasis is embellished and decorated with floral and geometrical patterns. The central apse is wider

⁶⁸⁹ Darwīsh, 2018, p. 95

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 94

than the other two regular apses. There is a gallery on the north, west, and south sides accessed by a staircase. The distribution of windows is at the gallery level and the ground floor (Fig. 172).

The church is covered with a flat roof of poplar wood, while the roof of the central nave is higher than the other parts. Subsequently, in 1983, a bell tower was constructed to the southeast of the church, accessible via a staircase at the entrance. (Fig. 173, 174, 175).

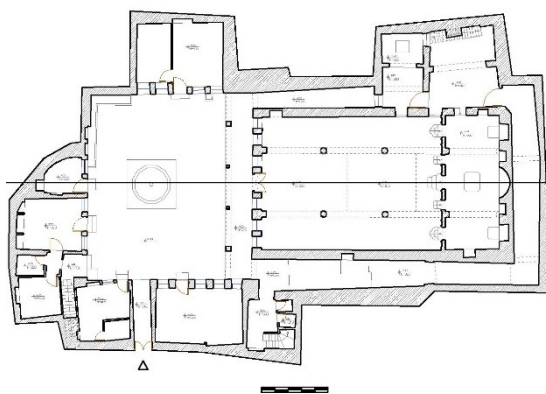
Façade:

The entrance of the church is indistinguishable from any entrance of damascene houses in this area. There is a courtyard with a fountain in front of the western façade. Noticeably, a portico precedes the western façade consisting of four columns carrying five arches. There is a single main door, and six rectangular windows distributed on the two sides of the door (Fig. 160, 161).

■ Special characteristics with reasons:

The assertion that the church's exterior is "difficult to recognize" and resembles a residential entry intrigue its architectural identity as Saint Ananias Apostle Church. This indistinguishability could be interpreted as a strategic blending into its urban surroundings. However, such blending may also dilute the visual assertion of the church's identity as a sacred space.

Does this design choice stand as a testament to the church's ability to adapt while maintaining its spiritual presence rather than undermining it??



A



B

Fig. 172 The cathedral of Our Lady, drawn by (DGAM archive). B. A view facing East, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 173 A. The altar. B. A view showing central roof, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 174 A view facing West, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 175 A. Exterior view showing South. B. A view facing West main entrance, 2019, taken by the author.

IV.3. Greek Orthodox Churches in the Twentieth and Twenty-First centuries

The following is a list of the Greek Orthodox churches in Damascus: ⁶⁹¹

Church Name	Type	Date	Field visits
Mariamite Cathedral of Damascus	Damascene Basilica	395-408 Renovated in 1953	-
St. Ananias Church	Damascene Basilica	1815 -1863	-
St. John of Damascus church	Damascene Basilica	1864	-
The Holy Cross Church	Basilica	1930	-
St. Nicolas Church	Modern - Basilica	1965	-
St. Ignatius church	House church	1973	
Archangel Michael Church	House church	1980	-
St. Dimitri Church	House church	1982-83	-
St. Elias Church	Modern - Basilica	1990	-
St. George Church	Modern centralized Basilica	1992	-
St. Antonius the Great church	House church	1995	
Saints Peter and Paul church	Modern - Basilica	1996-2004	-
Annunciation Church	House church	2015	

Table 6 List of the Greek Orthodox Churches in Damascus by the author

⁶⁹¹ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005

➤ **The Holy Cross Church:**

▪ History and time trajectory:

The Holy Cross Church, situated in al-Qassāʿ (Al-Qassaa) street, was established in 1930, with the first bell tower built in 1960 and the second built between 1962 and 1969.⁶⁹²

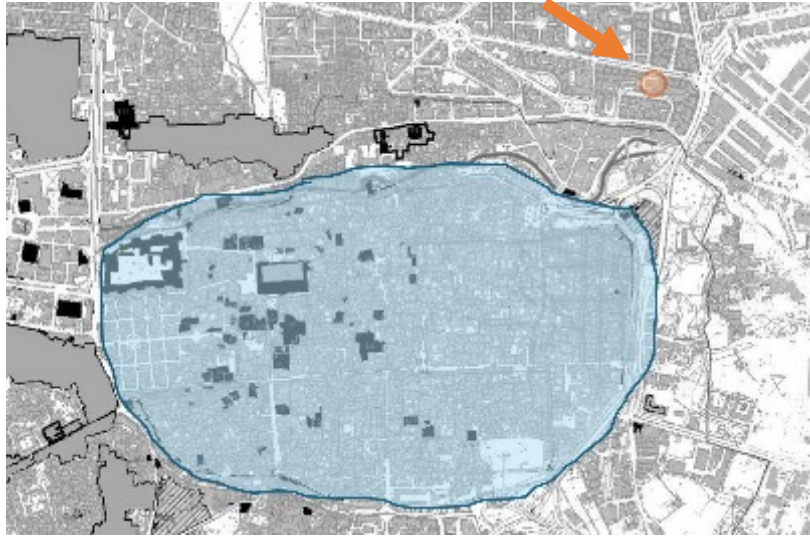


Fig. 176 A map showing the Holy Cross church location, by the author after (DGAM archive)

▪ General and special characteristics:

The Holy Cross Church is recognized as one of the largest Greek Orthodox churches in Damascus. This church features a surrounding space specifically designated for the performance of liturgical rituals. Its architectural design exhibits a strong resemblance to that of the Mariamite Cathedral in Old Damascus.

The architectural layout of the church follows a basilica plan, consisting of a central nave flanked by two lateral aisles, which are delineated by two rows of circular columns.

Oriented towards the East, the plan ends with a prominent apse, an ambon, and a white marble iconostasis. The church does not include a gallery or a narthex. It is accessed through three entrances located on the north, south, and west facades. Arched windows are distributed across both the upper and lower levels of the church. In addition, the pediment of the western façade is distinguished by three windows on the upper level, topped by a circular window, while the eastern side features a single circular window.

⁶⁹² al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 104

Moreover, its western façade is embellished with dated inscriptions and decorative elements. Above the entrance, semi-circular arches are featured, and the entrance itself is framed by four columns that support a frieze, culminating in an additional upper frieze. Beneath this upper frieze are three windows, and the pediment is surrounded by a cross. The magnificent pedimented western façade serves as the primary focal point, featuring a centrally positioned entrance situated on an elevated platform. Reflecting the architectural characteristics of ancient Syrian churches, this structure incorporates two western towers of varying heights and functions, with one designated as a bell tower and the second as a clock tower. Not to mention that the roof features a central dome positioned above the central nave, while the aisles are constructed with a flat roofing system (Fig. 177, 178, 179, 180, 181). From a critical and analytical perspective, the Holy Cross Church exemplifies a typical model of Greek Orthodox architecture. Its design harmoniously blends ancient and modern styles, reflecting characteristics of Byzantine church architecture and cathedrals. Prominent features such as the nave, ambon, iconostasis, and semi-circular east apse underscore its church identity. In addition, the church's facade features western towers reminiscent of Byzantine examples found in Syria, further emphasizing its architectural patrimony. The use of dome in roofing reflects traditional practices while simultaneously enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal. In particular, the church is adorned with decorations and ornaments that are becoming rare in the 20th and 21st centuries, making it a significant example of contemporary church architecture. Thus, the Church of the Holy Cross is an ideal representation of contemporary ecclesiastical design.

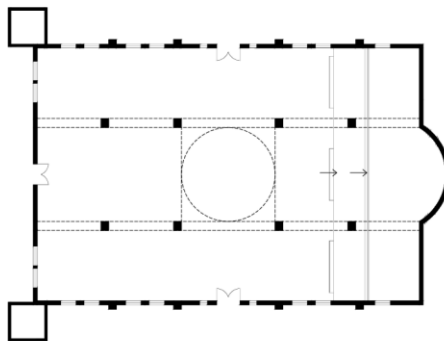


Fig. 177 The Holy Cross church, by the author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio



A



B

Fig. 178 A. A view facing East. B. The dome of central nave, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 179 A. Interior view facing West. B. A view showing an ambo, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 180 A. Exterior view showing the western façade, 2019, taking by author. B. The main west facade, drawn by the author.



A



B

Fig. 181 A. A view facing North. B. A view showing a projecting apse of the church, 2019, taken by the author.

➤ **St. Nicolas church:**

▪ **History and time trajectory:**

The church is located in the al-Mazza 86 district and was built in 1965, alongside an adjacent celebration hall and dormitory.⁶⁹³ According to an interview with Bishop Nizar al-

⁶⁹³ al-Shihābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 119

Mabardi, the conceptual framework and primary design strategy for the church were developed under his guidance. As a result, it is widely regarded that the bishop played a pivotal role in shaping the architectural vision, while the architect primarily acted as an implementer of the proposed design (Fig. 182).



Fig. 182 A map showing St. Nicolas church location in Damascus, (Google Earth, 2025)

- General and special characteristics:

The church is oriented towards the East, featuring a straightforward rectangular hall. The nave is separated from the altar by an iconostasis. The altar is elevated on a platform of three steps. Not to mention that the apse terminates with a straight wall. This church has three entrances located on the western, northern, and southern sides, while arched windows are distributed solely at ground level.

Overall, the church is situated on an elevated platform, elevated with ten steps. The main entrance, located on the western façade, is bordered by four elegantly designed windows that allow natural light to filter into the church. The structure is topped with a flat roof, which contrasts with the central nave, where an oval dome covers it. A row of windows is positioned within the drum of the dome.

From a critical and analytical point of view, Greek Orthodox church architecture displays essential features such as a single nave and a linear eastern apse. The priest chose an oval-shaped dome that covers the central nave to establish a clear church identity and enhance its architectural significance, to better signify a sign of landmark.

The whole structure is elevated on a raised platform, which emphasizes the importance of the edifice. It is noted, however, that there are no western towers on the facade besides a

lack of decorative elements or ornamentation in this church. Overall, St. Nicholas Church exemplifies a minimalist design while maintaining its basic liturgical functions and spotlights it as an important building being elevated compared to other buildings around it (Fig. 183, 184, 185, 186).

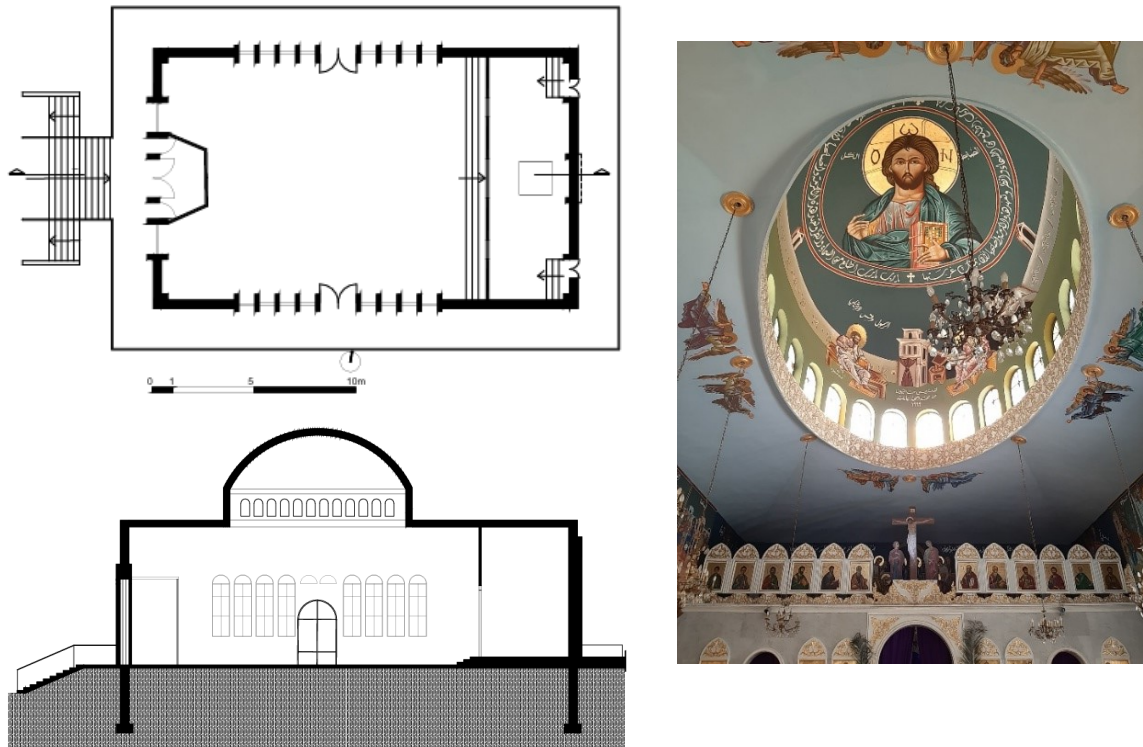


Fig. 183 A. St. Nicolas church plan, drawn by the author based on Prist Nizar al-Mabardi. B. The dome of central nave, 2019, taken by the author.

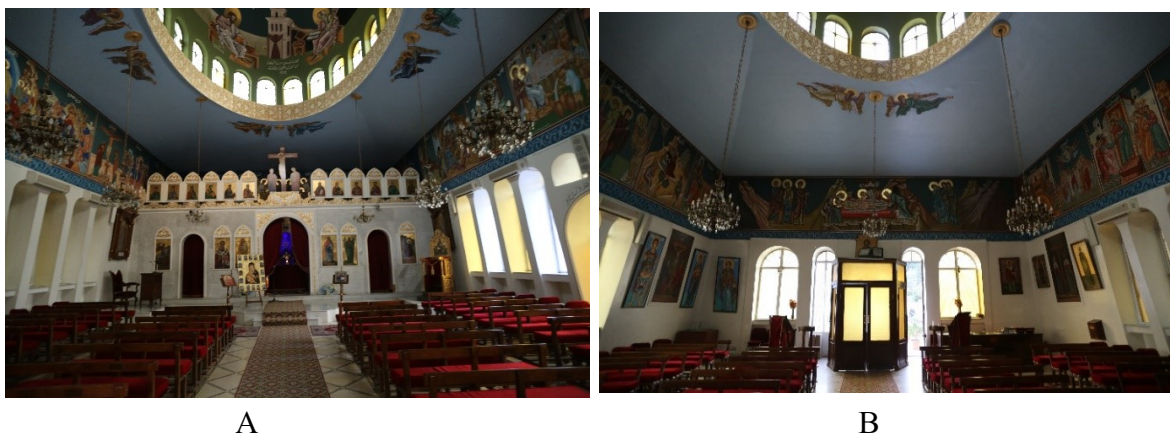


Fig. 184 A. Interior view facing East. B. Interior view facing West, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 185 A. Interior view shwing the altar. B. Interior view facing West, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 186 Exterior view facing West main entrance, 2019, taken by the author.

House churches

As for the appearance of house churches, it is well known that from the inception of Christianity until the third century, Christians were accustomed to practicing their rituals in houses such as Dura-Europos (house church). On the other hand, this phenomenon of using the residential floors of inhabited buildings as Greek Orthodox churches reappeared significantly in Damascus between 1980-1985 and 1995. Still, why this type of church reemerged during this period (1980-1986) is a persistent question.

At the outset, the presence of house churches was an uncommon move. According to the field visits and the interviews with priests and members of the Christian community, hereunder are some of the justifications for employing a floor of a residential building as a church:

- In several regions, such as al-Tijārah (Al-Tijara), Jaramāna (Jaramana), and abu-Rūrmanih (Abu Rummaneh), the demographic distribution of Christians had greatly increased. Christians would prefer having a church close to their accommodation rather than going to another location.
- In these residential areas, finding a plot of land to build a church is a big challenge
- The Patriarchate lacks the financial means to build a church.
- Many benefactors had provided or donated their houses as a church for prayer.

➤ **Archangel Michael church:**

- History and time trajectory:

Archangel Michael Church occupies the ground floor of a residential building. It is located in al-Tijārah (Al-Tijara) district, overlooking the highway. At first, the church was a house that belonged to Fū'ād al-Zayyāt (Fouad al-Zayat), who endowed it with the Greek Orthodox denomination in 1980. Later, the church got the name Michael after his father (Fig. 187).⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹⁴ Jūzīf Zaytūn, 2019

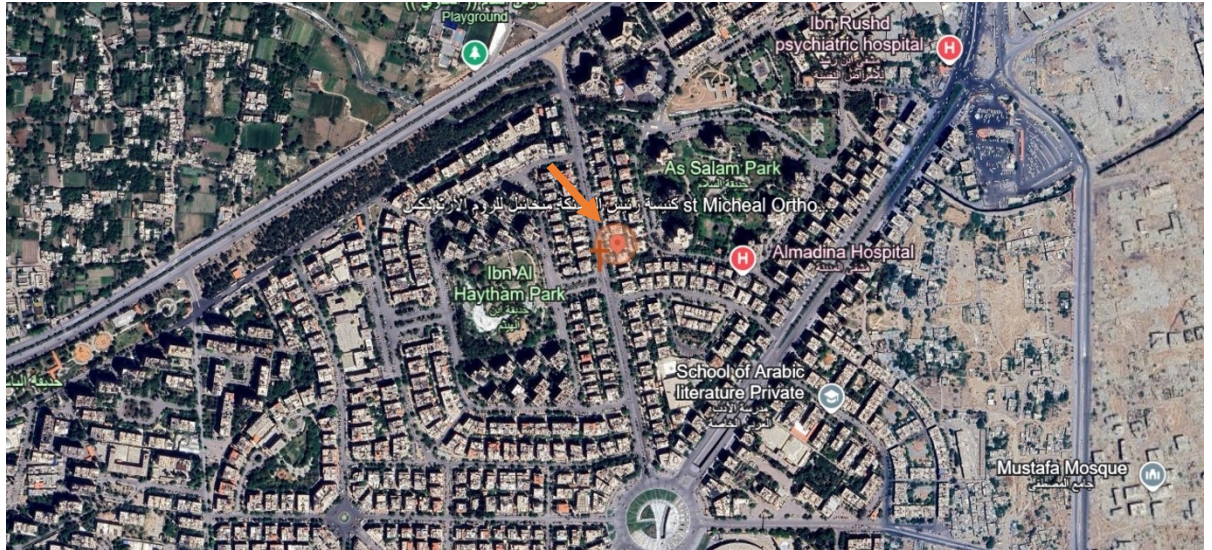


Fig. 187 A map showing Archangel Michael church location in Damascus, (Google Earth, 2025)

- General and special characteristics:

The church, oriented to the north and featuring a separate entrance accessed by approximately ten steps, presents an intriguing case in contemporary ecclesiastical architecture. While the presence of Christian cross symbols above the entrance provides some level of identification, the overall simplicity of the design raises concerns about the visibility and prominence of religious identity in urban settings. The layout, consisting of a hall divided into three sections by two columns, reflects a functional approach that prioritizes worship over architectural and spiritual sides.

The church accommodates nearly 150- 200 people. The narrow portico that leads to the main hall functions as a transitional space where believers can light candles, thus reinforcing the church as a place of spiritual preparation. The altar is placed on a raised platform, and a projecting apse enhances its significance as a focal point for worship despite its location within a residential building. The modern wooden iconostasis with three doors divides the nave from the altar (Fig. 188, 189).

However, the church's flat concrete slab roofing contrasts with traditional vaulted designs commonly found in Orthodox churches, potentially limiting the spiritual symbolism often associated with more elaborate ceilings. Icons are painted on both the walls and the ceiling.

From a critical and analytical point of view, this church exemplifies a modern, simple example that Christians can practice their rituals close to their accommodation. It prominently features essential architectural elements such as the nave and the iconostasis.

Notably, the projecting apse stands out as a striking characteristic of the structure, enhancing its visual impact and serving as a focal point for worship and architectural appreciation. Thus, it is obvious that this unique positioning within a residential context shows the community's commitment to maintaining its Christian traditions.



Fig. 188 A view facing East, 2019, taken by the author.

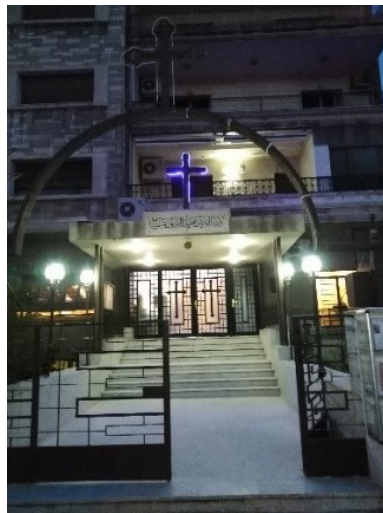


Fig. 189 The main entrance of the church and a interior view facing southeast side, 2019, taken by author.

➤ **St. Dimitri church:**

▪ History and time trajectory:

The church was first dedicated to the Greek Catholic denomination. They leased this house to worship between 1980 and 1983. After that, they constructed a new church, St. John of Damascus located in 'abū- Rummna (Abu Rummaneh) area. Then, this house church was rented by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate between 1982 and 1983 (Fig. 190).⁶⁹⁵

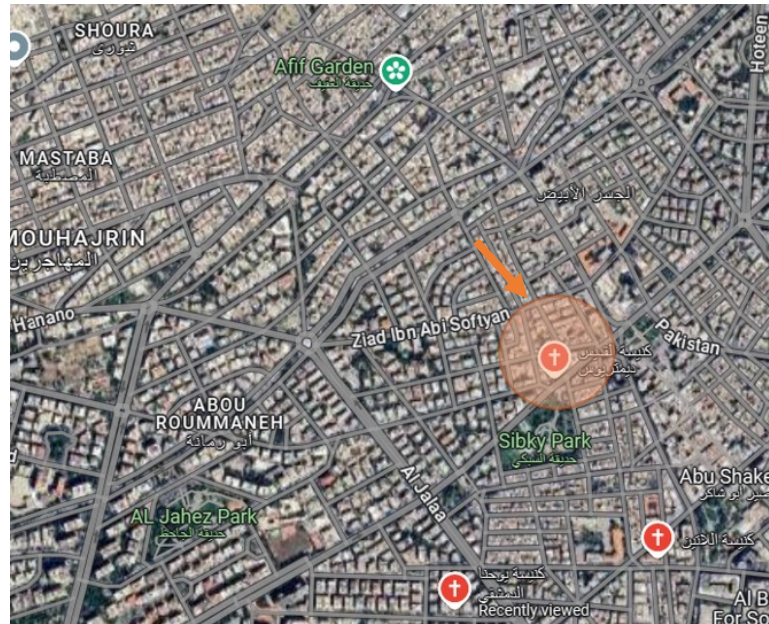


Fig. 190 A map showing St. Dimitri church location in Damascus, (Google Earth, 2025)

▪ General and special characteristics:

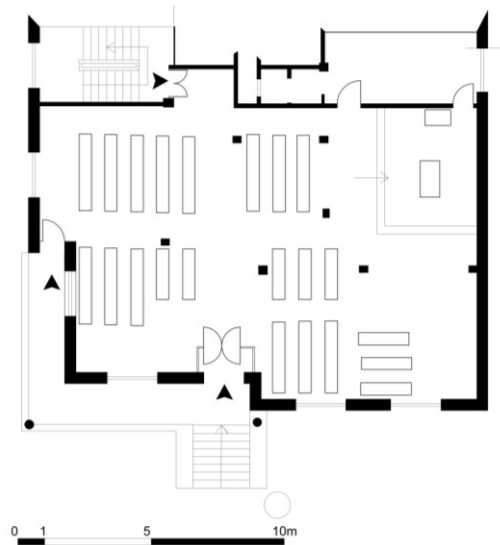
The house church, oriented towards the Northeast and elevated on a platform of eight steps, presents a unique case in contemporary church architecture. While it possesses essential architectural elements such as a nave and an altar, it lacks prominent features aside from a Christian cross at the entrance, challenging traditional expectations of church identity. This minimalist approach may reflect a conscious decision to integrate the church into a residential context, emphasizing functionality over religious symbolism.

The interior layout is characterized by a hall supported by six columns and an entirely visible altar separated from the nave by two steps. The absence of an iconostasis is replaced by a low barrier that maintains the visibility of the altar, which is uncommon in Greek

⁶⁹⁵ Jūzīf Zaytūn, 2019

Orthodox churches. However, the flat ceiling roofing contrasts with traditional domed or gabled designs often found in Orthodox churches, potentially limiting the spiritual symbolism typically associated with vaulted ceilings. This feature is a result of its location on the ground floor of a residential building (Fig. 191, 192).

Overall, this house church exemplifies or a modern interpretation of sacred space that prioritizes Christians gathering to practice their rituals in this region.



A



B

Fig. 191 A. St. Dimitri Church plan, drawn by the author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio .
B. Interior view showing the altar.



A



B

Fig. 192 A. A view showing the altar. B. A view showing the main entrance, 2019, taken by the author.

- **St. Elias church:**
- History and time trajectory:

Saint Elias Church was built in Duwīl'a (Dwel'a), suburbs of Damascus, in 1990 (Fig. 193). It was designed by the architect Charles Kassab. Depending on the architect and the priest's interview, the number of Christians in this area has expanded significantly, reaching almost 20,000 families.⁶⁹⁶ As a result, the Christian residents in this region need to build a church to practice their rituals. The government provided the church land which was divided into two parts: one for the Catholics and one for the Orthodox Christians. However, due to the unwise exploitation of the area of the church building, the Greek Orthodox denomination is currently looking for another plot of land, which is difficult to come by in this suburb.

Overall, it is believed that the architect was primarily responsible for the design decisions of this particular form, with the minimal involvement of the bishop.



Fig. 193A map showing the location of St. Elias Church

- General and special characteristics:

Its blueprint shows a basilica plan consisting of a wide nave and two narrow side aisles divided by five circular columns on each side. As for the altar, it is placed on a raised platform accessed by three steps. In contrast, the apse appears different from the traditional church examples, which are typically straight or semi-circular, presenting an unconventional corner form. The east apse is pierced by cruciform windows. As for the openings, they are identified by their contemporary design and elongated rectangular form. (Fig. 170).

⁶⁹⁶ Ḥabīb, 2019

The church features a single door located on the western façade, providing access to a small portico leading to the nave. As for the roof, it slopes progressively in height (Fig. 171, 172), with its primary purpose to create a cruciform shape when viewed from mass plan. The church is set on a raised platform with five steps. Overall, the church adopts a modernized design, taking on the shape of a ship. (Fig. 194).

In conclusion, the church is characterized by an elegant interplay of overlapping architectural volumes that assert its monumental presence within a residential context while unmistakably identifying it as a church. Architect Charles Kassab pursued a modern ecclesiastical design, integrating symbolism into the structure while preserving critical interior elements such as the iconostasis and the nave. The altar, set on a raised platform, exemplifies modernity through its innovative angular form-a departure from the conventional straight or semi-circular apses, which traditionally carried symbolic and liturgical significance. Thus, Mr. Kassab merges modernity with ecclesiastical symbolism, maintaining essential aspects of Orthodox church design with the sole exception of the apse, and showing a huge church structure in this area (Fig. 195, 195, 196,197).

A more straightforward approach utilizing simple volumetric compositions and cost-effective materials, such as local stone, could enhance its structural clarity and economic feasibility. The available land could be used to incorporate western towers, which would reinforce traditional ecclesiastical symbolism and contribute to a more balanced and harmonious composition. Reassessing the internal spatial organization to improve functional and liturgical coherence could further enhance the church's overall impact.

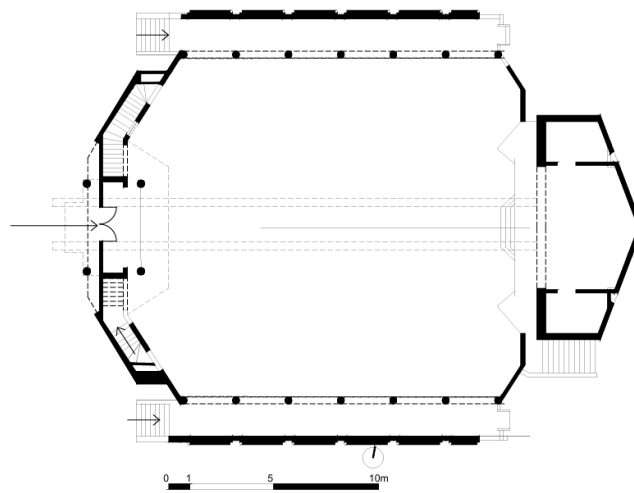


Fig. 194 . St. Elias Church plan, drawn by the author based on Mr. Charles Kassab



Fig. 195 A view showing roof. B. Interior view showing the apse, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 196 A view facing East. B. A view facing South, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 197 Exterior view facing south-west. B. Exterior view facing East, 2019, taken by the author.

➤ **Saints Peter and Paul church: both Greek Orthodox and Catholic denominations.**

▪ History and time trajectory:

This church is located in Dummar area (a suburb of Damascus). Saints Peter and Paul Church was designed by two architects Yūsif abū Ḥadīd in (Yousef Abo Hadid) collaboration with Paul Shinyāra (Paul Shinyara), both of whom are regarded as specialists in church designed and construction. The church was constructed between 1996 and 2004. The government has designated this area of land (500 m²) for the Greek Catholic and Orthodox denominations respectively.⁶⁹⁷ Hence, the land's advantages were outstanding given its position and size. The four sides are surrounded by streets, which assisted the architects in meeting the standards for building the church (Fig. 176). This bestowed an opportunity for the completion of the church's key aspects, such as orientation to the East as well as the liturgical demands.⁶⁹⁸

Due to the different views between the Catholic and Orthodox denominations, one of the Christian denominations selected a Byzantine Basilica layout with columns. While the other requested a single hall without columns. It is thought that the presence of columns obscures the clear eyesight of believers. In order to achieve a balance between the two denominations, the architect eventually adopted a single square hall (22*25).⁶⁹⁹

In summary, the design of Saints Paul and Peter Church was influenced by three key stakeholders: the Patriarchate, the Christian community, and the architects. Notably, the architects assumed a significant role as decision-makers in the church's design, alongside input from the Christian community. Conversely, there was no discernible influence on the architectural design from the bishop or the Patriarchate. Ultimately, the final church plan was aligned with the principles of the Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic denominations.

▪ General and special characteristics:

The church stands out for its modernism and simplicity. It is built on a high platform that is reached through three steps. The scheme presents a single hall ending with an east apse quarter of curve. The altar is positioned on an elevated platform separated from the single nave by three steps (Fig. 174, 175). The iconostasis, which is one of the most

⁶⁹⁷ Ḥadīd, 2003, p. 30

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹⁹ Ḥadīd, 2003, p. 32

important ecclesiastical features of both denominations, has vanished. The church is covered with a gable roof. Moreover, the modern bell tower is placed on the northeast side (Fig. 177).

In conclusion, adopting a critical and analytical approach, architects (Yousef Abo Hadid) collaboration with Paul Shinyāra (Paul Shinyara) approached the design of this church with a distinctly modern perspective while successfully establishing its identity as a church. Their design effectively bridges tradition and modernity, utilizing a gable roof as a nod to ancient church architectural forms. However, it is suggested that the potential inclusion of western towers could have facilitated a deeper integration of traditional elements and church structure as whole. While the essential components of the church, such as the nave and altar, are present, the design notably lacks an iconostasis, the principal element in church architecture of the Greek Orthodox and Catholic churches.

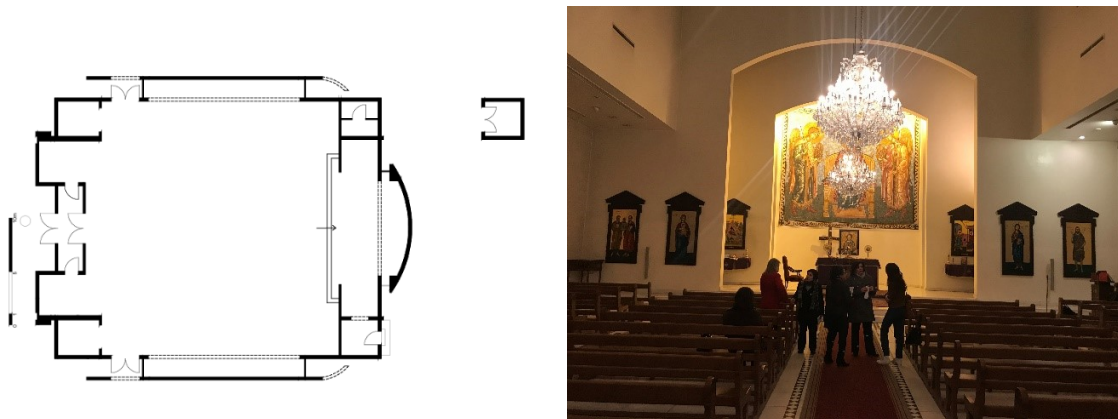


Fig. 198 Saints Peter and Paul church plan, drawn by the author based on Priest Mitri Haji Athanasio . B. A view facing East, 2019, taken by the author.

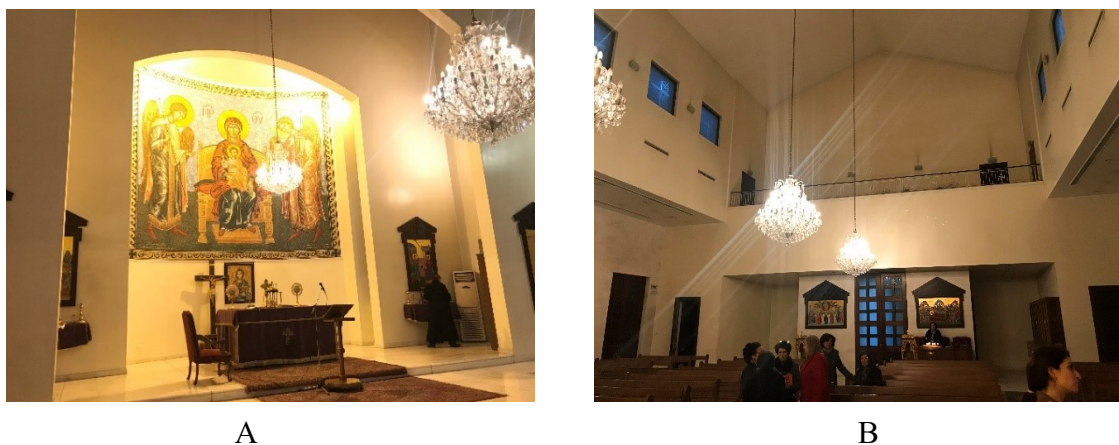


Fig. 199 A. The altar of the church. B. Interior view facing West, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 200 Exterior view of the church, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 201 A. Exterior view facing South-West. B. Exterior view facing East, 2019, taken by the author.

Churches under construction:

➤ St. Paisios the Great:

The church is situated in Jarmanā (Jaramana). Because of the number of Christian distributed is in this area, there was a necessity to build a church. The church land is chosen

by the patriarchate who set the church design.⁷⁰⁰ The principal idea of designing the church is to resemble the Mariamite Cathedral.

The church features a single hall without columns. Its plan is preceded by three porticos on the west, north, and south facades. The apse is oriented to the east. The church presents a basilic type (Fig. 181, 182).

To sum up, the design of the church under construction reflects a clear alignment with the traditional basilica plan, incorporating essential features such as the nave, iconostasis, and altar. The nave is covered with a gable roof. This adherence to these architectural elements not only gives precedents but also establishes a recognizable identity for the church within its community and is linked to the traditional elements. The materials used are stones and concrete. As the construction progresses, it will be essential to observe how these traditional components are integrated into the overall design, potentially influencing the church's functionality and aesthetic appearance.

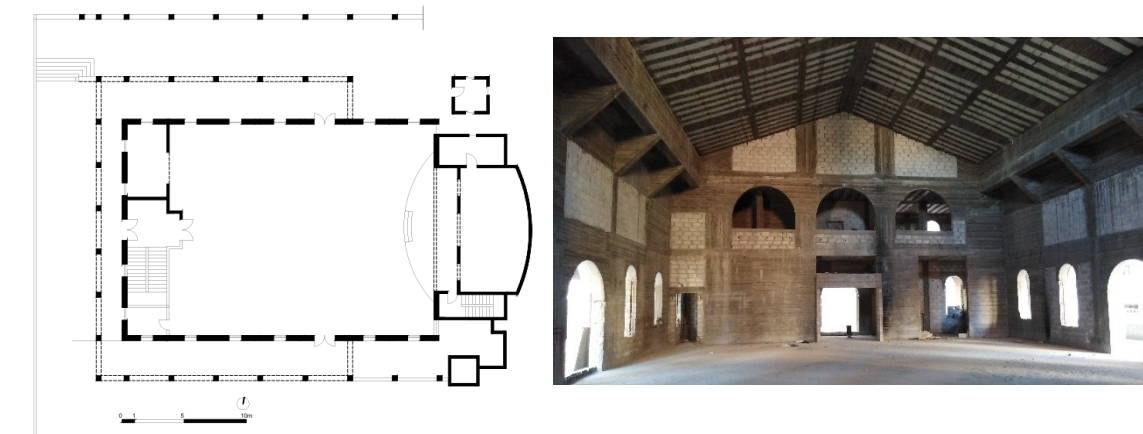


Fig. 202 A. St. Paisios the Great Plan, drawn by the author based on Prist Ilyas Habib. B. A view facing West, 2019, taken by the author.

⁷⁰⁰ Habib, 2019



A



B

Fig. 203 A. Interior view facing East. B. A view facing East apse the bell tower, 2019, taken by the author.

➤ **St. Andrew church:**

The church is situated on the outskirts of Damascus, in Jamarāyā, primarily driven by the substantial Christian population in this area. The church design was determined by the priest, who played a pivotal role in its conceptualization. However, due to financial limitations, the goal of completing the construction by 2010 was not manageable, therefore, the church remains under construction.⁷⁰¹

The church design follows traditional basilica architecture while drawing clear inspiration from Mariamite Cathedral through its porticos and roof structure. The semicircular projecting apse and iconostasis reinforce Orthodox liturgical traditions. The gable roof serves practical purposes and improves both aesthetic appeal and structural efficiency.

⁷⁰¹ al-Mabārdī, 2019

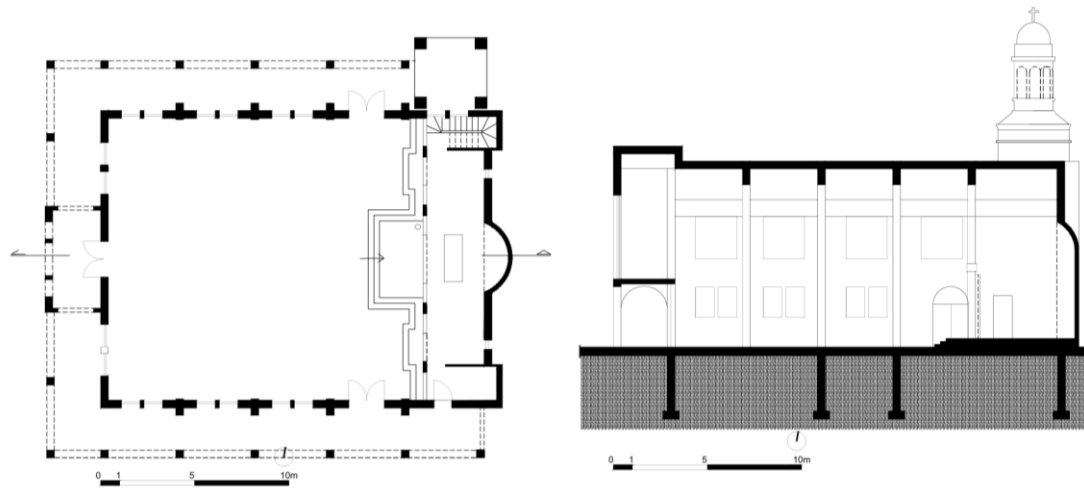


Fig. 204 St. Andrew church plan and section, drawn by the author based on Prist Nizar al-Mabardi.



Fig. 205 Exterior Church, 2019, by al-Mabārdī, N.

IV.4. The Roles of Bishops, Benefactors, and Architects of Church Architecture of the Greek Orthodox denomination in the Recent Past

⇒ Location of the church

⇒ Decision-makers in designing a church

➤ Location of the church:

Based on the church architecture examples mentioned above, the church location was selected by the government, the patriarchate, or the donor.

In certain instances, the patriarchate purchased land to build a church, exemplified by the establishment of St. Paisios the Great Church in 2015. In Addition, from 1980 to 1988, the Christian community mostly endowed their homes to be used as churches such as Archangel Michael Church and St. Dimitri Church or provided financial support to construct new churches.

It is remarkable that recently the government has often adhered to allocated land to construct a church in each new residential project, such as Saints Peter and Paul Church in Dummar in 1999.

➤ Decision-makers in designing a church:

Overall, to determine the architectural design of a church, three key stakeholders are instrumental in the decision-making process: the Patriarchate in conjunction with its engineering committee, the architect, and the donor, who may also represent the Christian community.

First and foremost, the spiritual presidencies in the patriarchate have a great impact on the church architecture and liturgical requirements through their instructions and recommendations. In each patriarchate, there is also an engineering committee that provides church design and helps the architect. However, based on the interviews, the role of the engineering committee was clearly absent.

In addition, the cultural context, religious theology studies, and religious affiliation of the theological presidency have also had an impact.

The architects emerged as the primary decision-makers, as indicated by interviews regarding churches like Saint Elias Church and Saint Paul and Peter Churches. Their principal objective was to create a contemporary church aligned with their visions and

perspectives. Many architects pursued advanced education abroad, which led to their designs being significantly influenced by Western architectural styles. Furthermore, numerous architects utilize the internet as a resource to set out church plans based on various models, resulting in heterogeneous and diverse designs.

Moreover, there was migration involving renowned architects in various forms of artwork, including churches, mosques, and civil buildings. There is a noticeable gap in the understanding and knowledge of the legacy of churches in Syria. Consequently, the architects' motivation to design distinctive churches is often driven by a desire to capture the attention of the Christian community by creating visually striking churches, a landmark. On the other hand, many architects may aim to reinforce a sense of belonging and continuity within challenges in preserving their heritage.

In summary, these led to the loss of part of the authenticity of the theological meaning of church construction.

Hereunder, a hypothesis arising from the interviews and church examples (Fig. 206):

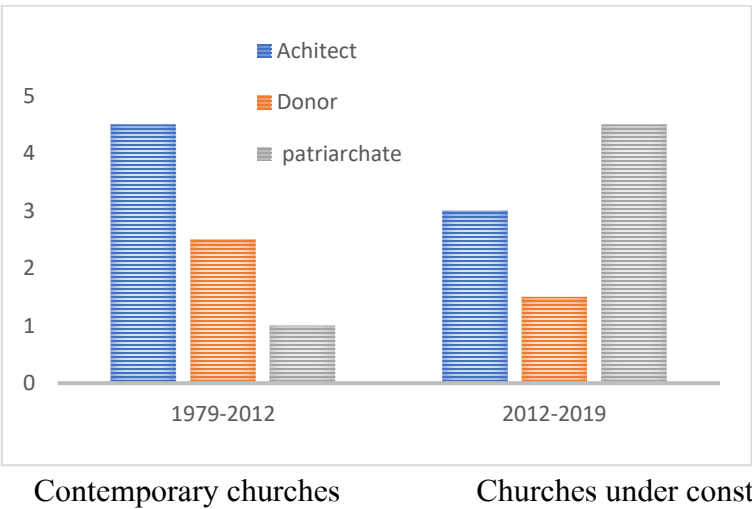


Fig. 206 A diagram Illustrating decision-makers in church building over two period 1979-2012 and 2012-2019, by the author.

In the context of decision-making concerning church construction, the following hypothesis is proposed:

At first, the above diagram shows the years between 1979-2012 and underlines the limited Patriarchate's influence on church design decisions, with architects primarily responsible

for selecting the church plans. In addition, contributions to the design process came from both donors and the Christian community, particularly in the context of house churches and contemporary church designs.

The second diagram illustrates the years between 2012-2019 and marks the ongoing construction of the church. The Patriarchate has taken the initiative in developing church plans that resemble the design of the Cathedral. They have resumed their primary collaboration role as decision-makers with the engineering committee.

IV.5. Conclusion of the Chapter

Hereunder the key points based on this chapter:

➤ In examining the churches of old Damascus and al-Mīdān (Al-Midan), it is evident that most adhere to a basilica layout, characterized either by a single hall or a nave flanked by two aisles divided by columns. These columns support a variety of arches, including semicircular, pointed, and Gothic vaulted arches with transverse ribs, reflecting architectural diversity. However, liturgical transformations have rendered the narthex absent, coinciding with the disappearance of spaces for catechumens and penitents. The altar, a significant liturgical space, is consistently elevated on a raised platform accessed by steps, while the inclusion and form of the iconostasis ranges from a low rail to a full wall adorned with icons which is determined by the theological practices of each denomination.

Additionally, the dense urban fabric of old Damascus has influenced the orientation of churches, leading to variations that deviate from the traditional eastward alignment. Despite extensive reconstructions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the key architectural elements of church interiors, namely the nave and the altar, have been preserved across denominations, underscoring their enduring importance to church architecture.

From a critical perspective, the architectural plans of these churches reveal several constraints in their church identity. The limited size of the churches, combined with their lack of prominent distinguishing features, suggests a departure from the grandeur typically associated with church architecture. Unlike traditional raised platforms, these churches were constructed at ground level, or with only a few steps marking the transition to their interior closely resembling the spatial composition and materiality of Damascene domestic

architecture including shared elements such as construction techniques, columns, and arches.

The typical western twin towers of church facades either did not exist or were not very prominent. The central roof of the nave occasionally rises higher than the lateral sections but it is usually covered with a dome or wooden beam slabs and thus has a modest visual profile. The semi-circular apse, a characteristic of ecclesiastical design, is often replaced by a plain linear wall, which further obscures the architectural expression of sacred space. These elements collectively indicate an adaptive architectural approach, rather than a strict adherence to traditional church forms, shaped by contextual and practical constraints.

In summary, the external characteristics of churches in Old Damascus closely mirror the architectural patterns of traditional houses. While Damascus serves as a pivotal center for Greek Orthodox churches, the Western influences, particularly from Latin churches, has resulted in a distinct architectural identity that effectively integrates into the Eastern cultural context. This phenomenon illustrates not only the adaptability of religious architecture in response to external pressures but also highlights the complex interplay between local traditions and foreign styles, ultimately enriching the architectural landscape of the region.

Some of the factors that led to the formation of distinctive characteristics of Damascene churches in old Damascus and al- Mīdān are further discussed below in accordance with the first Chapter:

- Damascus witnessed several historical transformations that distanced it from the Christian world and its heritage, beginning with the Umayyad period. New restrictions were imposed on Christians, ending with the Ottoman period. Their strict regulations regarding Christianity were evident, such as the imposition of taxes and the prohibition of the construction of new churches. More glaringly, during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, there were strict rules regarding the renovation of churches, such as a roof or a window, and they had to have repair permission beforehand.

All these factors led to a simple form of churches, especially exterior features; domes became glaringly scarce in use responding to the demands of the ruling class. Blending into the urban structure of old Damascus was one of the major characteristics to allow the presence of the church.

- In 1724, there was a schism in the church between the Catholic and Orthodox supporters. Therefore, the Western missionaries became powerful and supported the Catholics. The main goal of the Western missionaries was to teach foreign languages, open schools, and promote contacts with the West. On the other hand, the existence of the Latin, Maronite, and Armenian churches became significant, while they preserved their church style more than the Greek Orthodox denomination.

- Natural disasters, including the earthquakes and subsequent plague that occurred between 1809 and 1813, played a significant role in prompting the reconstruction of churches and the painting of icons in Damascus.⁷⁰²

- The crisis of 1860 induced many Christians, including artists, architects, and expert laborers to emigrate, while many local artists cooperated with the foreigners, who started embellishing churches with icons in Damascus.

- It is well known that the Syrian major cities such as Aleppo, Homs, Damascus, and Hama, were important trading centers. There was an increase in, cultural and scientific exchanges between the East and West.⁷⁰³ These exchanges were Western thought which created an intellectual openness and reached the churches and icons as well.

In conclusion, the architectural changes in old Damascus churches represent practical solutions to the social changes and historical events. The Christian community, together with the bishops, successfully adapted traditional Damascene house characteristics to fulfill religious needs while preserving their religious traditions. This approach resulted in a cohesive ecclesiastical church architecture that seamlessly integrated with the urban fabric of old Damascus, evident in elements such as the main façade, Syrian sanctuary, and roofing styles.

However, certain general architectural features, such as western towers, the narthex, and chancel arrangements, were either absent or held limited significance in regions like old Damascus and al-Mīdān. The western tower, for instance, was not a prominent feature in these areas. Meanwhile, the presence and design of the iconostasis varied according to the theological and liturgical practices of each denomination, as previously discussed. This

⁷⁰² Fayyād, 2013, p. 30

⁷⁰³ Ibid, pp. 46-48

reflects the adaptive and context-sensitive nature of ecclesiastical architecture in old Damascus.

➤ Regarding the contemporary churches of the Greek Orthodox denomination, the primary part of liturgical elements has remained consistent throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While the external features demonstrate variation in many aspects. A new phenomenon appears of the churches in residential buildings over this period.

Hereunder is a brief outline of the constant and various features of the Greek orthodox church in Damascus:

- The blueprint of churches in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries shows a single or central nave with two side aisles. This arrangement aligns with the functional needs of Christians and liturgical rituals like in the case St. Nicolas church, Saints Peter and Paul church

From aesthetic aspects, the nave emphasizes simplicity and spatial clarity, offering an aesthetic sense of openness and visually balanced space. Moreover, this basilica layout trend demonstrates the influence and correlation with Byzantine architecture such as The Holy Cross church.

- With the disappearance of catechumens and penitents, the narthex lost its main liturgical function and has been repurposed as a portico to provide shelter for the faithful from the rain. This new, practical use of the narthex reflects an adaptation to meet the needs of Christians and is commonly observed as a simple portico in most contemporary Greek Orthodox churches.

The absence of an ambon in smaller churches reflects a prioritization of simplicity in modern design, while its occasional presence in larger churches emphasizes its ceremonial and hierarchical significance for large liturgical events. In other words, since the bishop quotes his word in the center of the Christian assembly in front of the altar, the ambon is seldom shown in churches such as a Cathedral. On the other hand, it has not been used as it once was before due to liturgical changes.

- The gallery is also one of the preferred parts in many church examples. It is found in very few church examples, further enhancing the sense of prestige, and accommodating choirs and additional worshippers while highlighting the architectural larger of spaces. However, it is not used for liturgical functions as before. The gallery, meanwhile, provides

a sense of verticality and spatial depth, enhancing the overall aesthetic harmony of the church interior by creating balanced proportions and accommodating multi-level engagement with the liturgy.

- The iconostasis in Greek Orthodox churches serves both aesthetic and functional purposes. Aesthetically, it is made of a variety of materials, including wood, stone, and metal, and is often decorated with iconographic images that reflect theological themes and saints' lives.

Functionally, iconostasis acts as a significant partition that separates the nave from the sanctuary, symbolizing the division between the earthly realm and the divine.

- The elevated position of the altar in Greek Orthodox churches in Damascus enhances its significance as the central focus of liturgical practice, symbolizing both its sanctity and its essential role in worship. The altar establishes a visual hierarchy that naturally captures the congregation's attention, thereby enhancing its aesthetic impact within the church interior. The altar's configuration—whether linear, semicircular, or situated in a corner introduces diversity to the architectural design, effectively balancing functionality with artistic expression.

Drawing from the contemporary examples of Greek Orthodox churches discussed earlier, the apse typically exhibits linear and semicircular forms, consistent with traditional designs. However, in a few instances, it adopts a corner configuration, representing an unconventional approach not previously observed in historical contexts such as St. Elias church.

- The majority of churches built in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries preserve the traditional eastward orientation, aligning with longstanding liturgical and symbolic practices. However, not all of these churches are constructed on elevated platforms, reflecting contextual adaptations.

- The aesthetics of western towers in Syrian churches during the Byzantine period were characterized by their verticality and ornate design, setting them apart from other architectural features within these churches. Hence, these western towers of Syrian churches during the Byzantine period served multiple functions, including liturgical usage, as they often housed bells that called the faithful to worship, while also symbolizing the church's prestige. Aesthetically, these towers reflected stylistic trends of the time,

contributing to the overall size of the church architecture, yet they did not reemerge in Greek Orthodox church designs in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

- The analysis of contemporary church roofing reveals a rich diversity in styles, including gable, slab, inclined roofs, and domes, which reflect both functional requirements and aesthetic preferences across various contexts. This variety not only serves practical purposes such as weather resistance and structural integrity but also embodies the evolving stylistic trends within church architecture, highlighting the balance between traditional elements and modern design innovations.

To conclude, it is clear that the stylistic trends of Greek Orthodox churches in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries integrate traditional church forms with contemporary architectural innovations. These forms show that modern churches often adopt simplified forms and innovative huge structures. The main aim of these forms is to use intellectual and modern concepts simultaneously, offering a simple and classical touch.

The interior layout of the church has been basically preserved or influenced by many examples. While the external features have not maintained a clear identity of the Greek Orthodox churches. Therefore, the architect created a contemporary church in accordance with the twenty-first century by combining a modern volumetric mass, using new materials and introducing new forms of openings based on studied examples.

V.CONSTANTS AND CHANGES IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCHES BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT IN LATAKIA AND DAMASCUS

Overview:

As mentioned above, the first three chapters are the core of this study, which covers historical contexts, liturgical and symbolic aspects, and church architecture in Syria from the 4th to the 6th and the 11th to the 13th centuries. The fourth Chapter shows church architecture in Damascus of all Christian denominations in old Damascus and al- Mīdān (Al-Midan) and finally the modern Greek Orthodox churches.

This study's conclusion, represented by the fifth Chapter, offers a great chance to expand the focus on the Greek Orthodox church architecture in other cities to a broader perspective on the research. The method used in this chapter, which is a comparative and analytical method between modern and old churches, is a starting point for further comparison and exploration in other regions.

Accordingly, this chapter endeavours to clarify the constants and changes in the architecture of the Greek Orthodox churches through a liturgical, architectural, and chronological comparison between two groups of churches that are discernible in different areas in Syria. Hence, the first group represents churches with a centralized plan: St. George church in Izraa and St. George church in Damascus. The second one displays a basilica plan: Qalb Loze church in Idlib and St. Andrew church in Latakia. Thus, these two groups of churches have been chosen not only based on their analogous plans but also due to their distinct geographical locations and cultural and religious circumstances, which render them more intriguing.

Furthermore, the goal of this comparative study is to obtain answers to the following hypothetical questions:

- What are the reasons behind opting for plans resembling the ancient ones: the centralized plan in Damascus, and the basilica plan in Latakia?
- Is there a tendency towards continuity with the ancient plans, in terms of scale, external features such as the western towers, and internal arrangements such as the Syrian sanctuary and iconostasis? What about the differences in space, plans, columns, openings, roofs and materials?

➤ What strategy was used in establishing these two contemporary churches, St. George in Damascus and St. Andrew in Latakia?

To achieve a more precise response to the aforementioned questions, the methodology employed involves the description of ancient churches, drawing upon both written sources and field visits to churches. Moreover, it depended on conducting interviews with bishops, architects, and Christian community members. Hence, drawing on this comparative approach would assist in reaching a satisfactory formula for building a contemporary church related to historically authentic churches.

V.1.Churches with centralized plans: St. George in Izraa and St. George in Damascus

➤ St. George Church in Izraa

■ History and timing:

St. George church is situated in the northeastern part of Izraa city, within the boundaries of the Daraa Governorate (Fig. 207). This church represents an important example of traditional Syrian church architecture that remains intact today. It is affiliated with the Greek Orthodox denomination. The church possesses St. George's relics and was established in 515 by John “son of Diomedes, at his own expense”.⁷⁰⁴ However, it is believed that the church was built over the foundation of a pagan temple⁷⁰⁵ dedicated to the goddess Theandrite.⁷⁰⁶

It is remarkable that on the western entrance, there is a Greek epigraph which reads as follows:

“This has become a house of God is propitiated. A certain man, Christ- loving, the primate Ioannes, son of Diomedes, at his own expense, as a gift of God, made offering of (this) noble structure, placing herein the reverend relic of (the) holy martyr Georgios, the gloriously victorious, who appeared to him, Ioannes, and not in sleep, but manifestly, in (indication), year 410 (515 A.D)”. Fig. 208)



Fig. 207 A map illustrating location of St. George church in Izraa, 2019, by the author based on google map

⁷⁰⁴ Kennedy, 2016, p. 23

⁷⁰⁵ Butler, Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries, 1929, p. 125

⁷⁰⁶ DGAM. Archive

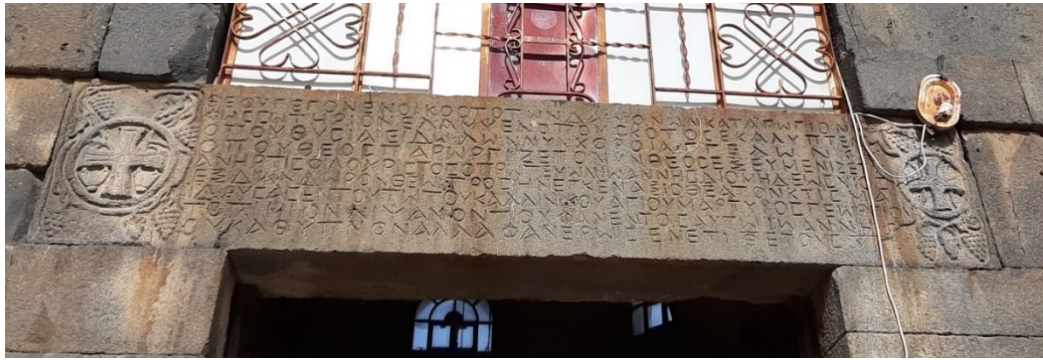


Fig. 208 Greek inscription on the lintel of the western entrance where on both endings are crosses and vine, 2019, taken by the author.

During Ibrahim Pasha's military campaign in 1840, the old stone dome of St. George Church suffered partial damage. Later, an earthquake in 1893 destroyed the dome. In response, Russian Emperor Nicholas II sponsored the construction of a new dome, which was inaugurated in 1911 by Patriarch Gregory Haddad.⁷⁰⁷

■ General characteristics:

St. George church plan features an external square encompassing an internal octagon. The central octagonal space is formed by eight angled piers, with arches resting on them, and surmounted by a dome.⁷⁰⁸ Additionally, the four niches (exedra) are situated in the corners of the square.⁷⁰⁹ The plan culminates in a prominent east apse exhibiting three polygonal sides pierced by a single window. As previously indicated, it is imperative to acknowledge that the architectural design of this church was significantly influenced by early baptisteries, which often adopt octagonal forms and are surmounted by a dome.⁷¹⁰



Fig. 209 A southeast view displaying the pillars, and another view illustrating the stone arches that support the dome, 2019, taken by the author

⁷⁰⁷ DGAM. Archive

⁷⁰⁸ Stewart & Simpson, 1954, p. 62

⁷⁰⁹ Kennedy, 2016, pp. 24-25

⁷¹⁰ Milburn, 1988, p. 130

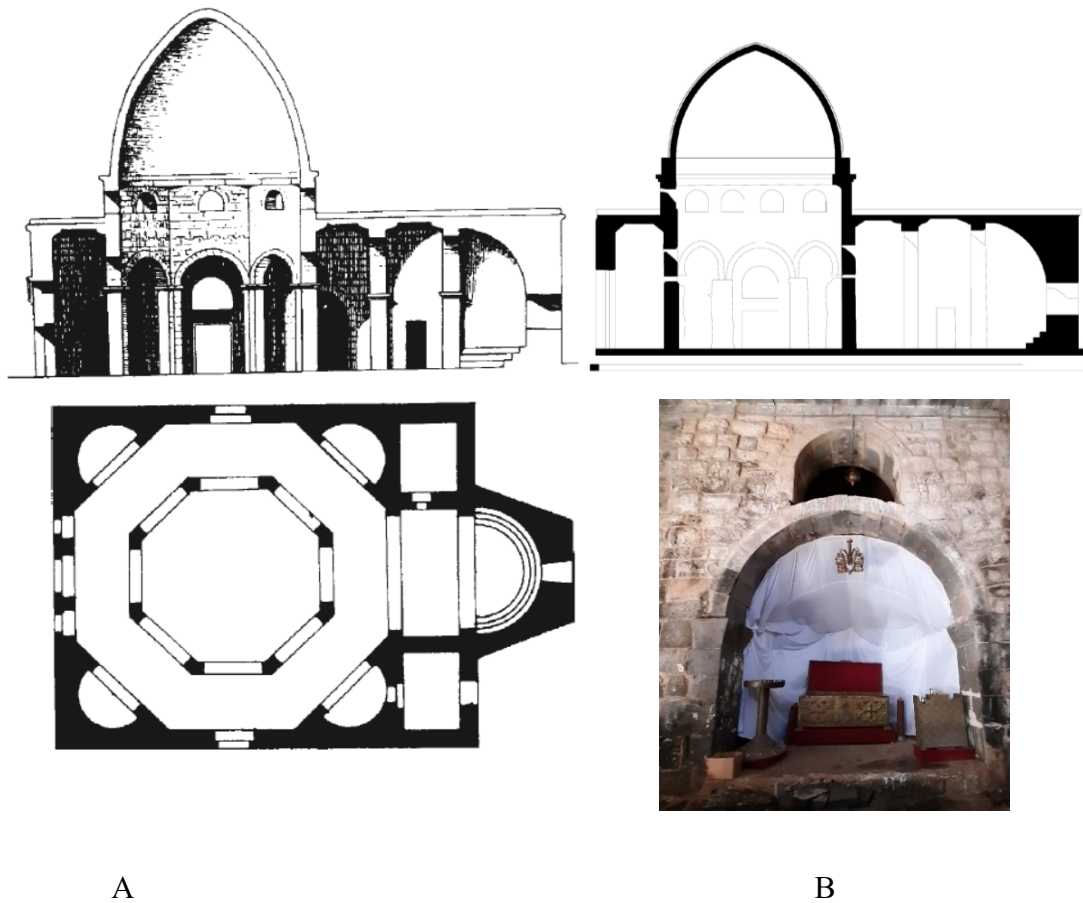


Fig. 210 St. George plan and section, (*Escrig, 2006, p. 37*)B. Section showing the new dome, by the author after (*Escrig, 2006, p. 37*) and a view facing North-West exedra, 2019, taken by the author.

Furthermore, the plan illustrates the presence of two side chambers located near the altar. The southern chamber, designated as the prothesis, characterizes an entrance that leads to the niche (bema), whereas the northern chamber, identified as the diaconicon, is accessible from the apse.⁷¹¹ The apse (bema) is surrounded by a rectangular space. Iconostasis is a prominent architectural element. In addition, the entrances are located on the north, south and west sides of the church. The western façade features three doors, with the central one being the largest. (Fig. 210)

As stated previously in the historical part regarding the reasons for the damaged dome, the church shows today an iron dome on the outside and wood on the inside, after having been a stone dome for more than 1400 years. This dome has a pointed rather than hemispherical shape and was built in 1911. Moreover, the dome has rows of windows that provide

⁷¹¹ Ibid, p. 129.

illumination from within the drum. However, the efficacy of these windows is limited, resulting in an overall dimly illuminated interior (Fig. 209, 210, 211, 212)



A



B

Fig. 211 A. Interior view facing East. B. Interior view facing West, 2019, taken by the author.



A



B

Fig. 212 A. A view showing the dome. B. Interior view facing east apse, 2019, taken by the author.

The surrounding aisles formed by the internal octagon are covered by slab basalt stones similar to the traditional method used in southern Syria.⁷¹² To facilitate the transformation from an octagonal to a circular form, two rows of stones are placed and distributed in the internal octagon. The first row comprises sixteen sides,⁷¹³ while the second row consists of corbels, forming a total of thirty-two.⁷¹⁴ In this manner, the multi-sided forms became more circular. The roof of the apse is constructed as a half dome of concrete (Fig. 213).

The whole church is built of basalt stone. Moreover, the ornaments of the Classical profile are discernible in the western façade, where a single stone lintel is positioned centrally beneath an archway inscribed with crosses and vines on either side of a Greek epigraph.⁷¹⁵



Fig. 213 The roof which is a corbelled stone slab of the south aisle, a stone arch tops the iconostasis. 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 214 Exterior view facing West façade, 2019, taken by the author.

⁷¹² Kennedy, 2016, pp. 24-25

⁷¹³ Stewart & Simpson, 1954, p. 62

⁷¹⁴ Milburn, 1988, p. 130

⁷¹⁵ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 122



Fig. 215 Exterior view facing South façade, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 216 Exterior view facing East, 2019, taken by the author.

➤ **St. George Church in Damascus:**

▪ History and timing:

St. George Church is located in the al-Tijārah (Al-Tijara) district of Damascus. (Fig. 217) According to the inscriptions, the church building was completed in 1992. The church was designed by the architect Farid Awaad. This was undertaken over the Patriarch Ignatius IV, who served as the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East from 1979 until 2012. Moreover, George Ḍāhir (George Daher) was a benefactor (donor), who took part in the construction of this church.⁷¹⁶

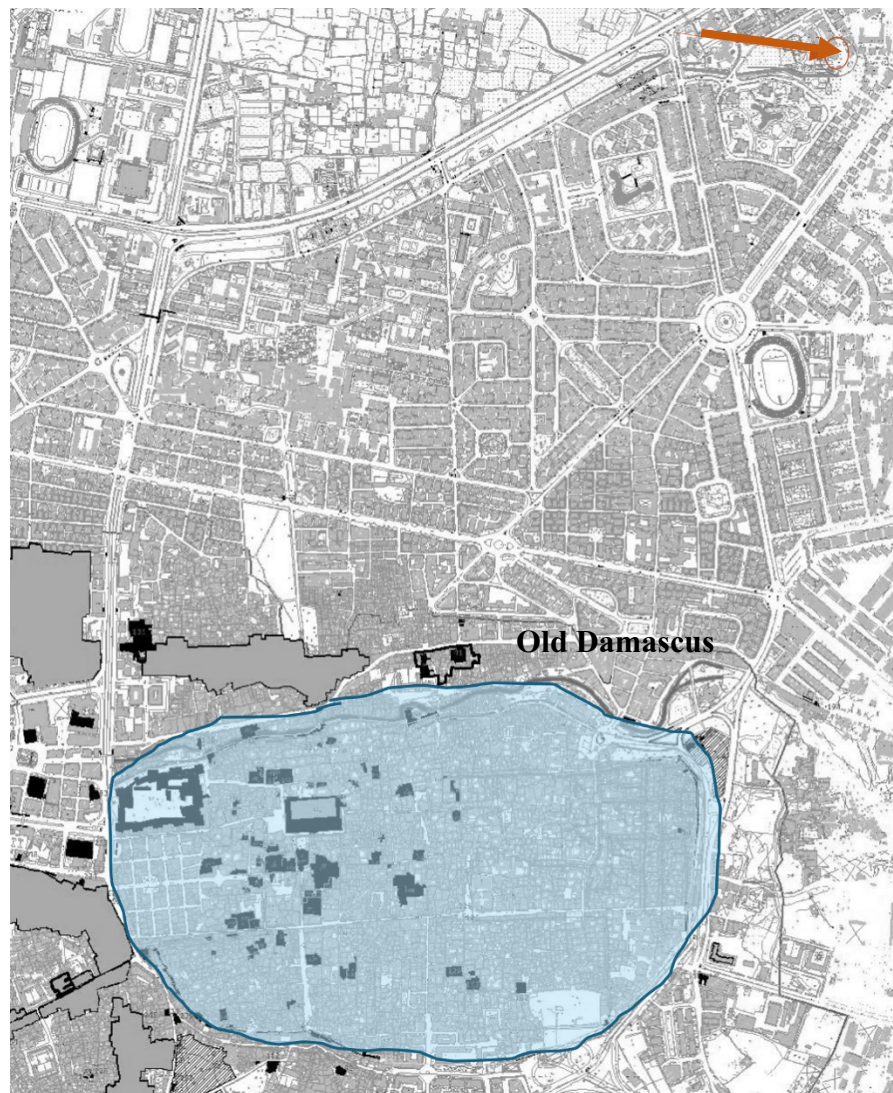


Fig. 217 of St. George church location in Damascus, modified by the author after DGAM archive

⁷¹⁶ al-Shīhābī & Athanāsiyū, 2005, p. 106

Based on the field visit and the interviews with priests and members of the Christian community, the main reason for choosing the church form is:

There was a necessity to establish a church for the Christian congregation in order to practice their rituals in the district. The Greek Orthodox denomination (Antiochenes), whose population experienced a notable increase during the twentieth century in al-Tijārah district, exhibited a distinct demographic distribution. However, the search for a plot of sufficient size to construct a church proved challenging due to the limited availability of land in this densely populated district. In addition, based on the interview, the architect Farid Awaad implemented his design approach for this church through a thoughtful balance between spatial constraints and historical inspiration. The restricted plot size required Mr. Farid Awaad to develop creative solutions through his analysis of architectural traditions in St. George Church in Izraa. Through this approach, he created a design that respected the historical side while fulfilling contemporary requirements. Mr. Farid chose to implement a centralized plan, which stands as an exception in contemporary church architecture today to achieve his goal of historical modernity integration. Through his combination of traditional design elements with contemporary architectural elements, Mr. Farid created a building that honors historical traditions while projecting a modern architectural direction. Through this method, he demonstrated his talent for creative adaptation within spatial and contextual constraints while maintaining the cultural heritage and spiritual relevance of ancient church architecture.⁷¹⁷

▪ General characteristics:

Despite opting for a centralized plan, the church tends obviously to show a distinctive postmodern style. The church is distinguished by a complete circular plan "centralized basilica plan", which is terminated by an east apse that projects outward and a south chamber (vestry, diaconicon). The altar is on a raised platform with three steps and has a straight wall on the inside and the outside. While the columns disappeared from the nave. The wooden iconostasis, added subsequently, separates the altar from the nave. The church is distinguished by a polygonal slope roof, which is surmounted by a drum dome and

⁷¹⁷ Zaytūn, Kanīsat Mār Jūrjyūs fī al-Tijarah, 2019

pierced by rows of small arched windows. Furthermore, the sloped roof is pierced with 12 diminutive rows of windows that extend to the walls. The church features three elongated arched windows situated between these rows (Fig. 218).

The church was built using a mix of materials, like concrete, stone and brick for the roof. Furthermore, it has two entrances: one in the west and another in the south. with steps leading up to it, the main door is on the west facade with an entrance hall featuring a table adorned with candles in front of it; also, there is a bell tower, on the northeast corner made up of two cylinders that overlap each other. The primary entrance is located in the west and is preceded by a small portico that includes a table with candles. The bell tower is situated on the northeastern side of the church and is represented by two overlapping cylinders (Fig. 219, 220, 221, 222, 223)

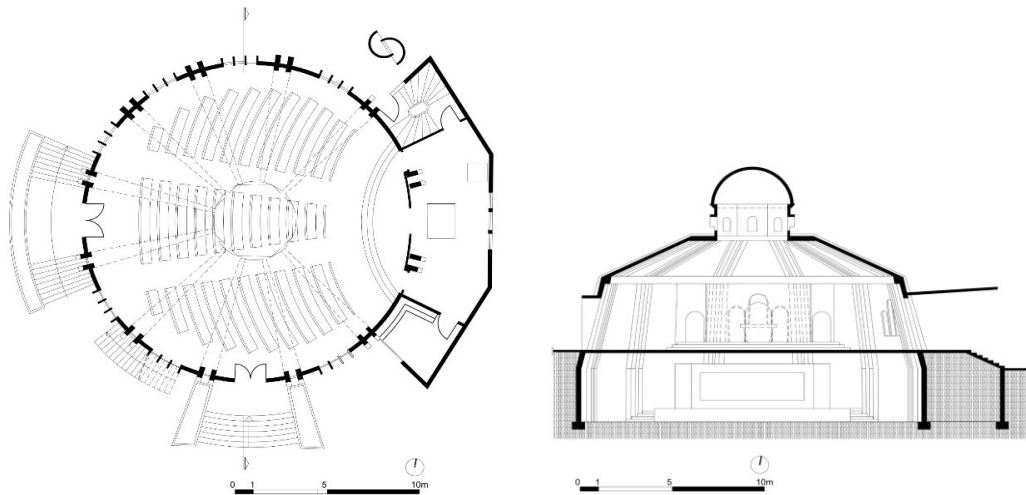


Fig. 218 St. George Church plan and section, drawn by the author based on Prist Ilyas Habib



Fig. 219 A view showing dome, 2019, taken by the author. A view showing the slop roof, 2019, taken by the author



Fig. 220 Interior view facing East, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 221 A. Interior view showing East altar. B. A view showing three elongated windows, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 222 Fig, Interior view facing South, 20119, taken by the author.



Fig. 223 Exterior view facing West, 2019, taken by the author

V.2.Churches with basilica plans: Qalb Loze church in Idlib and St. Andrew church in Latakia.

➤ Qalb Loze church:

■ History and timing:

Qalb Loze church represents one of the most magnificent examples of ancient church architecture in the vicinity of Ḥārm (Harem) city, situated in the southeastern region of Idlib governorate. According to scholar Butler, it is suggested that the church was built in 480.⁷¹⁸ It is assumed that the significance of this church was not only limited to being the village's main church but also functioning as a shrine for pilgrims (Fig. 224).⁷¹⁹

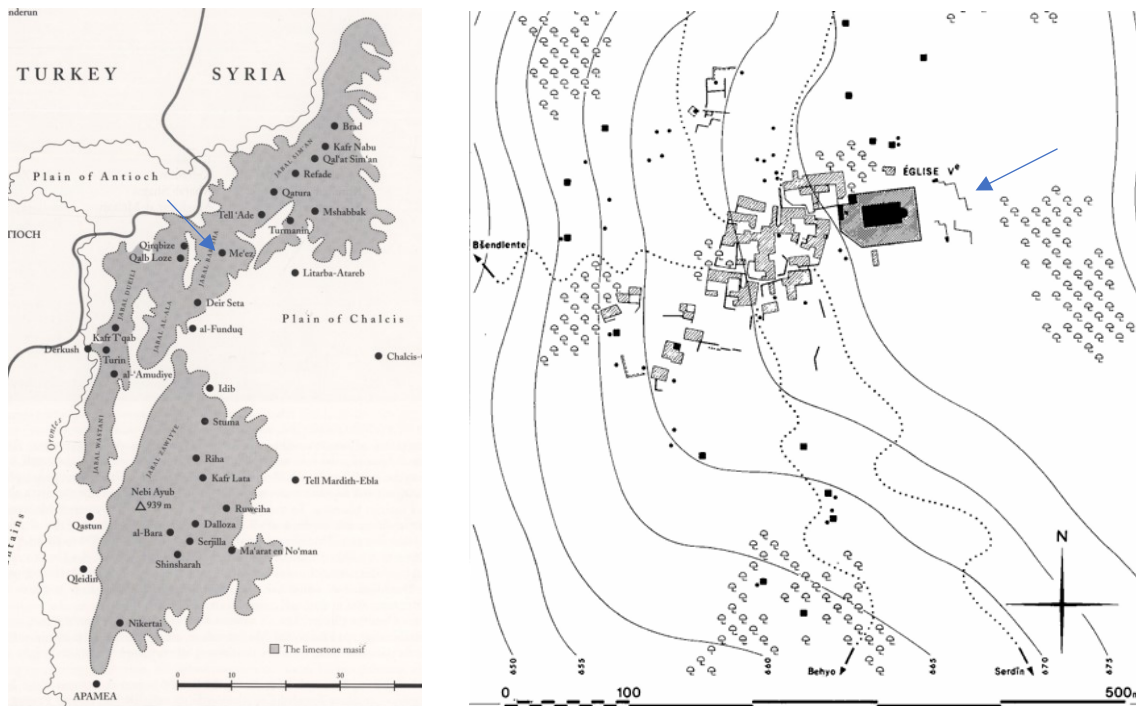


Fig. 224 map showing location of Qalb loze village, (Pena, 1997, p. 15). Location of Qalb loze church (Tchalenko, 1979, p. 256)

■ General characteristics:

⁷¹⁸ Qawṣara, 1995, p. 7

⁷¹⁹ Tchalenko, 1974, p. 225

The plan represents a nave divided into three aisles by two rows of piers. The ratio in this church is about 3:2.⁷²⁰

A prominent apse with three windows characterizes the eastern side of the church. Two side chambers are situated at both ends of the aisles in the east. The northern chamber is designated as a diaconicon, while the southern chamber is a prothesis (martyrion), where the remains of saints are stored.

Each side chamber has two doors: one leading to the nave and another to the apse. The southern chamber, however, has an additional entrance leading to the exterior.⁷²¹ Furthermore, as it is well-documented, the bema was a significant common element in fourth-century churches in northern Syria.⁷²² Qlab Loze church features a bema with five steps in the center of the nave.⁷²³ Two additional chambers are situated on either side of the narthex, located beneath the western towers. These chambers have two openings: one leading to the side aisle and another providing access to the narthex (Fig. 197).⁷²⁴

The lighting in this church is outstanding, as it has nine windows on the sidewalls and eleven on the upper level. Along with three windows on the west and east sides, these windows are modestly sized and have a round-headed shape, as well as some that are rectangular (Fig. 225, 226, 227, 228, 229).⁷²⁵



Fig. 225 Interior view facing east (*Alsammarae, 2019, p. 4*)

⁷²⁰ Butler, *Architecture and other arts*, 1903, pp. 221-222

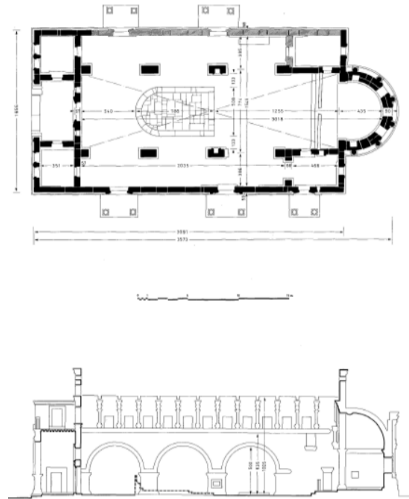
⁷²¹ *Ibid*

⁷²² Tchalenko, 1974, p. 225

⁷²³ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, p. 7

⁷²⁴ Butler, *Architecture and other arts*, 1903, pp. 221-222

⁷²⁵ Kennedy, 2016, p. 13



A



B

Fig. 226 A. Qlab Loze church. plan and section, (Tchalenko, Documents D'Archaeologie: La Syrie A L'Epoque de L'Empire Romain D'Orient. No 1, 1980, p. 256). B. Interior view illustrating East apse, wide arches and piers, (Mango, Byzantine Architecture, 1985)



A



B

Fig. 227 A: Interior view illustrating East apse, B: East apse with three windows (Alsammarac, 2019, p. 5)

The church features five distinct entrances, with two located on both the north and south sides, and one situated on the west side.⁷²⁶ The doors are characterized by a round-headed form surmounted by a straight lintel and a semicircular arch.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁶ Tchalenko, 1974, p. 225

⁷²⁷ Kennedy, 2016, p. 13

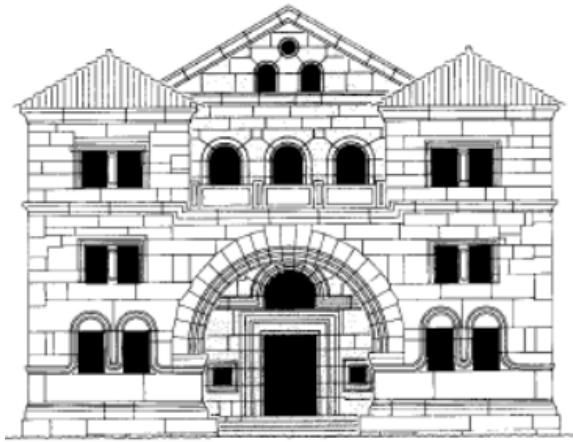


Fig. 228 A. Reconstruction model of western façade, Peña, 1997, p. 144 Exterior view of West façade, Alsammarae, 2019.



Fig. 229 The main door with its ornaments of western façade, *Alsammarae*, 2019.

In terms of roofing, a flat slab roof was employed to cover two side aisles.⁷²⁸ A timber gable roof was used to cover the central nave. while the apse was covered with a stone half dome. The western towers are comprised of three stories, with the middle floor featuring wooden ceilings.⁷²⁹ Externally, the splendid western façade has an entrance surmounted with a huge arch and is positioned between two western towers of middle height. Furthermore, protruding porches preceded the side doors, covered by gabled roofs, and carried by columns.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁸ Butler, 1903, pp. 221-222

⁷²⁹ Butler, *Early Churches in Syria: Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, 1929, pp. 71-72

⁷³⁰ Krautheimer, 1986, p. 155

The apse is adorned with refined columns. The capitals of the apse resemble those observed in St. Simon-church, as illustrated in Chapter Three (Fig. 230, 2319).⁷³¹

Most striking, the merit of this church is shown an uninterrupted frame of ornaments profiling the surroundings of the whole structure of the church linking doors and windows.⁷³² The geometric and floral embellishments are observed on the arches, windows, and entrance frames, creating a continuous ribbon terminating in a swirl.⁷³³



Fig. 230 Exterior view of the southern façade of Qalb loze church *Alsammarae*, 2019



Fig. 231 A view showing the southeast façade of Qalb loze church *Alsammarae*, 2019

⁷³¹ Butler, *Architecture and other arts*, 1903, p. 225

⁷³² Kennedy, 2016, p. 13

⁷³³ Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 1985, p. 80

In consequence, the elaborate adornments indicate economic and agricultural wealth. This is exemplified by the depictions of grape and bay leaves, along with other flora.⁷³⁴

The architectural design of this church serves to reinforce the concept of the Holy Trinity. The number three is a prominent feature, evident in the three windows on the west and east facades, the two aisles of the nave, and the three arches that span the central aisle. These elements collectively illustrate a clear and profound connection between the architectural design and the theological concept of the Holy Trinity, comprising the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The western towers show three floors. Moreover, the bound decoration is about three rows or layers.⁷³⁵

Regarding the materials, the church was constructed using limestone, a material that was commonly employed in northern Syria, as previously indicated.

To sum up, there are two remarkable key points in this church:

- Qalb Loze basilica is one of the earliest examples exhibiting the employment of piers instead of columns bearing broad round arches separating the nave and the side aisles.⁷³⁶ As a result, the width of the arches was doubled by using piers, helping to connect the nave and the two side aisles and providing an excellent view for believers. The nave was turned into a visually greater space. Not to mention that the technical performance of using arches resting on piers is considered a significant accomplishment in church architecture.⁷³⁷
- The second notable aspect of this church is its symmetrical western facade, which features a central loggia with two side towers. The towers, consisting of three floors, acquire a staircase in order to reach the loggia (nave roof and aisles). Perhaps, the purpose of these towers was to invite the believers to pray, yet it became a tradition for Muslims.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁴ Ghrūsman, 1976, p. 307

⁷³⁵ Qawşara, 1995, pp. 30-33

⁷³⁶ Kennedy, 2016, p. 12

⁷³⁷ Pena, 1997, p. 69

⁷³⁸ Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 1985, p. 80

➤ **St. Andrew church:**

▪ History and timing:

The design of this church was designed after Qalb Loze, a renowned example of Byzantine architecture. Gabi Saadi, a Syrian archaeological expert, developed the concept. Architect Mark Murqus executed the design, and the construction process spanned approximately six years, culminating in 1982.

Furthermore, hereunder are the justifications behind the selection of this plan:

Firstly, according to the interview with the priest, Ispīrīdūn Fayyāḍ (Ispiridon Fayad), there was a cave called St. Andrew in Latakia, which was turned into a church dating back to the Days of Apostolic Fathers. However, this church was purposefully destroyed in 1932 to build a road. Thus, the name of St. Andrew was chosen to indicate the old church (cave).

Architect Mark Murqus's thought process for designing St. Andrew Church in Latakia reflects a deep appreciation for historical significance and architectural innovation. Drawing inspiration from the ancient Syrian church of Qalb Loze, Mr. Mark aimed to recreate one of the most iconic examples of Byzantine-era architecture in a modern context. His design sought to honor the architectural heritage of Syria while adapting it to the twentieth-century setting, blending tradition with contemporary relevance.⁷³⁹

Moreover, the availability of a sufficiently large plot of land in Latakia between 1979 and 1986 played a critical role in enabling the realization of his vision. This allowed Saadi to incorporate the expansive and symmetrical layout characteristic of Qalb Loze into the new church's design. By doing so, he not only preserved the essence of ancient Syrian church architecture but also ensured that St. Andrew Church would stand as a testament to the enduring legacy of Byzantine craftsmanship and its influence on modern ecclesiastical design.⁷⁴⁰

▪ General characteristics:

The church is notable for its impressive external structure, situated on a raised platform accessible with a few steps. Its plan is a rectangle, comprising a nave and two side

⁷³⁹ Fayyāḍ, 2019

⁷⁴⁰ Fayyāḍ, 2019

aisles. The nave is divided into three aisles by two rows of quadratic pillars⁷⁴¹ carrying three broad arches, with the central aisle being the widest.

The plan ends with an altar on a raised platform, accompanied by a protruding semicircular apse with three arched windows. A wooden iconostasis separates the altar from the nave, surmounted by a victory arch. Concerning the openings, there are four arched windows on the western façade, and the remaining four are distributed on the upper level as small rectangular forms. Additionally, the openings are positioned on the northern and southern sides at two levels. Remarkably, a simple band similarly connects the windows to that observed in the Qlab Loze. Stones and concrete were used to build the church.

The church has three entrances, the westernmost of which is the principal entrance and is the widest, preceded by a portico that does not function as a narthex due to changes in the liturgy. In other words, catechumens and penitents disappeared. The most striking feature is the placement of the western towers in the main façade. Furthermore, the nave is covered by a traditional gabled roof, whereas the two aisles are topped with flat slab roofs. Notably, the apse features a distinctive half-dome roof (Fig. 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237).

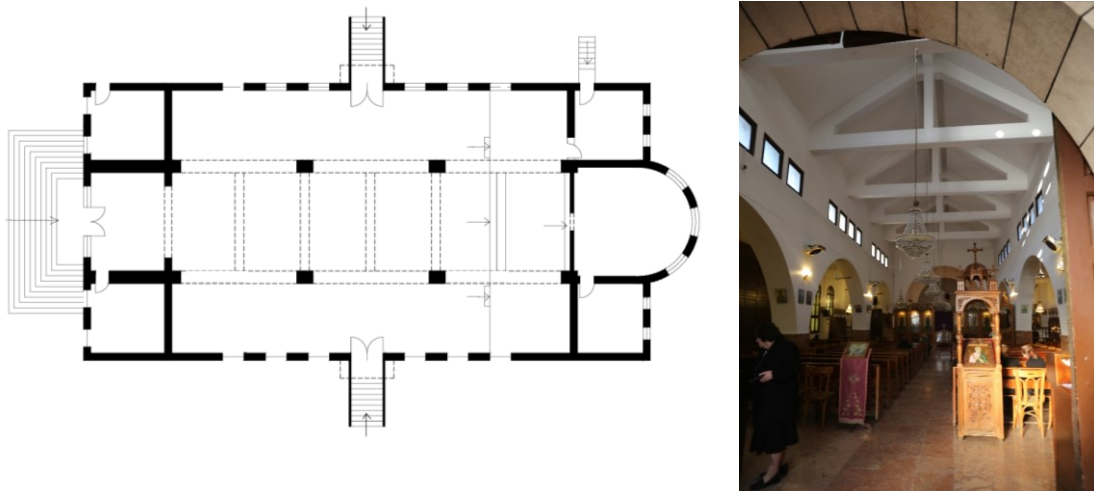


Fig. 232 St. Andrew church plan, drawn by the author based on Prist Ispiridon Fayad Interior view facing the east, taken by the author

⁷⁴¹ It refers to a pillar or column with a square or rectangular cross-section, which is often used in architectural designs for both structural and aesthetic purposes. In architectural terms, pillars or piers with square or rectangular shapes are commonly used to support structures like arches, vaults, or roofs.



A



B

Fig. 233 A. Interior view facing West. B. Interior view facing North, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 234 Interior view showing apse, 2019, taken by Fayyād, I.



Fig. 235 Interior view facing East, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 236 Exterior view facing West, 2019, taken by the author.



Fig. 237 A. Exterior view facing East. B. Exterior view facing South, 2019, taken by the author.

V.3. Conclusion of the Chapter

Based on the comparison of the churches above, here are essential points:

- ⇒ Space: nave, altar.
- ⇒ Openings and roofs.
- ⇒ Decorative ornaments, façade.

- Churches with centralized plans: St. George in Izraa and St. George in Damascus:

It is obvious that the architectural outline of St. George church in Damascus simultaneously represents a postmodern and peculiar type. Albeit St. George plan in Damascus was fundamentally designed to imitate St. George in Izraa, the influence of postmodern style predominates at the expense of the Orthodox tradition. This is clearly witnessed through:

The nave of the contemporary St. George church in Damascus is a circle without columns, while St. George church in Izraa features an internal octagonal plan with an external square. The scale of the nave seems approximately similar in both churches. Moreover, the apse of St. George church in Damascus exhibits a paradoxical design, featuring both internally and externally projecting straight walls. In contrast to the altar of St. George in Izraa represents

a semi-circular apse from the inside and a polygonal shape outside externally. On the other hand, both churches show iconostasi (Fig. 238)s.

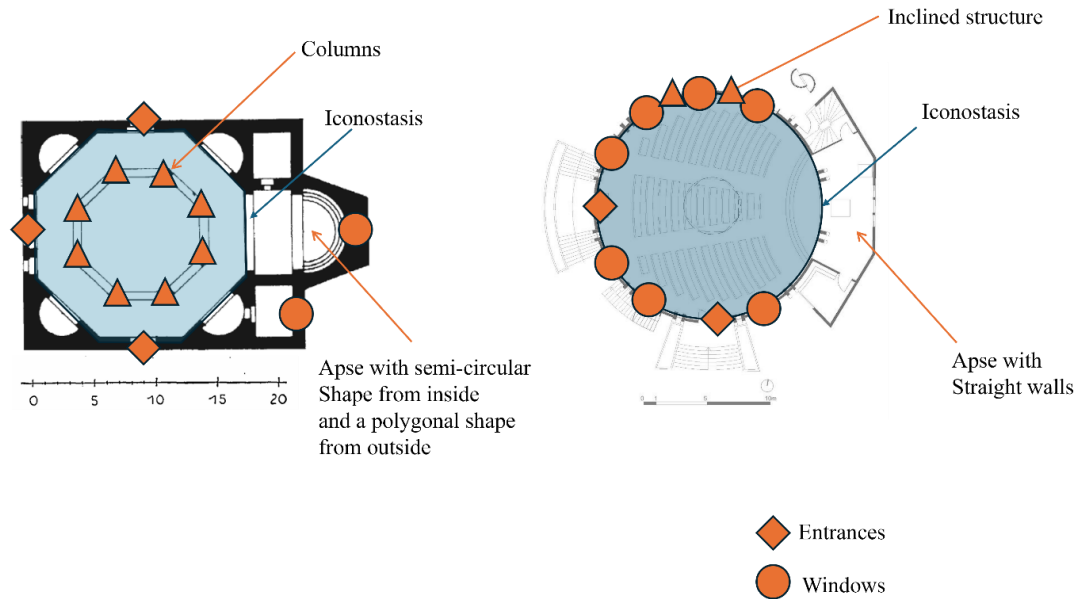


Fig. 238 An illustration comparing the architectural plans of St. George Church in Izraa and St. George Church in Damascus, highlighting their similarities and differences, by the author.

Nevertheless, a discernible characteristic of St. George church in Damascus is the employment of a polygon slope roof, crowned by a drum dome, and inclined walls. It is evidently absent in the case of St. George church in Izraa which was never observed in previous eras. Based on the interview done on site, a big question mark was revealed by the Christian community concerning the acceptance of these element (Fig. 239s).



Fig. 239 An illustration comparing the roofing, walls, and materials between St. George Church in Izraa and St. George Church in Damascus, by the author.

Farīd ‘awād (Farid Awad), the architect who designed St. George in Damascus aimed to use innovative roof designs that enhance a contemporary and distinctive appearance, giving the church the aspect a landmark. Moreover, he designed the church with slanted walls aiming for spiritual and cultural impact, which apparently had never been used before.

Regarding the openings, the number of windows in St. George church in Damascus is greater than in St. George church in Izraa. St. George church in Damascus shows simply the three elongated windows with a modern style. Nevertheless, it is assumed that there is a certain symbolic message behind opting for this specific number of windows: Three openings are distributed amongst the tiny rows and the middle is the widest, which is probably an indication of the Holy Trinity. It is well-known that all the internal elements of the church are not only based on liturgical needs but also carry a certain symbolic meaning. Not to mention that the ancient St. George church in Izraa has three entrances on the northern, western, and southern facades, while the other church has only two doors located on the western and southern facades.

Concerning construction materials, St. George Church in Izraa was erected using basalt stones, where St. George Church in Damascus was constructed with stone and concrete. Furthermore, the decorations of St. George church in Damascus are minimalist as it is considered as a minor decoration.

In essence, the design of St. George church in Damascus is based on a centralized plan, like to the ancient St. George Church in Izraa. However, the contemporary form of the Damascus church avoids any direct imitation of the Izraa church. The observed similarities are attributable solely to formal and spatial characteristics such as centralized plan, altar, and iconostasis. The churches bear some resemblance as already mentioned but do not fully align as some differences are also noticeable like different structures which necessitate diverse materials, as well as different openings which give a different special impression.

- As for the comparison of two basilica church plans in Idlib and Latakia:

The church in Latakia reflects a profound connection with the ancient church of Qalb loze. Hence, the architect Mark Murqus evidently took direct influence from Qalb Loze Church, displaying great reverence for Byzantine and early Christian architectural traditions. The architect skilfully achieved a straightforward and elegant design,

representing the essence of early Christian architecture without excessive ornamentation. Every detail, from structural form to decorative elements, reflects a dedication to maintaining the authenticity of the original church while adapting to modern construction techniques. Furthermore, the church design represents a bridge between the past and present.

All Syrian distinguished stylistic criteria of the ancient church are demonstrated as follows:

The nave of St Andrew church in Latakia shows many similarities with Qalb Loze church. Some of these features are wide arches resting on quadratric pillars, resulting in a suitably large nave with two aisles and a semicircular apse projecting and pierced with three window (Fig. 240).

Equally important, the contemporary church of St. Andrew presents parallel covering to Qalb Loze church such as a gable roof employed for the nave, a slab flat roof for the aisles, and a hemispherical dome for the apse. Despite using larger windows compared to Qalb Loze church, the form of these openings imitates the same type in the upper and lower levels of the church (arched openings). On the other hand, St. Andrew church has three entrances, on the northern façade, southern façade, and the widest located on the western façade. While Qalb Loze church has five doors: two in the north, three south walls, and one in the west.

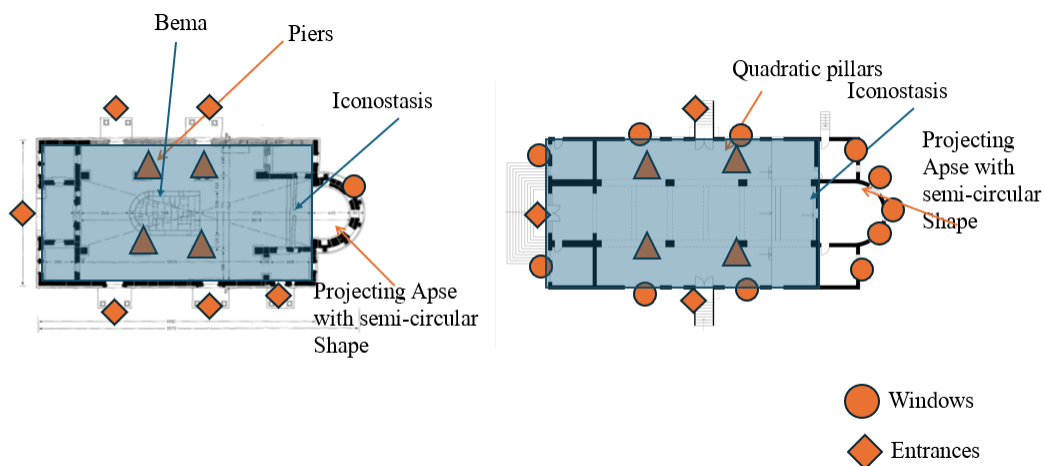


Fig. 240 An illustration comparing the architectural plans of Qalb loze church and St. Andrew church in Latakia highlighting their similarities and differences, by the author.

Moreover, the Western façade of St. Andrew church perfectly bestows expression conducive to understanding the correlation with Qalb Loze church: using two western

towers. Most striking, a plain profiling adornment line connects the windows, which is somehow reminiscent of the detailing in Qalb Loze church, albeit with a simpler approach. Concerning the materials utilized in construction, Qalb Loze church in Idleb was built using limestone, while the St. Andrew church in Latakia was erected with stones and concrete.

It is obvious that Latakia city has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to authenticity, by the replication of the ancient church in the contemporary church. This replication is not merely an imitation; it is a meticulous reproduction of the original, encompassing both the internal and external elements in a simple straightforward yet sophisticated manner. This thoughtful and historically grounded approach positions St. Andrew church as more than just a place of worship; it becomes a living testament to the enduring influence of Christian Byzantine architecture in Syria (Fig. 241).

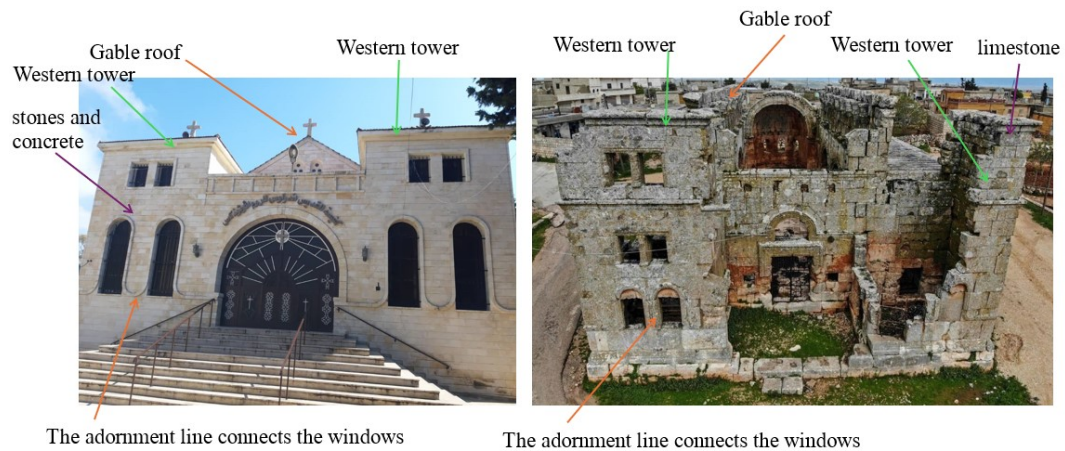


Fig. 241 An illustration comparing the facades, roofing, and materials between Qalb loze in Idleb in Izraa and St. Andrew church in Latakia, by the author.

Not to mention that St. Andrew Church is not the only example of a contemporary replication of ancient church designs in Latakia. Several other churches, such as Sayidat al-Bishara Church, constructed in 1962 and belonging to the Greek Catholic denomination, exhibit a clear resemblance to the ancient churches of Ruwayḥa and al-Mashbak in northern Syria. This similarity is particularly evident in architectural elements such as the gable roofing method, window design, and the western entrance. However, the western towers, which were once a prominent feature, are absent from the façade (Fig. 242).



Fig. 242 Saydat al-Bishara church, 2019, by the author

In light of these two groups of comparison, the association of the contemporary church in the twentieth century significantly follows a similar pattern to the authentic ancient church architecture in Latakia compared to the ones in Damascus. The fundamental elements of historical Syrian church architecture, including western towers, a projecting apse, and a gable roof, are evident in St. Andrew Church, which emphasizes the imitation of the Church of Qalb Loze. On the other hand, the appearance of a centralized plan in St. George's Church in Damascus is merely a link with the ancient St. George Church in Izraa.

Taking everything into consideration, the following factors play a role in church constructions in Damascus and Latakia:

- ➡ Religious factors
- ➡ Historical and social factors
- ➡ Personal factors

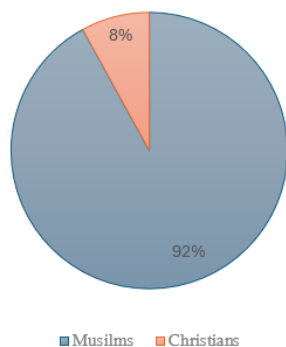
○ Religious factors:

The Greek Orthodox denomination is significantly represented in Latakia. There are fifteen churches in Latakia: nine churches of the Greek Orthodox, one church of the Greek Catholic, two churches of the Maronite, one church of the Armenian, one church of Latin, and one church of the Evangelic.

According to an interview with the priest, Ispīrīdūn Fayyāḍ, the percentage of Christians in Latakia was approximately 8% in 2009. This percentage declined to 5% in the wake of the

Syrian crisis in 2011, despite the exodus and fled of Christians from Aleppo, Idleb, and Homs.⁷⁴²

Percentage of Christians in Latakia in 2009



Percentage of Christians in Latakia after 2011

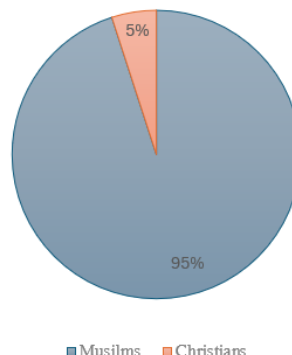


Fig. 243A chart showing the percentage of Christians between 2009 and 2011, by the author after *Fayyād, 2019*

Thus, the Greek Orthodox comprised around 85% of all Christian denominations. Damascus is characterized by the richness and diversity of Christian denominations. (Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Syriacs, Chaldeans, Latin, and Maronites).

Damascus has about 14 churches belonging to the Greek Orthodox, five Latin churches, two Armenian Catholic churches, one Armenian Orthodox church, two Syriac Catholic churches and two Syriac Orthodox churches, seven the Greek Catholic churches, one Protestant church, one Chaldean Catholic church, and one Evangelic church, one Maronite church.

According to an interview conducted in 2019, this statistic from 1960 is of particular significance because it provides a clear understanding of the population census nearly a century ago. It is advantageous to compare it with previous and subsequent statistics

⁷⁴² Fayyād, 2019

Hereunder, the number of Christian denominations in Latakia after the Syrian crisis:

The Greek Orthodox denomination: 11600 families.

Latin denomination: 760 families, about 2000 Christians. It is worth to mention this number includes the Chaldean, the Armenian Catholic and the Syriac Catholic as well.

The Armenian denomination: 450 families, 2000 Christians.

The Maronites denomination: 360 families, about 1080 Christians.

The Evangelical: around 270 families, 885 Christians.

The Syriac denomination: 130 families, nearly 450 Christians.

The Greek Catholic denomination: 30 families.

regarding the Christian population. The remaining data is located in Sālīhiyya, and Ghūta.

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- Historical and social factors:

Damascus takes a central role in Syria, due to its historical importance, being capital. Hence, Damascus attracts all the significant capabilities of various fields including construction and particularly construction of churches. This caused an openness to the Western world. Most architects who have completed their education abroad tend to adopt a contemporary style when designing new churches. Thus, the western interventions became more influential and targeted in Damascus and slightly in Latakia.

- Personal factors:

Furthermore, the personality and the architect's culture as well as the community play a part in the way of perception of the actual concept of the architectural tradition.

A compelling conclusion can be highlighted that authenticity surely can not only be achieved through imitating ancient architectural elements but there are surely other ways to find after a thorough evaluation of important ancient architectural examples. Any approach based on a false understanding, a shallow copying of traditional forms, or using forms and materials that are partly traditional and partly contemporary will lead to problematic and questionable results. Conversely, a strong and contemporary concept based on a thorough evaluation and a clear interpretation of historical architectural tradition will result in more honest and acceptable building and religious space.

⁷⁴³ Būlād, 2019

Hence, the population in Damascus was 188,000, and Christians 21,000 population census of Christians denominations in Damascus as follow:

The Greek Catholic: 6530 Christian.

The Greek Orthodox: 6240 Christian.

The Syriac Catholic: 1070 Christian.

The Armenian Orthodox: 4420 Christian.

The Armenian Catholic: 770 Christian.

The Maronite: 670 Christian.

The Syriac Orthodox: 524 Christian.

The Protestant: 420 Christian.

VI. CONCLUSION

This comprehensive study of the development of church architecture includes scientific and academic aspects of architectural and liturgical issues in terms of description, analysis, and comparison, and specializes in the Greek Orthodox denomination, generally in Syria and specifically in Damascus. On the other hand, in order to investigate the church building activity of the recent past and today, the research is based on field visits to various types of churches and interviews conducted with priests, architects, and members of the Greek Orthodox denomination. Based on this, hereunder are key points to building a new church of the Greek Orthodox denomination today.

➤ In Christianity, liturgy and symbolism are foundational to church architecture. The development of church architecture is deeply correlated with theological doctrine, symbolism, faith, and liturgical practices. Unlike other buildings, every element of a church carries symbolic meaning and serves liturgical requirements, which is reflected in the architectural design.

As previously discussed, orientation towards the east is a primary consideration in church construction due to its symbolic and liturgical significance. The external form of the church constitutes a second crucial aspect, encompassing various plan types such as rectangular, centralized, and cruciform plans. Each of these forms embodies both symbolic and functional approaches.

Furthermore, the western towers situated on the main façade of the church, originally serving as bell towers or platforms for preaching, have primarily evolved to enhance the church's visual presence and reinforce its architectural identity. Observations indicate that these towers have transitioned from functional elements to predominantly aesthetic features. In conclusion, reviving these towers could be advantageous, provided it is feasible and aligns with practical considerations.

The traditional semicircular apse should be preserved as a distinctive external feature of the church, as it exemplifies both liturgical significance and a clear architectural identity.

It would be advantageous to use architectural elements from the Syrian church architecture in the Byzantine period mentioned above, such as arched windows, the apse, dome roofs,

and gable roofs, into modern designs where practical, thereby linking simply the heritage of Syrian church architecture.

In addition to the previously mentioned essential elements, key internal spatial arrangement elements of Greek Orthodox churches include the nave, iconostasis, and altar. The nave often comprises a single hall or a central nave flanked by two side aisles. The altar, consistently situated on an elevated platform, is separated from the nave by the iconostasis. The side chambers continue to serve as the prothesis and diaconicon, fulfilling liturgical functions. The choir remains integral to contemporary liturgical practices. However, modifications to the liturgy have led to the disappearance of catechumens and penitents, resulting in the absence of the narthex.

Drawing from this research, the Mariamite Cathedral of Damascus, the Holy Cross Church in Damascus, and Saint Andrew Church in Latakia can be regarded as models of church architecture that successfully fulfilled most of the architectural criteria and liturgical requirements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

- Hence, despite undergoing numerous restorations and reconstructions, the Mariamite Cathedral of Damascus exemplifies a deep connection between architectural heritage and the contemporary approach. Its preservation of the basilica plan, complete with a nave and two side aisles, demonstrates a commitment to historical layouts. The continued presence of key liturgical and architectural elements, such as the richly decorated marble iconostasis and semicircular apse, further enriches the interior, harmonizing historical design with present-day spiritual needs. This careful balance renders the cathedral a compelling demonstration of how architectural traditions can endure and adapt, creating a space that respects both its historic roots and its modern function as a place of worship.

- The design of the Holy Cross Church in Damascus exemplifies how historical basilica elements, such as the ambon and iconostasis, and a projecting apse can be integrated with modern architectural expressions to create a twentieth-century model. The main facade, featuring western towers with a pediment and ornamental details, establishes a contemporary architectural presence in the region linked to the ancient church architecture in Syria. The use of a dome represents a symbolic reference to traditional roofing, positioning the church as both a modern landmark and a contemporary interpretation of

historical architectural styles. This is accomplished through the utilization of essential and practical elements of the church and modern materials, such as stone and concrete.

- Saint Andrew in Latakia serves as another model by integrating historical elements with contemporary design. The basilica plan, featuring quadratic pillars, wide arches, an iconostasis, and a projecting apse with three windows, establishes historical connections while maintaining functional effectiveness for the twentieth century. The proposed design, incorporating western towers and a gable roof, achieves a harmonious blend of historical and modern styles.

This study highlights that the authentic value of heritage is more apparent in areas farther from old Damascus, such as Latakia, where it has been preserved with greater integrity despite the challenges and economic crises in the recent past and today.

These churches demonstrate how architectural church designs can create successful connections with historical churches. The churches unite traditional architectural components such as domes and gable roofs and basilica plans, semicircular apses and iconostases with modern requirements and design elements. The architectural designs represent reinterpretations that both respect historical precedents and meet the needs of contemporary liturgical and community functions. The churches unite eternal architectural elements to form sacred spaces that connect their historical significance with modern-day importance, thus serving as exemplary models for church architecture.

- The church examples in Damascus show that pastoral considerations are an essential element. The two primary aspects of these considerations are the proper assessment of present and expected Christian population numbers determines suitable land utilization. Hence, this strategy prevents future modifications to increase the church building size. The church basement contains supplementary buildings which include the clergy offices, along with the parish priest's office and religious education classrooms and meeting rooms and special areas for celebration and mourning.

- One significant challenge in constructing new Greek Orthodox churches, particularly in densely populated cities like Damascus, is the scarcity of suitable land. The limited size of available plots often dictates the church's design, sometimes requiring deviations from traditional forms and orientations.

Furthermore, financial constraints are another obstacle. The Greek Orthodox Church relies on donations from the Christian community due to the Patriarchate's limited resources. While the Patriarchate contributes to the construction process alongside donors, the restricted budget can lead to delays or compromises in completing the project. It is important to emphasize that the decision on the church building is based on sharing between the diocese and the architect in a compatible manner with guidelines to serve the church architecture. Thus, there is a need to set up a committee consisting of bishops and architects who are specialists and experts in ecclesiastical art and architecture. Hence, they are aware of the principal issues and can guide the processing of church building to accomplish these matters in accordance with the liturgy, tradition and pastoral considerations. Thus, the final decision in carrying out the church is made by the diocese and this committee and is unrelated merely to a donor.

VII. Appendix

Eastern churches were distinguished with spiritual richness and the orthodox faith flourished against paganism and heresies. With the spreading of Christianity to include entire empire, doctrinal and theological disagreements ended up with the appearance of divisions and Christian denominations.

This is vividly shown within the pillars of the faith by means of the proclamation of the Seven Councils: The First Council of Nicaea in 325, the First Council of Constantinople in 381, the Council of Ephesus in 431, the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the Second Council of Constantinople in 556, the Council of Constantinople III in 680, and the Second Council of Nicaea II 787.⁷⁴⁴

Below is a concise summary of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and their chronology:

The First Council of Nicaea in 325:

It was organized in Nicaea and is known today as Iznik. Nearly 318 bishops from the East and the West attended this council, besides Constantine's emperor. This council was set up to disprove the Alexandrian theologian Arius's heresy (280-338) and his followers. Those who denied the divinity of Christ believed that Christ is merely a human, the son of God by adoption, and unequal to God. As a result of this council, the definition of the Orthodoxy of the Holy Trinity was determined and confirmed the three hypostases are equal in essence.⁷⁴⁵

The First Council of Constantinople in 381:

It is deemed the Second Ecumenical Council. The council was held by the Theodosius emperor (346-395) in Constantinople and 148 bishops participated.⁷⁴⁶ The purpose of the council was to emphasize the divinity of the Holy Spirit against another heresy. This heresy was made by Macedonius, the bishop of Constantinople (341-362) who refuted the concept of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. However, this council succeeded in adding the Holy Spirit clause which supports all the principles of the Orthodox churches.⁷⁴⁷ Hence, through this council and the previous one, the 'Nicaea Creed' reconfirms the doctrine of Christ's divinity

⁷⁴⁴ Fortescue, 1908, p. 73

⁷⁴⁵ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Antākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 171

⁷⁴⁶ Kanīsat madīnat Allah 'Antākiya al-'uẓmā 34-634 A.D, 1958, p. 255

⁷⁴⁷ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at baṭraḳiyyat 'Antākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 174

as “*of one substance with the Father*”.⁷⁴⁸ The Nicaea Creed reached its final form under the “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed” which specifies seven canons related to ecclesiastical canon law and theological and liturgical issues.⁷⁴⁹

The Council of Ephesus in 431:

This gathering included 200 bishops in order to deal with Nestorius,⁷⁵⁰ who was the archbishop of Constantinople chosen by Theodosius II (408-450) in 428. Nestorius proclaimed the use of the term *Christotokos* (Mother of Christ) instead of the term *Theotokos* (Mother of God). In addition, he believed Jesus had two separate natures: human and divine (two hypostases).⁷⁵¹

Hence, the theological disagreement started with the Nestorians and Monophysites, between Nestorius and Patriarch Cyril of Alexandria (376-444). He believed in a hypostatic union with two natures (human and divine). Ultimately, it was approved with Cyril's attitude and accepted the term *Theotokos* (Mother of God). While Nestorius was exiled.⁷⁵² Thus, there was a dispute between the three patriarchates as follows: Monophysite was in Alexandria, Dyophysite was in Antioch, and Constantinople took an average attitude.⁷⁵³

The Council of Chalcedon in 451:

At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which was one of the greatest meetings in the history of the church, there were 630 bishops' participants.⁷⁵⁴ Moreover, it represents an essential council for Orthodoxy in the East. They announced the dogma statement that determined two distinct natures of Jesus and one hypostasis.⁷⁵⁵ The Western and Byzantine churches have approved this formula. However, it was rejected by Alexandria and named Monophysites or Anti-Chalcedonians.⁷⁵⁶ Hereby, the Chalcedonians convicted the Monophysites. As a matter of fact, due to the rejection of this council, Alexandria's patriarchate includes two patriarchates: the Coptic, and the Melkites which is supported by

⁷⁴⁸ Balderstone, 2007, pp. 3-4

⁷⁴⁹ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 176

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid

⁷⁵¹ McGuckin, 2011, p. 165

⁷⁵² McGuckin, 2011, p. 165

⁷⁵³ Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, 1986, p. 93

⁷⁵⁴ Fortescue, 1908, p. 78

⁷⁵⁵ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 176

⁷⁵⁶ Balderstone, 2007, p. 33

Constantinople, as well as in Antioch: the Jacobites and the Melkites.⁷⁵⁷ Thus, the Coptic and the Jacobites as well as the Armenians became out of involvement with Constantinople and Rome.⁷⁵⁸

Before continuing in the clarification of the subsequent Councils, it is important to recap these Christian denominations that arose due to the Christological disagreements through two Councils: the Ephesus Council in 431 and the Chalcedon Council in 451.

- The Jacobites (Western Syriac, Monophysites, Syriac Orthodox):

Monophysites disagreed with the Council of Chalcedon in 451 in terms of Christ's nature, believing in one hypostatic and one nature (oneness). They also followed Jacob Baradeus.⁷⁵⁹ Particularly, they spread among Arab tribes where a significant number of their monasteries were located in the West Badia al-Sham.⁷⁶⁰ Part of the monastic centers were found in northern Syria, and Mesopotamia as a reaction to the Justinian policy.⁷⁶¹

In addition, the Ghassanids in the 6th century, who stayed in the southeast of the Byzantine Empire, significantly supported the Monophysites.⁷⁶² Despite the fact that most of them were Jacobites, their families belonged to Chalcedon.⁷⁶³

What is more, the Syriac (Jacobites) welcomed the Arab arrival (Muslim conquest in the 7th century) and considered them rescuers whether from Persian or even Greek Byzantine. Their social and administrative matters became rather organized. The episcopal see rose, and the diocese was enlarged.⁷⁶⁴ In that way, they earned privileges under the Muslim reign that could not be available under the Byzantine reign.⁷⁶⁵

- The Nestorians (Eastern Syriac, Dyophysite):

They believe in two natures of Jesus Christ: divine and human, and two hypostases. The main home of Nestorianism is in eastern lands; in Iraq and Iran.⁷⁶⁶ Furthermore, Eastern Syriac appeared in the Eastern Anatolia region, Kurdistan, and upper Mesopotamia.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁵⁷ Talal, 1995, pp. 40-41

⁷⁵⁸ Fortescue, 1908, p. 78

⁷⁵⁹ McGuckin, 2011, p. 157

⁷⁶⁰ Trübbü, 2001, p. 469

⁷⁶¹ Atiya, 2010, p. 236

⁷⁶² Geffert & Stavrou, Eastern Orthodox Christianity Supplemental Text, 2016, pp. 71-72

⁷⁶³ Trübbü, 2001, p. 469

⁷⁶⁴ Sākā, 2001, p. 240

⁷⁶⁵ Atiya, 2010, p. 221

⁷⁶⁶ Jenkins, 2009, p. 6

⁷⁶⁷ Atiya, 2010, p. 292

Remarkably, as Antioch became in agreement with Alexandria regarding the one nature (Monophysitism), the Eastern Syriac tended to connect with the Nestorian doctrine.⁷⁶⁸

Moreover, the activity of Nestorians over the Muslim period extended to western Asia, reaching the roots of Monophysites and Orthodox. Hence, with the arrival of the Muslim reign, Nestorians were motivated to spread their doctrine in Syria, Egypt, and Cyprus. The first bishop was appointed in Damascus in the seventh century, and also in Egypt in the eighth and eleventh centuries.⁷⁶⁹

▪ The Melkites (Greek Orthodox):

The Greek Orthodox Church is deemed the first universal apostolic church after expanding Christianity through apostles by the first century. It is suggested that the term Melkite was designated by the non-Chalcedonians on the basis of their point of view that they followed the king or emperor. Indeed, those who accepted the Seven Councils did not follow the emperor but followed the saints of the Greek Orthodox Church.⁷⁷⁰ They believe in one hypostasis and two natures of Christ: divine and human. Particularly, their main home was in big cities such as Damascus, Aleppo, Seleucia, Latakia, and Antioch.⁷⁷¹ Most striking is that over the Muslim period in the seventh century, the Melkite remained faithful to the Byzantine politically and ecclesiastically. Bear in mind that the Jacobites, as well as the Coptic and the Nestorians, welcomed the Islamic reign instead of the Byzantine due to their suffering from the Byzantine reign.⁷⁷²

The Second Council of Constantinople in 556:

It represents the Fifth Ecumenical Council, which was held by Justinian (527-565). Nearly 151 bishops attended this council.⁷⁷³ The aim of this council lies in the discussion of three articles named “Three Chapters” ascribed to the period between the fourth and first half of the fifth century by theologians: Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrihus, and Ibas of Edessa, which were refused due to affiliation with Nestorius.⁷⁷⁴ Moreover, several endeavors were made by Justinian to settle the situation between the Chalcedonian

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid, p.216

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid, p.325

⁷⁷⁰ ‘Atiya, 2001, p. 295

⁷⁷¹ Hazīm, 2001, p. 469

⁷⁷² Talal, 1995, p. 85

⁷⁷³ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū‘at batrakiyyat ‘Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 185

⁷⁷⁴ McGuckin, 2011, p. 162

“one hypostasis in two natures” and the anti-Chalcedonian who believed in the formula of St. Cyril of Alexandria “one incarnate nature of God the Logos”. Accordingly, the Jacobite church in Syria was permitted to remain, (as Melkites), maintained that they referred to themselves as the patriarchs of Antioch, despite the fact that the Jacobites did not live in Antioch.⁷⁷⁵

The Third Council of Constantinople in 680:

The meeting was held by Emperor Constantine III (658-668) and attended by nearly 285 bishops. The purpose of setting up this council was to condemn (Monotheletism) and remove the schism between the Eastern and Western churches caused by this heresy of one Christ's nature. This council concluded by announcing one hypostasis nature of Christ and two natures.⁷⁷⁶

The Second Council of Nicaea 787:

This council was set up under Empress Irene (752-803) and included 390 bishops.⁷⁷⁷ Hence, the council announced and affirmed the rightfulness of the veneration of icons in the Christian churches. This was due to the outbreak of iconoclasm, which lasted for about 120 years when a great number of icons were devastated in churches and even general places.⁷⁷⁸ In addition, punishment against the iconophiles through incarceration and exile was practiced.⁷⁷⁹

For further explanation, this historical period is divided into two phases: the first one was in 726 during the reign of Emperor Leo III (717–741), who commanded to demolish crosses, icons and even relics.⁷⁸⁰ The second phase was between 815-843 during the rule of the Armenian Leo V (813–820) which ended with Empress Theodora.⁷⁸¹ One of the great triumphal outcomes of the Orthodox Church was when Empress Theodora went to the Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople in order to honor the icons.⁷⁸² The first

⁷⁷⁵ Talal, 1995, p. 41

⁷⁷⁶ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū‘at baṭrakiyyat ‘Antākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-‘athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīhiyya fī al-‘alf al-‘awal al-milādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 187

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 189

⁷⁷⁸ Ibrāhīm, 1980, p. 4

⁷⁷⁹ McGuckin, 2011, p. 167

⁷⁸⁰ Geffert & Stavrou, Eastern Orthodox Christianity Supplemental Text, 2016, p. 193-194

⁷⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 204-205

⁷⁸² Talal, 1995, pp. 50-51

Sunday of the Great Lent is called the “Feast of Orthodoxy”⁷⁸³ “Sunday of Orthodoxy” or “Icon Sunday”, which became an annual celebration commemorating the victory of Orthodoxy after the period of iconoclasm.⁷⁸⁴

In 1054, the schism happened between the Rome and Constantinople churches (East and West churches); the Roman Catholic Church, and the Eastern Greek Orthodox Church, known as "The Great Schism". Hence, the Greek churches in Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria followed Constantinople's attitude.⁷⁸⁵ This schism was due to controversy in believing in the Holy Spirit. The Catholics (West) believe that the Holy Spirit in the Trinity proceeds from the Father and the Son “*Filioque*”, while the Greeks (East) believe merely the Holy Spirit arises from the Father.⁷⁸⁶

In the following centuries, there was a division between Protestant and the Catholic denomination. It is known as the Protestant Reformation (1521) and Martin Luther was the Catholic leader for this movement. Protestantism and Catholicism are in many Western European and the United States. Yet, some Eastern European countries remain believing in Orthodox such as Russia, Greece, and Bulgaria.⁷⁸⁷

In Syrian cities, several early writings appeared in order to interpret Christian doctrine, mainly during the second and fourth centuries. Their importance is considered after the Canonical Scriptures and one of the earliest Christian literatures.⁷⁸⁸ This Syrian Christian literature element adds to the importance of Christianity in Syria. The following are some examples of Christian literature:

- The Didache or Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles: This work is considered one of the ancient and richest documents of Christian literature, written presumably in northern Syria at the end of the first century.⁷⁸⁹ It includes the church's ritual and statutory constitutions.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸³ Pena, 1992, p. 42

⁷⁸⁴ Naṣūr, 2013, p. 31

⁷⁸⁵ Rustum, Kanīsat madīnat Allah ʿAnṭākiya al-ʿuzmā 634-1453 A.D, 1958, p. 214-226

⁷⁸⁶ Talal, 1995, pp. 24-56

⁷⁸⁷ ʿAbda, 2000, p. 26

⁷⁸⁸ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 25

⁷⁸⁹ Firrīrā, 2004, p. 42

⁷⁹⁰ Athanāsiyū, Mawsūʿat baṭraḳiyyat ʿAnṭākiya al-tārīḳhiyya wa al-ʿathariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-ʿalf al-ʿawal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 381

Besides the practice of Christian life and the celebration of the Eucharist.⁷⁹¹ It was found in 1873 at the library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem.⁷⁹²

- Books of Apologetics: In the second century, it was found series of books relating to the Apologetics of Christian philosophers. There were numerous examples of this type of literature found in Syria.⁷⁹³
- The Teaching (Didascalia) of the Apostles: It is ascribed to the third century (220), written by a Syrian bishop.⁷⁹⁴ This book depends on the Didache and frequently relied on Saint Irenaeus, the Gospel of Peter, and the acts of Paul. Its content shows a number of ecclesiastical regulations for bishops, married people, and widows. In addition, it is dedicated to Christians who had converted from paganism.⁷⁹⁵
- The Apostolic Constitution: there are approximately eight books covering early church, liturgy, and prayers. Not to mention that it is deemed as a reproduction of the previous books mentioned above.⁷⁹⁶ It indicates the east orientation to be observed in church buildings. It is probably written in 380 in Syria.⁷⁹⁷
- Heretical books and Anti-heretics: The writers of these books are theologians who influenced incorrectly in the theories connected with Jewish- Christian Greek philosophy or Eastern philosophy. Hence, this collection of dissensions appeared in most of the regions of the Empire and Syria. Two issues could be explained clearly: a group of writers who attempted to confirm the theories of the heresy and the other ones who endeavored to contradict them giving a clear definition of the faith and known orthodox writers.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹¹ Kānīfih, 2001, p. 52

⁷⁹² Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 381

⁷⁹³ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 26

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid, p.25

⁷⁹⁵ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 320

⁷⁹⁶ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 26

⁷⁹⁷ Athanāsiyū, Mawsū'at batrakiyyat 'Anṭākiya al-tārīkhiyya wa al-'athariyya: Sūriyya al-Masīḥiyya fī al-'alf al-'awal al-mīlādī (Vol. I), 1997, p. 320

⁷⁹⁸ Castellana & Fernandez, 2014, p. 26

Villages of the Limestones Massif					
Jabal al-Ala	Jabal Barisha	Jabal Duetli	Jabal Simon	Jabal Wastani	Jabal al-Zawiyye
Anzeran	Bahisqa	al-Hosn	Ba'e	Ain Sukhna	al-Bara
Belyo	Babutta	Kherbet Bazaziye	Banastur	al-'Amadiye	Ba'ude
Betlaya	Bamusqa	Kouaro	Basufan	'Aqabat	Bshille
Bettir	Banaqfur		Bazirer	Bafamun	Bitisa
Bshendlaya	Banusa		Brad	Banusra	Dalloza
Bshendlente	Baqitha		Burdaqli	Bechir	Deir Sunbul
al-Kharabat	Bashakuh		Burj et-Qas	Betlaya	Friya
Kafr Mares	Bashmishli		Burj Heidar	Fasuq	Has
Kfeir	Ba'uda		Burjke	Ikrad	Huarte
Kherbet Hermes	Breij		ash-Sheikh Barakat	Kafr T'gab	Jerade
Kherbet al-Qaseir	Burj Baqitha		ash-Sheikh Sleiman	Kharab Sultan	Kaukabe
Kherbet Ruman	Buzgar		Deir 'Aman	Kherbet Zarqa	Kafr Haya
Kukku	Dar Qita		Deir Mishmish	Kneise	Kafr Lata
Ma'asarte	Dehes		Deir Tell 'Ade	Ma'arata	Kherbet Muqa
Northern Berrish	Deir Alzarara		Deir Turmanin	al-Musheirfe	Ma'arat en-No'man
Qalb Loze	Deir Seta		Fafertin	Turin	Majleyya
Qaser al-Gharbi	al-Funduq		Fidre		Nikertai
Qaser al-Hammam	al-Ishruq		Kafr Lab		Rayan
Qirg'ize	Kafr Dertan		Kafr Nabu		Rbi'a
Teluta	Kaukanaya		Kalota		Riba
	Kescibe		Kefrantin		Raweitha
	Kherbt esb-Sharqyye		Kharab Shams		Serjilla
	Kherbt Hasan		Margharat al-Malaab		Shinsharah
	Kherbt al-Khatib		Mshabbak		Shnan
	Kheribat		Qa'at Kalota		Southern Dana
	Ma'aramyya		Qa'at Sim'an		Stuma
	Me'ez		Qasr al-Banat		Wadi Marthun
	Nuriyye		Qutura		
	Qa'at al Tuffah		Refade		
	Qaser Iblisu		Sergible		
	Rab'eita		Sinkhar		
	Rab'eita		Sitt er-Rum		
	Radwe		Surqanya		
	Sarfiad		Tanura		
	Sermada		Taqle		
	Siffaya		Telanissos		
			Tell 'Aqbrin		
			Tell 'Ade		
			Turmanin		
			Zerzita		

List of villages in the limestone massifs, by the author

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