



**The church of San Marco in the eleventh century**  
**La iglesia de San Marcos en el siglo XI**  
**L'església de Sant Marc al segle XI**  
**A Igreja de São Marcos no século XI**

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**Abstract:** In 1084 the most important of the few consecrations of St Mark's church in Venice – that which solemnized the completion of its largest altar – took place. It is assumed that Doge Domenico Selvo (1071-1084) assigned Byzantine mosaicists to finish the decorative programme in time for the respective event. In part because of the beauty and the remarkable quality of the works they created, the eleventh century saw the prestige of this Venetian shrine increase. Also what in the popular imagination was the miraculous appearance of the relics of its patron saint from a pillar (either in 1084 or 1094, depending on the source employed) further augmented it. The article attempts to prove that the eleventh century was the most important period in the existence of the medieval Venetian church which much later became the cathedral San Marco. It will venture a description of this shrine not only on the basis of its similarities, claimed by most scholars, with the Apostoleion church in Constantinople, but also using information from extant documents as well as results of new scientific and archaeological discoveries, especially those published in the catalogue of the exhibition organised by its Procuratoria between July and November 2011, in Ken Dark and Ferudun Özgümüş's works, in the reports concerning the research undertaken by the British Museum, and in other sources.

**Resumen:** En 1084 tuvo lugar la más importante de las pocas consagraciones de la iglesia de San Marcos en Venecia, la que solemnizó la finalización de su altar mayor. Se supone que el dogo Domenico Selvo (1071-1084) encargó mosaicos bizantinos para terminar el programa decorativo a tiempo para el evento respectivo. En parte debido a la belleza y la notable calidad de las obras que crearon, el siglo XI vio aumentar el prestigio de este santuario veneciano. También lo que en el imaginario popular fue la aparición milagrosa de las reliquias de su santo patrón en un pilar (ya sea en 1084 o en 1094, según la fuente empleada) lo aumentó aún más. El artículo intenta demostrar que el siglo XI fue el período más importante en la existencia de la iglesia medieval veneciana, que mucho más tarde se convirtió en la catedral de San Marco. Se aventurará

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una descripción de este santuario no solo sobre la base de sus similitudes, afirmadas por la mayoría de los eruditos, con la iglesia Apostoleion en Constantinopla, sino también utilizando información de documentos existentes, así como los resultados de nuevos descubrimientos científicos y arqueológicos, especialmente los publicados en el catálogo de la exposición organizada por su Procuratoria entre julio y noviembre de 2011, en las obras de Ken Dark y Ferudun Özgümüş, en los informes sobre la investigación realizada por el Museo Británico, y en otras fuentes.

**Keywords:** Venice – St Mark’s church – Byzantium – Dominico Selvo – Emperor Henry IV – The eleventh century.

**Palabras-clave:** Venecia – Iglesia de San Marcos – Bizancio – Dominico Selv – Emperador Enrique IV – Siglo XI.

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## I. The city of Venice<sup>2</sup>

The eleventh century was an extremely propitious moment for the politic and economic life of Venice<sup>3</sup> and that facilitated many remarkable artistic and religious endeavours by its inhabitants. This period of flourishing led Emperor Henry IV (1084-1105) to declare the city a regnum in 1095. Otto Demus comments on the context that made possible

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<sup>2</sup> A slightly shorter version of this article was presented as a paper to the 45th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies ‘Byzantium in the Eleventh Century’, Exeter College, University of Oxford, 24-26 March, 2012. That work has not been co-authored, as the symposium’s programme mistakenly stated. The present text constituted my presentation to the Congress of Byzantine Studies, Belgrade, 25 August 2017; the session ‘Venetian Historiography (and Byzantine Studies)’; conveners: Andrea Nanetti and Șerban V. Marin.

<sup>3</sup> Diacono, John (Giovanni) (attributed). *Istoria Veneticorum* (IV), ms. 794 (=8503). Venice: Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, the beginning of the eleventh century; CARACCILO ARICÒ, Angela. “Nel gran mare delle cronache”. *Quaderni veneti* 34 (2002): 17-32; from this source one can find out that in the eleventh century the duchy of Venice became a dominant power on the Adriatic. See also CARACCILO ARICÒ, Angela (ed.). *Le schede dei manoscritti medievali e umanistici delfondo*. Venice: Centro di Studi Medievali e Rinascimentali ‘E. A. Cicogna’, 2 vols., 2008-2010; ZULIANI, Fulvio. “Le chantier de la basilique Saint-Marc (1063-1094). in *Chantiers médiévaux* (1996): pp. 71-98; ZULIANI, Fulvio. “Nuove proposte per la veste architettonica della San Marco contariniana ‘Storia dell’arte marciana’”. in POLLACO, Renato (ed.). *L’architettura* (1997): 153-163; and CARACCILO ARICÒ, Angela. “Il terzo visitatore nella biblioteca di Marin Sanudo il giovane e nelle sue camere”. *Studi veneziani* 62, 2011, 375- 418.



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these achievements and surmises that the chrysobull of 1082 (or 1092 according to the results of newer research<sup>4</sup>), which ensured “a virtual trade monopoly in the eastern Mediterranean [...] at the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth might have facilitated the influx of Byzantine artists and mosaic material.”<sup>5</sup> Doge Domenico Cantarini *protosebastos* (1043-1070) built a new church – one dedicated to St. Mark<sup>6</sup> in his palace complex;<sup>7</sup> its construction seems to have been initiated in 1063.<sup>8</sup>

The synthetic image of the eleventh century building we propose is based on relatively recent data, mostly archaeological in nature, to be found in the catalogue of the exhibition organised by its Procuratoria in the cathedral’s museum between July and November 2011,<sup>9</sup> in Ken Dark and Ferudun Özgümüş’s publications about their own discoveries,<sup>10</sup> and to be inferred from the photographs of San Marco’s mosaics hosted by the Photo Archives of the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC. There exists, of course, a rich literature about the architecture, iconographical programme, and other aspects of the monument dedicated to St. Mark. The newest major piece is a collective volume published in 2014 about the decoration in its atrium; even though most of the data it provides does not refer to the eleventh century, there are some items within it that can be relevant to a discussion concerning that relevant temporal span.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> FRANKOPAN, Peter. “Byzantine Trade Privileges to Venice in the Eleventh Century: The Chrysobull of 1092”. *Journal of Medieval History*, Elsevier 30 (2004): pp. 135-160.

<sup>5</sup> DEMUS, Otto (one volume version with Herbert L. KESSLER; ed.). *The mosaic decorations of San Marco, Venice*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> San Marco has only been the city’s cathedral since 1807, when it became the seat of the Patriarch of Venice, archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Venice, formerly at San Pietro di Castello; O. DEMUS. *The mosaic decoration of San Marco*, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> SHEPARD, Jonathan. “Imperial outliers: building and decorative works in the borderlands and beyond”. STEPHENSON, Paul (ed.). *The Byzantine World*, Routledge, New York, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 381 [pp. 372-386].

<sup>8</sup> PAPACOSTAS, Tassos. “The medieval progeny of the Holy Apostles: trails of architectural imitation across the Mediterranean”. P. STEPHENSON (ed.). *The Byzantine World*. New York, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 387.

<sup>9</sup> ORSONI, Giorgio et al. (eds.). *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco 1881-1893*. The catalogue of the exhibition organised by the Procuratoria of St. Mark, Venice, in the cathedral’s museum in 16 July-27 November 2011, Venice: Marsilio, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> DARK, Ken and Ferudun ÖZGÜMÜŞ. “New evidence for the Byzantine Church of the Holy Apostles from Fatih Camii, Istanbul”. in *Oxford Journal of Archeology* 21(4): 2002, pp. 393-413.

<sup>11</sup> New research adds to what was already known about the decoration of the church, information concerning especially the link between the images in the Cotton Genesis manuscript in London (fourth-fifth century) and the decoration containing this biblical subject in San Mark’s porch. However, the mosaic panels from the cathedral’s atrium date to the beginning of the thirteenth



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The current paper will pay the due and expected attention to the claims of most specialists that the building in Rialto was, at least partially, modelled on the Apostoleion church in Constantinople. Nevertheless, what prompted its writing was not specifically a wish to elaborate more on the respective topic,<sup>12</sup> but rather the coincidence between the appearance of Orsoni's catalogue that showcases some previously unpublished images regarding a few eleventh century architectural elements from the Venetian edifice and the focus of the 45th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, which took place at the University of Oxford in March 2012, on realities pertaining to this interval. As already suggested, a Byzantine presence in the decoration of San Marco's shrine in that historical period is mostly assumed and partially attested; therefore a talk on the subject announced in the title of my work suited the theme of the event.

## II. San Marco/St Mark's basilica in Venice

In 1084 the most important of the few consecrations of St Mark's Basilica in Venice – that which solemnized the completion of its largest altar – took place. The event was represented in BMV, Ms. Lat. III, 111 (= 2116), Missale (antiphony) f165v, (fig. 1).<sup>13</sup> We must, however, note that this reproduction was made three hundred years after the event, and therefore reflects the thirteenth-century renovation of the exterior, which incorporated elements that had constituted a part of the bounty brought from Constantinople.<sup>14</sup>

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century (c. 1220), therefore we cannot extensively use the material provided by this publication. BÜCHSEL, Martin; Herbert KESSLER, and Rebecca MÜLLER (eds.). *Das Atrium von San Marco in Venedig: Die Genese der Genesismosaiken und ihre mittelalterliche Wirklichkeit* [The Atrium of San Marco in Venice: The Genesis and Medieval Reality of the Genesis Mosaics]. Papers from a symposium held at Bad Homburg, Forschungskolleg Humanwissenschaften, 22-23 June 2012; German-English texts, Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> I have done so in my book, ENE D-VASILESCU, Elena, *Heavenly sustenance in Patristic texts. Nourished by the Word*. London, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> BMV, Ms. Lat. III, 111 (= 2116), Missale, f165v, reproduced in “La miniatura nei libri liturgici marciani”, in CATTIN, Giulio, *Musica e liturgia a San Marco, Editioni Fondazione Levi*, Venice, 1990, vol. 1, p. 139. The subsequent volumes of this work give a general view on the context of this manuscript. See

CANOVA MARIANI, Giordana and Susy MARCON. *I codici liturgici di San Marco* [Study and transcription]. Venice: Editioni Fondazione Levi, vols. 2-3, 1990-1991; vol. 4, 1992.

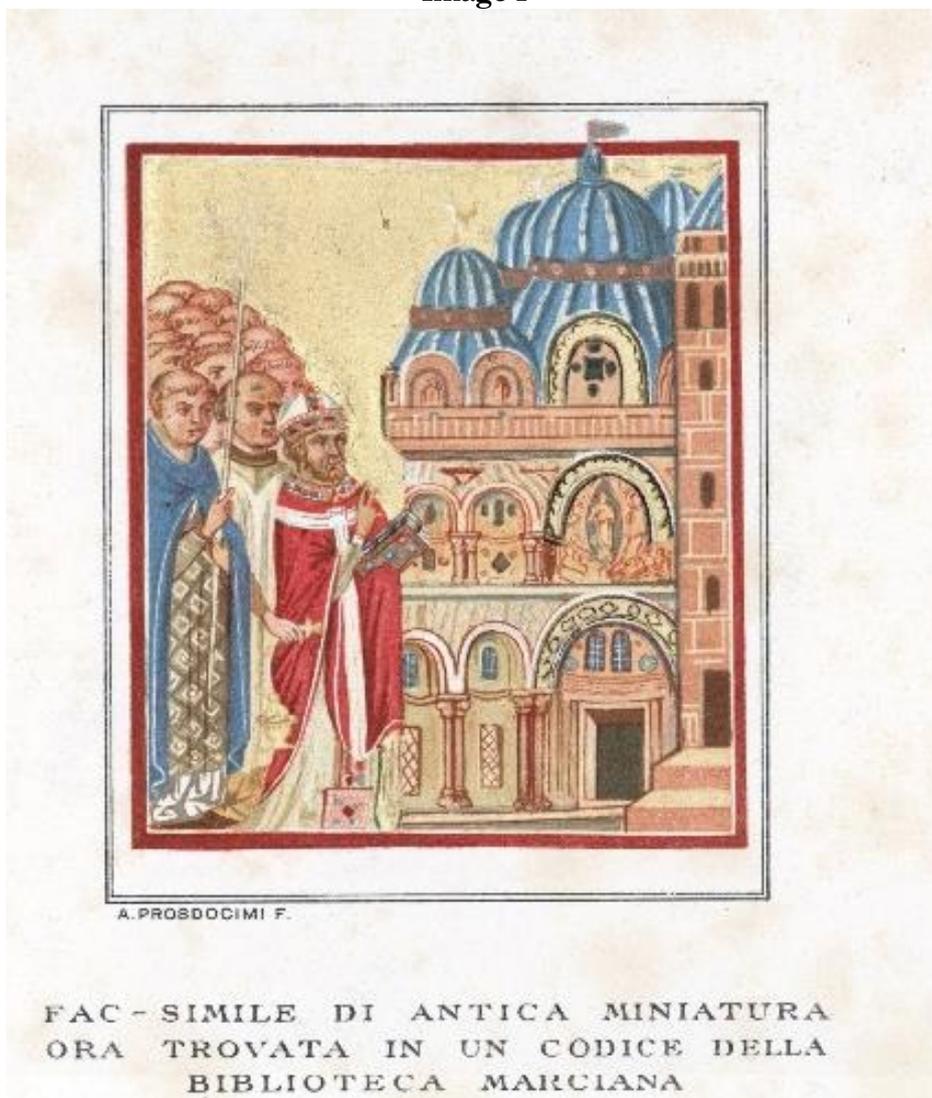
<sup>14</sup> DALE, E. A., Thomas. This author said that in the thirteenth century the church was “complete with the bronze horses and marble spoils of Constantinople”; these are visible in Gentile Bellini's painting of the “Procession of the Relics of the True Cross in Piazza San Marco” painted in 1496 for the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista. The painting is now in Galleria dell' Accademia, Venice. See DALE, E. A., Th. “Pictorial Narratives of the Holy Land and the Myth of Venice in the



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**Image 1**



In dedicatione ecclesie beati Marci/ The consecration of the church of San Marco, in Biblioteca Marciana.<sup>15</sup>

It is already of notoriety that this is also the year when, according to some texts, as for instance the Cronacain lingua francese dale origini al 1275, St. Evangelist Mark's relics

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Atrium of San Marco". BÜCHSEL, Martin; Herbert KESSLER, and Rebecca MÜLLER (eds.). *Das Atrium von San Marco in Venedig*, 255; [247-269]; on the same page Dale reproduces Bellini's work.

<sup>15</sup> Prot. 1348, Missale, Lat. III, 111 (= 2116), f165v; fourteenth-century. The image is reproduced also in G. ORSONI et al. (eds.), *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*, p. 119; it is a part of fig. 13 on that page.



miraculously appeared out of a pillar in the church,<sup>16</sup> after being considered lost not long subsequent to their arrival from Alexandria in 828. Another version of the story relates that actually the body of the saint was rediscovered on the 25th of June, 1094 by Vitale Faliero/Falier Dodoni (ruler between December 1084 and December 1095).<sup>17</sup>

In a wonderful piece, Fabio Barry speaks about another (later) “apparition” legend and he thinks this is the invention of the ruler Ranieri Zeno, 1253-1268.<sup>18</sup> His argument is not very strong with regard to the story being Zeno’s invention, but makes a good case that it may have been used by him for his own purposes.<sup>19</sup> It is probable that the legend

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<sup>16</sup> DA CANAL, Martino. *Les estoires de Venise: Cronaca veneziana in lingua francese dale origini al 1275*. ed. and trans. A. Limentani, *Civiltà veneziana*, Fonti e testi 12, 3rd ser. 3, Florence: Leo S. Olschki Publisher, 1972, pp. 217-219; MONTICOLO, Giovanni, “L’Apparition Sancti Marci ed i suoi manoscritti”. in *Nuovo Annali Veneto* 9, no. 1 (1895): p. 111 [111-177]. There are three main versions of the story: the first, dating to the twelfth century, was compiled by Di Zenone, the Abbot of San Nicolò del Lido, the second exists in a manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale Vaticana, cod. Lat. Z. 356 (thirteenth-fourteenth century), and the third (which uses Andrea DANDOLO’s *Cronaca breve*) dates from the fourteenth century. The original manuscripts of the first and third versions have been lost. See also MC CLEARY, Nelson. “Note storiche et archeologiche sul testo della Translatio S. Marci”. in *Memorie storiche forogiolesi XXVII-XXIX* (1931-33), pp. 223-224; for further discussion see also GEARY, Patrick J. *Furta sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978, pp.107-115; RENIER MICHIEL, Giustina. *Le origine delle feste veneziane*. Milan: Presso gli Editori degli Annali universali delle scienze e dell’industria, 1817, vol. 1, pp. 63-83, and MUIR, Edward, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 78-92. See also MURARO, Michelangelo. “Il pilastro del miracolo e il secondo programma dei mosaici marciani”. in *Arte Veneta*, XXIX, 1975, 60-65; O. DEMUS, “Bemerkungen zu M. Muraro’s Pilastro del miracolo”, in MURARO, Michelangelo and David ROSAND (eds.). *Interpretazioni veneziane. Studi di storia dell’arte in onore di Michelangelo Muraro*. Venice: Arsenale editrice, 1984, 23-28; CESSI, Roberto, *L’apparition Sancti Marci dal 1094*; and DALE, E. A., Th. “Stolen Property: St. Mark’s First Venetian Tomb and the Politics of Communal Memory,” in VALDEZ DEL ALAMO, Elizabeth, and Carol STAMATIS PENDERGAST (eds.). *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, pp. 205-225.

<sup>17</sup> CESSI, Roberto. “L’apparition Sancti Marci dal 1094”. in *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, series 5, 65 (1964), pp. 113-115.

<sup>18</sup> BARRY, Fabio, “Dissecta membra: Ranieri Zeno, the Imitation of Constantinople, the Spolia Style, and Justice at San Marco”, in MAGUIRE, Henry and Robert S. NELSON (eds.). *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*. Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010, [pp. 7-62], p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> Also Demus and other researchers comment on this later “invention”, or “apparition” legend and connect it with Ranieri Zeno; see DALE, E. A., Th., “Inventing a Sacred Past: Pictorial Narratives of St. Mark the Evangelist in Aquileia and Venice, ca. 1000-1300”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48, 1994, 85-103 [53-104.]



of the apparition of the saint's relics from a pillar in the basilica dedicated to him was not the creation of a specific person in a particular moment, but rather the result of a process of syncretism (there have been similar cases throughout human, especially Venetian history,<sup>20</sup> and relics revealing themselves from columns have been mentioned before, one even in connection to the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Constantinople).

Stories involving saints and pilasters were common around the Mediterranean of earlier periods (especially in Syria and the territories of contemporary Turkey), and they originate in the choice of some fourth century hermits (later sanctified) to dwell on them – hence their generic name 'the Pole Dwellers' or 'Stylites'.<sup>21</sup> The most known of these recluses are three called Symeon (The Elder c. 388-459),<sup>22</sup> the Young (521-597),<sup>23</sup> and

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<sup>20</sup> Various legends about saints and about the movements of their relics can be found, for example, in MONTICOLORO, Giovanni. "L'<Inventio> e <Translatio> dei Santi Ermagora e Fortunato nel cod. Marc. Lat. X. 37 [3761; i. e. IX, 27 (2797)]", *Nuovo Annali Veneto*, III (1892), 132-139, [117-156] (Inventio) e 140-148 (Translatio) according to ms. Marc. Lat. IX, 27 (2797) as well as pp. 149-156 (Translatio and Inventio in Pietro da Chioggia Legendae) according to ms. Barb. Lat. 714 and ms. Marc. Lat. IX, 19 (2946); Monk of Lido, "Historia de translatione Magni Nicolai", *Recueil des historiens des croisades: historiens occidentaux*, Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belle-Lettres, 1872-1906, vols. 1-5, vol. 5, 1906, 259-264; Monk of St. George, "Translatio corporis beatissimi Pauli martyris de Constantinopolis Venetias", in Riant, Paul (ed.). *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae*. Geneva, 1877-1978, vols. 1-2, reprint Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2004, vol. 1, pp. 141-149.

<sup>21</sup> MIGNE, J.-P., PG 86, pt. II, 3216-20; SCHAFF, Philip (ed.), "St. Symeon and the Pillar Saints", in *History of the Christian Church*. vol. 3: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity. A.D. 311-600. chapter 4, section 37; CAMERON, Averil, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395-700*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993, pp. 61, 73; COZZA-LUZI, Giuseppe. "St. Symeon the Young". in *Nova PP. Bibliotheca* VIII, 3, Rome, 1871, pp. 4-156; BROWN, Peter. "The rise and function of the holy man in late antiquity". *JRS* 61 (1971): pp. 80-101, reprinted with additions in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1982, pp. 103-152, etc.

<sup>22</sup> There is still a sanctuary at Qalat Siman in Syria, where a great church with an adjoining monastery and other buildings surrounded the column on the top of which St. Symeon the Stylite had lived for more than thirty years. See ASHBROOK HARVEY, Susan. "The sense of a stylite: perspectives on Simeon the Elder". *Vigiliae christianae* 42 (1988): pp. 376-394; MILBURN, Robert. *Early Christian Art and Architecture*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif., 1988, pp. 126-129; A. CAMERON, *The Mediterranean World*, p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> Symeon the Young, St. had his pillar on the Wondrous Mountain near the city of Antioch; A. CAMERON. *Mediterranean World*. p. 73. She reproduces a pottery pilgrim token (eulogia) showing St. Symeon Stylites the Younger on his pillar, p. 77, plate 5. See also COZZA-LUZI, Giuseppe. "St. Symeon the Young", in *Nova PP. Bibliotheca*. VIII, 3, Rome (1871): pp. 4-156.



‘The third’ (fifth century); one John (fifth century), and one Daniel (d. 493).<sup>24</sup> They are still revered in the area in which they lived and much beyond that, and celebrated in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Barry recognises that in the Middle Ages sacred remnants were hidden in various parts of churches in “perhaps all Europe”.<sup>25</sup> He gives some examples, for instance, that at Monte Cassino, built between 1066 and 1070, where the remains of ‘the holy martyrs’ John, Paul, Nicander, Marcian and anonymous others were placed with due ceremony in bronze jars within the capitals of individual columns of the basilica at the time of its construction.<sup>26</sup>

As late as 1576, a casket with the relics of Saint Severinus was rediscovered in a column in the church of San Severino al Monte.<sup>27</sup> Some of the bones and objects connected with saints and that are kept in a reliquary or recipient which could fit in a small space at the bottom or the top of a pillar left empty for such a purpose, are the focus of the literature Barry cites in the context of his discussion.<sup>28</sup> He is intrigued that the Venetian accounts refer to a column that is supposed to have been hewed out in order to allow for the interment of the evangelist’s body in its entirety. What, expectedly, also perplexes him is the fact that even though St. Mark was buried in the church once and has always been there, so many tales were created about his relics.

The reality is that none of the chronicles affirm with certainty that the column was hollow; also none says that what revealed itself from within the Venetian pillar was an entire body. It is true that such a detail could be inferred from *Les estoires de Venise*, but the hollowness is not explicitly mentioned; that was the assumption of the contemporary researcher, and in any case the respective text does not single out St. Mark’s basilica with respect to the way its relics came out; as I remarked, similar apparitions have been recorded. (Today the cathedral in the lagoon of the Adriatic Sea still contains a column considered as and called the *Pilastro del Miracolo*, despite the fact that it is not the

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<sup>24</sup> VELIMIROVIC, Nikolai. *The Prologue of Ohrid: Lives of Saints, Hymns, Reflections and Homilies for Every Day of the Year* (written in 1928), vols. 1-2, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press. Daniel was a disciple of the first Symeon and lived on a pillar near Constantinople for thirty-three years; CAMERON. *Mediterranean World*. p. 73.

<sup>25</sup> BARRY, F. “Dissecta membra”. p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> MARSICANUS, Leo. *Chronica monasterii Casinensis*. edited by Hartmut Hoffmann, Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1980, p. 401 (Chron. 3. 29).

<sup>27</sup> PACIARONI, Raoul, *Il politico sanseverinate di Niccolò Alunno*, Città di San Severino Marche: Coop. di Solidarietà Berta 80, 1993, pp. 33-41.

<sup>28</sup> Other publications in n. 149 of BARRY’s article tell similar stories and uphold similar notions as those just mentioned in the body of our text immediately above.



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original column). Whatever the case with respect to the pillar that was supposed to have accommodated St. Mark's relics, the story of their rediscovery has indeed been deployed by Zeno to aggrandise himself without his inventing it in 1260s.

As is known, there have been three churches on the site or near where the cathedral lies today.<sup>29</sup> The most important document about the foundation of the first of them is the will of Doge Justinian Partecipacius/Giustiniano Partecipazio (d. 829), preserved in a manuscript from the fourteenth century.<sup>30</sup> This first building was replaced by a new one in 832, and that was constructed on the site where the basilica is today; from the same ninth century dates the first bell tower. The new church was burned in a rebellion in 976, rebuilt in 978, and again in 1063 to form the basis of the present basilica.<sup>31</sup>

As mentioned, it had its consecration – the most significant in a series – in 1084, when Doge Vitale Faliero is said to have discovered the holy relict. The building also

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<sup>29</sup> The first St. Mark Church was a temporary building within the Doge's Palace (actually nearby it, on the territory of the nunnery of Saint Zacharia), erected in 828 when Venetian merchants allegedly stole the supposed relics of Mark the Evangelist from Alexandria.

<sup>30</sup> The will says: "quidquid exinde remanserit de lapidibus et quidquid circa hanc petram jacet de casa Theophilato de Torcello hedificentur basilica beati Marci evangeliste, sicut supra imperavimus."/"From the stones left from Casa Theophylact of Torcello [after it became ruined] and on the same rock it was ordered that Basilica of St. Mark the Evangelist be built"; my translation. The fourteenth century document has been printed in a complete form in GLORIA, Andrea. *Codice diplomatico padovano, dal secolo sesto a tutto l'undicesimo, Deputazione veneta di storia patria*, Venice, 1877, vol. 1, p. 12 f. and CESSI, R. (ed.). *Documenti relativi alla storia di Venezia anteriori all mille*, vol. 1, Secoli V-IX, Padua, 1942, p. 93. It has also been published in an abbreviated form in *La Ducale Basilica. Documenti [Documenti per la storia dell'augusta ducale Basilica di San Marco in Venezia: dal nono secolo sino alla fine del decimo ottavo dall'Archivio di Stato e dalla Biblioteca marciana in Venezia]*. Venice (?), 1886, p. 3, no. 20.

<sup>31</sup> See DEMUS. *The mosaic decorations of San Marco*. p. 3 and (with FORLATI, Ferdinando). *The Church of San Marco in Venice: History, Architecture, Sculpture*. University of Chicago Press for Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D. C., Dumbarton Oaks 6, 1960, 67-69, 88-100; DEMUS (with a contribution by KLOOS, R. M.). *The mosaic of San Marco in Venice: The eleventh and twelfth centuries*. Washington, D. C. and London: University of Chicago Press for Dumbarton Oaks, 1984, vol. 1; DEMUS, Otto and Maria ANDALORO. *Basilica Patriarchale in Venezia. San Marco. I Mosaici. Le Iscrizioni. La Pala D'Oro*. Milano: Fabbri Editori, 1991; DEMUS, Otto; Wladimiro DORIGO; Antonio NIERO, and Guido PEROCCO. *Patriarchal Basilica in Venice. San Marco. The Mosaics. The History. The Lighting*, Milan: Fabbri, 1990; DEMUS O. (with H. L. KESSLER) (eds.). *The mosaic decorations of San Marco, Venice*. and the other works he published on San Marco; for other periods see especially DEMUS' study *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984, which has 4 volumes. See also DA VILLA URBANI, Maria. *La Basilica di San Marco e la pala d'oro*. Venice: Storti Edizioni, 2001; VIANELLO, Sabina (ed.), *Le chiese di Venezia*, Rome: Electa, 1993.



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incorporates a low tower (now housing St. Mark's Treasure). It is very plausible that the presbytery was separated from the nave by an altar screen formed by columns because only 21 years after the above-mentioned consecration, the Pala d'Oro made by Byzantine masters was placed on it.<sup>32</sup> Before the Golden Cloth was there, perhaps icons as the plaque of gold (c. 1050-1100) found in the rood-loft of the Assumption of Mary church on the neighbouring island of Torcello (fig. 2) decorated this partition board. In today's San Marco eight red marble columns crowned with a high Crucifix and statues by Pier Paolo and Jacobello Dalle Masegne from the late fourteenth century divide the altar from the nave.

**Image 2**



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<sup>32</sup> Pala d'Oro [The Golden Cloth] is a masterpiece of Byzantine craftsmanship, originally designed for an antependium. It was ordered from Constantinople by Doge Ordelafo Falier in 1102 and completed in 1105. Sergio Bettini, "Venice, the Pala d'Oro, and Constantinople", in BUCKTON, David (ed.), *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, and Milan: Olivetti, 1984, pp. 35-64. See also DA VILLA URBANI, Maria. *La Basilica di San Marco e la pala d'oro*, Venice: Storti Edizioni, 2005-2009, pp. 64-65, and VIANELLO, Sabina (ed.). *Le chiese di Venezia*. Rome: Electa, 1993.



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Plaque from the church of the Assumption of Mary, Torcello.<sup>33</sup>

Barry comments on the architecture and decoration of the three churches: “From the moment, in 828, that Venice abducted the remains of the apostle Mark from Alexandria, the construction and adornment of San Marco became an exercise in authentication by appropriation. Although the new palatine chapel built to house the saint’s body had begun as an imitation of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, it was rebuilt in the image of the Apostoleion in Constantinople, where Constantine’s dynasty had been laid to rest alongside the bodies of the apostles.”<sup>34</sup> We shall comment on this church later.

Along the same lines as those pursued above by Barry, Jonathan Shepard draws the reader’s attention that, “San Marco was, according to an early twelfth-century Venetian source, ‘a skillful construction entirely similar to ... [the church] of the Twelve Apostles’ in Constantinople”.<sup>35</sup> Demus also explicitly affirms “It has been known for a long time, indeed since the time of its construction, that the third church of San Marco, of the eleventh century, followed the model of the Constantinopolitan church; but it is only as a result of Forlati’s conclusions [to which we shall refer further in the article] that a similar relationship can be assumed for the first shrine of the Evangelist”.<sup>36</sup> Shepard explains why that was the case thus, “In appropriating salient attributes of a politically and spiritually charged Constantinopolitan monument, the Venetian leadership was asserting its own legitimacy under heavenly protection. The visual vocabulary of Constantinople was simultaneously saluted and subverted, a common enough approach among the most developed acquisitional societies toward a superordinate center.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The plaque represents a full-length figure of the Virgin and Child like the original in Constantinople, and has an inscription in Greek: ‘Mother of God strengthen thy servant Philip the bishop’; no other information about this prelate has come to us. Today the object is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London [Medieval and Renaissance, room 8, case 8]; Embossed copper-gilt; height: 21.2 cm, width: 14.2 cm, depth: 0.8 cm, weight: 0.16 kg, Italo-Byzantine (Venice); Museum (Inventory) number 818-1891]. The museum’s catalogue specifies that the plaque was probably made for an altar.

<sup>34</sup> BARRY, “Dissecta membra”, p. 7. See also his source: DEMUS, *The Church of San Marco in Venice: History, Architecture, Sculpture*. DOP, 1960, pp. 67-69, 88-100, and also DOWNEY, Glanville, “The Builder of the Original Church of the Apostles at Constantinople: A Contribution to the Criticism of the ‘Vita Constantini’ Attributed to Eusebius”. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 6 (1951): 51-80; MANGO, Cyril, “Constantine’s Mausoleum and the Translation of Relics.” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83 (1990): 51-61, and DINDORF, Ludwig August (ed.). *Chronicon Paschale, The Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*. Bonn, 1832, p. 559.

<sup>35</sup> SHEPARD, J. “Imperial outliers: building and decorative works”. p. 381.

<sup>36</sup> DEMUS. *The Church of San Marco in Venice*, p. 67.

<sup>37</sup> SHEPARD. “Imperial outliers: building and decorative works”. p. 381.



Demus believes that if the above-mentioned eleventh century consecration of the Venetian basilica “would [...] have concerned the main altar”, then “it may mean that the first decoration of the main apse was completed in 1084”, and if this is so it must have commenced earlier.<sup>38</sup> According to information from early chronicles as that of Zorzi Dolfin,<sup>39</sup> which seems to be supported by the literature mentioned earlier in the article, Domenico Selvo (doge in 1071-1084) had commissioned artists from “around the world” (more precisely, based on the style of their work, the selection process concerned the employment of Byzantines) to finish the decorative programme in time for this event.<sup>40</sup>

But, as Demus indicates, some of these masters were already in the area – involved, for instance, in renovating the above-mentioned church on the island of Torcello. Comparison of the mosaics completed by the decorators of St. Mark’s main porch with Byzantine mosaics of known age indicates “that the San Marco figures date from the last three decades of the 11th century, perhaps even as early as about 1070 [...] Paleographically, the inscriptions can be divided into two groups. The older one can most likely be dated between 1060 and 1099.”<sup>41</sup> The style in which the Venetian mosaics

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<sup>38</sup> DEMUS. *The mosaic decorations of San Marco*. p. 3; here the author mentions a chronicle which gives 1063 as the date of this new beginning, but he does not provide any other detail. See also PAPACOSTAS, “The medieval progeny of the Holy Apostles”. p. 387.

<sup>39</sup> ZORZI/Giorgio Dolfin (1396-1458), *Cronicha dela nobil cità de Venetia et dela sua provintia et destretto (origini – 1458)*. This is ms. B.N.M. 764 (=8503, cl. VII ed. by CARACCIOLO ARICÒ, Angela and Chiara FRISON, Venice: Centro Cicogna, 2007-2009, 2 vols. In the chronicle, Dolfin makes his famous statement that Domenico Selvo “se lavorava de adornarla de le più magnifiche collone che potassero trovar et mandono a cerchar per tutto el mondo”/ “laboured to adorn it with the most magnificent columns that could be found, and he sent out in search throughout the world”. See also DEMUS, *The Mosaics of San Marco*. vol. 1, p. 292.

<sup>40</sup> DEMUS. *Mosaics of San Marco*. vol. 1, p. 292.

<sup>41</sup> DEMUS, O., W. DORIGO, A. NIERO, and G. PEROCCO. *Patriarchal Basilica in Venice. San Marco*. p. 19. The newest bibliography on this topic is ANDREESCU-TREADGOLD, Irina “L’ingresso a San Marco nell’ XI secolo: I primi misaici del Portal Grande”. in VIO, Ettore (ed.). *San Marco. La basilica di Venezia: arte, storia, conservazione*. vol. 1 (out of three), Venice: Marsilio, 2019, pp. 248-269 (see also I. ANDREESCU-TREADGOLD, “I primi mosaicisti a San Marco”. in POLACCO, Renato (ed.), *Storia dell’arte marciana: l’architettura*, Atti Del Convegno Internazionale Di Studi: Venezia, 11-14 Ottobre 1994/The Proceedings of the the internat.onal conference of Venetian studies, Venice: Marsilio, 1997, pp. 87-104), and MASON, Mara. “I primi mosaici della basilica e l’elaborazione della leggenda marciana. Considerazioni sullo stile e l’iconografia”. in VIO, Ettore (ed.). *San Marco. La basilica di Venezia: arte, storia, conservazione*. vol. 1 (out of three), Venice: Marsilio, 2019, pp. 226-247.



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assigned by Demus to the eleventh century were executed has its closest parallel in the Greek mosaics accomplished before 1050 in the narthex of Hosios Loukas (those depict the Apostles);<sup>42</sup> the Pentecost scene found in this church is represented in fig. 14 here.

Liz James opens to debate whether it is certain that the artists who ornamented the basilica were from the Empire and questions the connection between their ethnicity and their craft. While it is true that she refers preponderantly to a period beyond the eleventh century, her concerns have a larger validity: “In an Italian context, the question of whether mosaicists were Greek or Venetian or generically Italian seems to come down, in scholarly analysis, to what bit of mosaic is being discussed.

The implication is always that the Byzantine-looking mosaics are the work of Byzantine mosaicists and the others are not. This may not be the best way to consider the question. Documentary evidence for Greek mosaicists at San Marco is almost non-existent. Renato Polacco claims that documents state that doge Orselo employed a mosaicist from Constantinople. Demus does not mention this, but says that later chronicles relate that Selvo brought a mosaic master from Constantinople. In 1153, a Marcus Grecus is recorded in documents as a mosaicist but, as Demus indicates, there is no evidence as to whether or not he worked on the mosaics of San Marco.”<sup>43</sup>

### **III. *Apostoleion* /The Church of the Apostles (sixth century – 1040) as a model for San Marco church**

Even more recent opinions, like that of Shepard, emphasize that “according to later chroniclers Cantarini’s successor had a mosaics master brought from Constantinople.”<sup>44</sup> The researcher supports the idea about such contributions thus, “That Byzantine emperors occasionally sent craftsmen, builders and decorators to build or embellish

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<sup>42</sup> DEMUS, O., W. DORIGO, A. NIERO, and G. PEROCCO, *Patriarchal Basilica in Venice. San Marco*. p. 18.

<sup>43</sup> JAMES, Liz, “Mosaic Matters. Questions of Manufacturing and Mosaicists in the Mosaics of San Marco, Venice” (pp. 227- 243), in MAGUIRE and NELSON, *San Marco. Byzantium and the Myths of Venice*. p. 232. The works of the authors she mentions are DEMUS, *Mosaics of San Marco*, vol. 1, p. 292; POLACCO, R. “Lo stile dei mosaici medievali di Venezia”. in RIZZARDI, Clementina (ed.), *Venezia e Bisanzio: Aspetti della cultura artistica bizantina da Ravenna a Venezia (V-XIV secolo)*, Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere, 2005, p. 457, 458, 460, 465, and I. ANDREESCU-TREADGOLD. “L’ingresso a San Marco nell’ XI secolo: I primi mosaici del Portal Grande”. pp. 248-269.

<sup>44</sup> SHEPARD. “Imperial outliers”, p. 381.



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monumental structures for the use of other regimes is known well enough.” And he explains why: “The ambivalence of this grand gesture is consistent with the ‘principles and methods’ of Byzantine diplomacy.”<sup>45</sup> He also indicates that “The Byzantine government was aware of the building work on San Marco, whose chief architect [was] probably hailed from Constantinople”.<sup>46</sup> Shepard also reminds us that the Byzantine emperor gave twenty pounds of gold for the church every year from 1082 onwards.<sup>47</sup>

C. Freestone, M. Bimson, D. Buckton, L. James, and other specialists explored and documented the production of tesserae locally in the period under investigation here.<sup>48</sup> As a conclusion to their efforts James states: “Whether the Venetians possessed the skill of making colored glass in the eleventh century is uncertain. If they did not, then the easiest way to get glass for the manufacture of tesserae would have been to obtain already coloured glass as cakes, or as sheets or even as tesserae.”<sup>49</sup> James also considers that by the twelfth century the Venetians could have been producing their own coloured glass tesserae; she justifies her opinion using the results of analysis carried out at San Marco by a team from the British Museum.

The specialists from London have found out that these decorative pieces [tesserae] at the Venetian cathedral were made from a typical Western European glass – high potash, lime, and silica – in contrast to the soda-lime-silica glass being manufactured in the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, it seems that the chances are that the masters who adorned San Marco after the twelfth century were locals and that those who worked before that time indeed came from Byzantium – this is a logical conclusion; some of the latter might have taken on apprentices who lived in Venice. There is also the possibility that Venetian people were sent to Byzantium to learn the craft of making and laying mosaic. This is actually Demus’s opinion expressed in the context of discussing the authorship of the decoration in churches situated in the Blue Lagoon, with special reference to the century under scrutiny here. He posits that “[Venetian] artists seem to have received their training in Byzantium around the middle of the eleventh century”.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 372.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>48</sup> L. JAMES. “Mosaic Matters”. p. 232.

<sup>49</sup> I. C. FREESTONE; M. BIMSON, and D. BUCKTON. “Compositional Categories of Byzantine Glass Tesserae.” in *Anales du II congrès de l’association internationale pour l’histoire du verre*, 1988, Basel, 1988, pp. 271-280.

<sup>50</sup> DEMUS et al. *Patriarchal Basilica in Venice*. pp. 18-19.



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New findings do not contradict the idea that the respective one hundred years [the eleventh century] was a period of fruitful exchanges between Venice and Constantinople. On the contrary, they offer additional evidence for the view that during this particular time mosaicists, craftsmen, and also artistic motifs circulated between the two and across the Mediterranean at large. The most famous outcome of such interactions are (according to Demus, Barry, Shepard, and other scholars) the already stated similarities between San Marco and the church of the Apostles in the Byzantine capital. As is known, it was and it is still widely believed that labourers from the latter city who participated in the construction of the Venetian house of worship, brought with them the model of the building [of the Apostoleion] from Byzantium to serve as inspiration for that dedicated to St. Mark.<sup>51</sup>

Whatever the artists and their patrons' ethnicity, their achievement was of high quality and therefore it was praised as such. The aforementioned *Cronaca veneziana in lingua francese*, which marks the event of the eleventh-century consecration of San Marco, states: "And when they had constructed a church so beautiful, the Venetians decided and approved that it should be enriched every year in perpetuity, and this they do".<sup>52</sup> But how would this third building in San Mark's Square have appeared? From the miniature of the consecration one can see that it had five domes, with the central one larger than the other four, just as did the Constantinopolitan church which initiated, at least in part, its construction. Regarding its interior, one can make informed deductions rather than offer a precise description. Conjectures can be formulated on the basis of comparisons with the inside of contemporary churches as described in the few extant sources.

Because, as noticed, most of these associate architecturally and decoratively the building of San Marco with that of the Twelve Apostles, firstly more information about the latter is necessary. The Apostoleion was erected by Justinian I (527-565) in the form of a cross in 550 as a replacement for the original church founded by Constantius II (337-361); it was constructed in two stages,<sup>53</sup> and was the burying place of many emperors until 1028.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> DEMUS, "Preface", in O. DEMUS (with a contribution by R. M. KLOOS). *The mosaic of San Marco in Venice: The eleventh and twelfth centuries*. Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984, vol. 1, ix; O. DEMUS and H. L. KESSLER (eds.), *The mosaic decorations of San Marco*. p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> "Et de lors en avant li Venesiens orent fait si bele yglise, si lorent que ele fust chacun an amende a tosjors mais, et ensi le font", DA CANAL, Martino. *Les estoires de Venise*. see footnote 4.

<sup>53</sup> DOWNEY, Glanville, "The Builder of the Original Church of the Apostles at Constantinople. A contribution to the criticism of the Vita Constantini attributed to Eusebius", in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 6 (1951), pp. 51-80. A debate took place as to who had the initiative concerning the



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There is a reproduction in Codex Graecus Vaticanus 1162 (written in the first half of the twelfth century by Jacobus Kokkinobaphos in Constantinople<sup>55</sup> believed to be of this church: it shows five domes – the central one larger than the others. Gregory Nazianzen (329-390) refers to the church as “the seat of Christ’s disciples/having been hewn into four parts”.<sup>56</sup> Michael Maas also states that Justinian’s church was cruciform and had many domes.<sup>57</sup> The second Apostoleion church, built over the ruins of the first one, has the same cruciform shape according to many researchers<sup>58</sup> – among them the already mentioned Dark and Özgümüş.

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various constructions of the Apostoleion. Mesarites states clearly that Constantius, Constantine’s son built the Mausoleum, although it has been argued convincingly (following Eusebius) that Constantine himself erected the rotunda as a free-standing structure, and the original church, which Justinian rebuilt, was constructed later by Constantius. The Mausoleum of Constantine the Great is the rotunda adjoining the apse at the eastern end of the church. Justinian’s mausoleum is the cross-shaped structure joining the apse and northern transept.

<sup>54</sup> SHEPARD., “Imperial outliers: building and decorative works”, p. 381.

<sup>55</sup> HENNESSY, Cecily, “The Stepmum and the Servant: the Stepson and the Sacred Vessel”. Liz JAMES and Antony EASTMOND (eds.). *Wonderful Things. Byzantium through its Art*. Ashgate, Farnham 2013, 79 [79-98].

<sup>56</sup> GREGORY NAZIANXEN, “XVI. Somnium. Anastasiae”, 59-60, in *Carminum Liber II. Historica. Poemata de Seipso*, PG 37, 1258. See also CONSTANTINE of RHODES, “Poème en vers iambiques”. published in LEGRAND, Émile. “Apostoleion. Description des oeuvres d’art et de l’église des Saints Apotres de Constantinople”. in *Revue des Études Grecques*, vol. 9 (1896), pp. 32-65; LANSDOWNE, J. “Echoes of the Fourth-century Apostoleion in Late Antique Italia Annoraria”. in *The Byzantinist, the Newsletter of the Oxford Byzantine Society*, Issue 1 (Spring) 2011, 4-5, 15, and L. JAMES (ed.). CONSTANTINE of RHODES, *On Constantinople and the Church of the Holy Apostles*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016 (first edition Ashgate, 2012); with a new translation of the Greek text by Ioannis Vassis.

<sup>57</sup>MAAS, Michael, *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 63.

<sup>58</sup> HEISENBERG, August. *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche. Zwei Basiliken Konstantins. Untersuchungen zur Kunst und Literatur des ausgehenden Altertums*. Leipzig, 1908, vol. 2, p. 200. Other writings on the Apostoleion are by PROCOPIUS (ca. 554/560), *On Buildings* 1.1.74-77, trans. by H. B. DEWING and G. DOWNEY, Loeb Classical Library 343, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., 1940, vol. 7; Nikolaos Mesarites, “Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople”, Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, n.s. 47.6, 1957, 855-923, K. WULZINGER, “Die Apostelkirche und ihre die Mehmedije zu Konstantinopel”, *Byzantion* 7 (1932), pp. 7-10; G. DOWNEY. “The Builder of the Original Church of the Apostles at Constantinople”; JANIN, Raymond. *La Géographie Ecclésiastique de l’Empire Byzantin*. The 1st part “Le Siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat Oecuménique”. JANIN, Raymond. *La Géographie Ecclésiastique de l’Empire Byzantin*. The 1st part “Le Siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat Oecuménique”. Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 1953, vol. 3, 1953, pp. 46-55; STRUBE, Christine. *Die westliche Eingangseite der Kirchen von Konstantinopel in justinianischer Zeit. Architektonische und quellenkritische*



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Some manuscripts from the Middle Ages contain miniatures thought to render the church in Constantinople. From among them, Richard Krautheimer is certain that the only one that really depicts the building is that existent in the Menologion of Basil II (fig. 3), which is an eleventh century Byzantine document that contains 430 miniatures and is kept now in the Vatican Library as Ms. Vat. Gr. 1613.<sup>59</sup>

**Image 3**



The return of the relics of St. John Chrysostom (c. 347- 407) to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.<sup>60</sup>

Regarding the rest of them, the image in fig. 4 below found in a codex that circulated in two very close variants, known today as Paris, Bibl. Nat. Ms. Gr. 1208 (with this image

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*Untersuchungen*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1973; WHARTON EPSTEIN, Ann, “The Rebuilding and Redecoration of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople”, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 23, 1982, 79-92; MÜLLER-WIENER, Wolfgang, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls, Wasmuth Tübingen*, 1977, pp. 405-411; KRAUTHEIMER, Richard (ed. with ĆURČIĆ). *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*. New Haven and London, 1986, pp. 241–242; MANGO, Cyril. *Studies on Constantinople*. Ashgate, Aldershot, 1994 (Studies V, VI and VII); DAGRON, Gilbert. *Naissance d'une capitale*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974, pp. 401-408, and MAJESKA, George. *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*. DOP 19, Washington D.C., 1982, p. 300. Demus refers to the Apostoleion indirectly when specifying, in *The mosaic decorations*, that San Marco “shared essential features with its sixth-century model” and implying thus that both churches had a “cruciform shape”, p. 5, and BARRY. “Dissecta membra”. p. 30, footnote 60.

<sup>59</sup> KRAUTHEIMER, R. “A Note on Justinian’s Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.” in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, Vatican City, 1964, vol. 2, pp. 265-270, esp. 268-269.

<sup>60</sup> The event took place sometimes during the office of Saint Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople (434-447). Miniature from the eleventh century Menologion of Basil II/Ms. Vat. Gr. 1613, fols. 121, 341, 353.

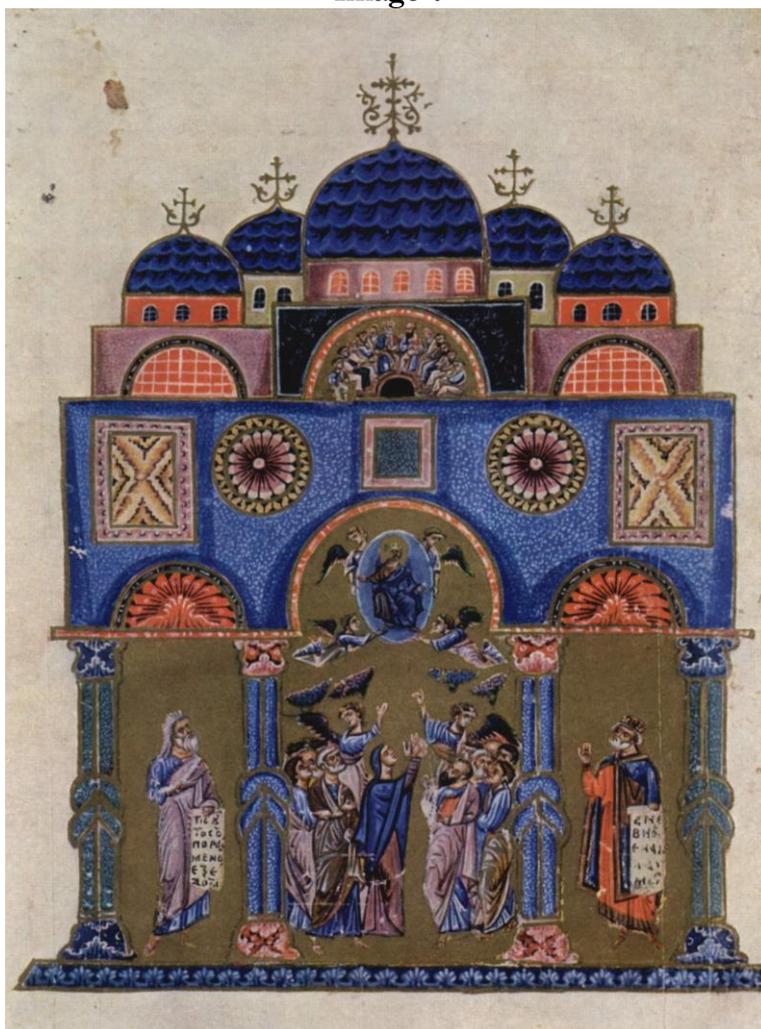


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on fol. 3v) and Ms. Vat. Gr. 1162 (image on fol. 2v), has constituted an object of debate as to whether it indeed represents the *Apostoleion*; in any case the church it depicts has five rooftops.<sup>61</sup>

**Image 4**



Ascension of Christ inside a church controversially regarded as representing the *Apostoleion* in Constantinople; the five cupolas are clearly visible.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> XYNGOPOULOS, Andreas. “Η προμέτοπις τῶν κωδικῶν βατικανοῦ 1161 καὶ Παρισινοῦ 1208.” Ἐπ. Ἐτ. Βυζ. Σπ. 12 (1937), pp. 158-178; R. KRAUTHEIMER. “A Note on Justinian’s Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople”. pp. 265-270. Basil Porphyrogenitus II lived between 958 and 1025, and was known in his time as Basil the Younger, to distinguish him from his ancestor Basil I the Macedonian. He belonged to the Macedonian dynasty and reigned from 10 January 976 to his death. He was nicknamed by later authors “the Bulgar-slayer” – Boulgaroktonos- for violently subjugating the tsardom of Bulgaria.



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Barry is sceptical that it reproduces the Twelve Apostles monument and opines that what the illustration contains “is less the portrait of an actual edifice than an ideogram of the holy and heavenly as a building”.<sup>63</sup> He reinforces his stand by paraphrasing Xyngopoulos’s claim that this does not depict the Apostoleion (and does not include the apostles within); certainly it shows an interior though.<sup>64</sup> In fact, it seems that the miniature represents a cross-section of a church, but effected in such a way as to allow for the domes to be visible; it seems more an artistic picture than a design made according to architectural norms.

Other visual accomplishments that are close in time, and look similar to the image accompanying *James’s Homilies* in fig. 4, also present a church with five tops; such instances are in Ms. Athens, Nat. Lib. 2759 (fig. 5), and Patmos, rol. 707 in the Monastery of St. John the Theologian. Ms. Athens, Nat. Lib. 2759 depicts Sts. Basil the Great and John Chrysostom celebrating the Liturgy with the help of four deacons. The images on Patmos, rol. 707 (second quarter of twelfth century, Constantinople) looks similar to the latter two; it shows St. Basil celebrating the Liturgy behind an altar with two deacons assisting him.<sup>65</sup> An argument that the miniatures within these latter manuscripts, as also that in fig. 4, could be representations of the Apostoleion would be the fact that they portray the two main Christian liturgists; they both served in Constantinople (though Basil only briefly), and this is where the church of the Twelve Apostles was located.

The excavations carried out by Ferdinando Forlati, who we mentioned at the outset of the paper, established a cruciform plan<sup>66</sup> for the first building of San Marco. It might have been a single-domed cross, given that some chronicles refer to it as to a construction modelled after the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.<sup>67</sup> Demus

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<sup>62</sup> Illumination from the manuscript of the Homilies on the Mother of God by James the Monk (Jakobos Kokkinobaphos), the first half of the twelfth century,<sup>62</sup> BNF, Ms. Gr.1208, fol. 3v ([Homélies de Jacques de Kokkinobaphos](#)). There is a close variant of this manuscript in Rome (BAV, Ms. Gr. 1162, fol. 2v); it is remarkable how clear this image is. I have used this source because the image is freely accessible on line under the *Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Generic* license.

<sup>63</sup> BARRY. “Dissecta membra”. p. 30.

<sup>64</sup> A. XYNGOPOULOS. “Η προμέτοπις τῶν κωδίκων βατικανοῦ 1161 Καὶ Παρισνοῦ 1208,” pp. 158-178; BARRY refers to XYNGOPOULOS in “Dissecta membra”. footnote 60 on p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> PEERS, Glenn, *Sacred Shock. Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium*, Pennsylvania University Press, University Park, P.A., 2004, p. 71.

<sup>66</sup> FORLATI, F. “Il primo San Marco”. in *Arte Veneta V*, 1951, pp. 70-85.

<sup>67</sup> DINDORF, L. A. (ed.). *Chronicon Paschale*. p. 559



indicates that *Chronicon Altinate* also claims this.<sup>68</sup> No research so far has reached a decisive conclusion on this aspect; but whatever number of domes the first church had, there are no reasons to believe that the subsequent buildings at that location did not have five cupolas, especially, as shown above, all representations we know, including those depicting the eleventh century consecration, have always exhibited five.

The illumination from the record concerning the Homilies on the Mother of God by Jakobos Kokkinobaphos constituted the basis of August Heisenberg's supposition that the *Apostoleion* was the model for San Marco from the point of view of marbling, as well as of other traits<sup>69</sup> but, as we already observed, that image does not seem to be sufficiently clear to entitle a conclusive view as to what kind of embellishment its outside walls had in the eleventh century. Within it no external revetment of the church is sufficiently observable, as Barry, following Richard Krautheimer, underlines.<sup>70</sup>

A lack of remarks about the external decoration of the *Apostoleion* is to be noticed in the narrations of early authors as Procopius (ca. 554/560) and Constantine of Rhodes (931/944).<sup>71</sup> That while the exteriors of other churches in Constantinople were described. For instance, Patriarch Photios praised the (re) decoration of Pharos Chapel done at the request of Emperor Michael III, 842-867.<sup>72</sup> (He even manages to slip in the subtle criticism that the decoration is too excessive considering the small size of the chapel; nevertheless he does not communicate the details of the embellishment<sup>73</sup>).

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<sup>68</sup> DEMUS, *The Church of San Marco in Venice: History, Architecture, Sculpture*, DOP, 1960, p. 64; on this page he mentions *Chronicon Altinate* (Venetum). See also Barry "Dissecta membra," p. 7; G. DOWNEY. "The Builder of the Original Church of the Apostles at Constantinople: A Contribution to the Criticism of the 'Vita Constantini' Attributed to Eusebius". *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 6 1951, 51-80; C. MANGO, "Constantine's Mausoleum and the Translation of Relics." *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83, 1990, pp. 51-61; DINDORF (ed.). *Chronicon Paschale*. p. 559.

<sup>69</sup> A. HEISENBERG. *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche, zwei Basiliken Konstantins: Untersuchungen zur Kunst und Literatur des ausgehenden Altertums*. Leipzig, 1908, vol. 2, p. 200.

<sup>70</sup> KRAUTHEIMER, R. "A Note on Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople." in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, vol. 2, Vatican City, 1964, 265-270, esp. 268-269.

<sup>71</sup> PROCOPIUS, *The Buildings* 1.1.74-77, Loeb translation; CONSTANTINE of RHODES. "Poème en vers iambiques".

<sup>72</sup> KALAVREZOU, Ioli, "Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court". in H. MAGUIRE (ed.). *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*. Dumbarton Oaks, 2004, p. 55; C. MANGO. *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453: Sources and Documents*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986, pp. 185-186.

<sup>73</sup> NECIPOĞLU, Nevra (ed.). *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*. Istanbul. Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 171-712.



There have existed an impressive number of churches which have been deemed to possess a similar plan to that of the Constantinopolitan structure<sup>74</sup> (in both its stages of construction); for instance, the Byzantine-inspired mid-eleventh century Canosa cathedral of San Sabino, some domed churches in Cyprus (Peristerona and Yeroskepou), Aquitania, and Apulia.<sup>75</sup> But after comparatively examining these and others, Tassos Papacostas concludes that only Apostoleion can be architecturally linked to San Marco, and that this is not the case with the other mentioned churches. Regarding the latter he estimates that, “Any similarities are almost certainly coincidental and not the result of a process of conscious imitation.

For reasons particular to each area (traditions concerning the process of building, prevalent church schemes, and structural considerations) it was deemed appropriate to cover church naves during the same period elsewhere too [...]. This is not to deny the unquestionable importance of the Holy Apostles. But the prestigious model was instrumental in determining the architectural scheme of San Marco, perhaps San Sabino and, indirectly, San-Front<sup>76</sup> only. [...] The lure of Constantinople and its apostolic shrine was certainly strong in the medieval world, and Venice constitutes the most potent case in point.”<sup>77</sup> In accord with this, Thomas A. Dale indicates that one can ascertain in San Marco: “a five dome Greek cross structure derived from the Apostoleion in Constantinople”; this within “the pre-existent architectural framework”.<sup>78</sup>

This whereas in a counter-point Barry draws attention to Xyngopoulos’s perception that the domes in the Twelve Apostles church and in St. Mark are differently placed. The latter author claims that the building represented in manuscripts as the Venetian basilica has minor domes over the corner bays (i.e. it has a quincunx plan), and not over the cruciform layout in the way the Apostoleion had them.<sup>79</sup> In any case, this latter argument

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<sup>74</sup> PAPACOSTAS, T. “The medieval progeny of the Holy Apostles”, pp. 386-405.

<sup>75</sup> PAPACOSTAS, T. “The medieval progeny of the Holy Apostles.”p. 401.

<sup>76</sup> San-Front church is in Périgueux, France; Demus in *The Church of San Marco in Venice*, pp. 95-96,

and Papacostas, “The medieval progeny of the Holy Apostles”, pp. 390-393, 404, among others, have written about it. It was erected a few decades after San Marco and the dispute was if its construction was done under Byzantine or Venetian influence.

<sup>77</sup> PAPACOSTAS, T. “The medieval progeny of the Holy Apostles”. p. 404.

<sup>78</sup> Th. E. A. DALE, “Sacred Space from Constantinople to Venice”. P. STEPHENSON (ed.), *The Byzantine World*, p. 406. [pp. 406-429].

<sup>79</sup> XYNGOPOULOS. “Η προμέτωπις τῶν κωδίκων Βατικανοῦ 1161 καὶ Παρισινοῦ1208.” pp. 158-178.



with regard to the position of the cupolas might help us to understand why Krautheimer drew the conclusion that, among a few, only the illustration of the church in Ms. Vat. Gr. 1613 is that of the Twelve Apostles; he does not refer to the way the domes were situated.

Images 5 and 6



Saints John Chrysostom and Basil celebrating the Liturgy.<sup>80</sup>

Even if the original schema was ‘redeployed’ to direct the mind to that particular Byzantine shrine, the fact that an ekphrasis written by Nicholas Mesarites in the twelfth century<sup>81</sup> only describes (as a “five colonnaded hall”) and praises the interior of the

<sup>80</sup> Ms. 2759, Nat. Lib. Athens, frontispiece (rotulus frontispiece on recto); Byzantine, twelfth century parchment; Vermion, section: 66 x 25.4 x 5.1 cm (26 x 10 x 2 in.); VEX.2014.2.73 in the exhibition at the Getty Center: [Heaven and Earth: Byzantine Illumination at the cultural crossroad](#); details re: [copyright permissibility](#). More about the scroll in H. MAGUIRE and R. S. NELSON (eds.). *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*. See also BARRY. “Dissecta membra”, p. 30.

<sup>81</sup> Nicholas [Nikolaos] MESARITES (c. 1163-?), the ekphrasis, i.e. the “Description of the Church of the Apostles at Constantinople” [written at some point between 1198 and 1203 and preserved in Cod. Ambrosianus gr. 350], in G. DOWNEY, (ed., trans., commentary, and Introduction),



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church, with no word about its exterior, could suggest that there is nothing significant about the latter to be highlighted; the church had simple brick walls, as some medieval churches extant around the Mediterranean display (figs. 20-21).

As one can observe, Krautheimer's view is in contradiction with what Demus, Grabar, Papacostas, and Shepard believe, and with what the archaeological discoveries made public by Forlati,<sup>82</sup> Dark, and Özgümüş prove.<sup>83</sup> Demus states that "the connections of San Marco with the Apostoleion in Constantinople, of which San Marco is, if not a copy, at least an imitation"<sup>84</sup> and, on an even stronger note, that "As early as 1100, the church was compared to the Apostoleion in Constantinople (now destroyed), and there is no doubt that San Marco shared essential features with its sixth-century model; the cruciform shape, five domes, barrel vaults, and four-legged piers."<sup>85</sup>

By using a particular element from the Venetian cathedral to support his opinion – the mosaic of the Ascension and its location in the main dome – Grabar offers a suggestion with respect to communalities in the internal decoration of the two churches. He considers that the respective religious scene in the church from Venice "Il s'agit sûrement d'une imitation directe d'un modèle byzantine, notamment d'un mosaïque de coupole des Sts. Apôtres de Constantinople."<sup>86</sup> And, as mentioned, the new archaeological findings referring to the church of the Apostles strengthen this view about the connection Apostoleion-St. Mark's; they also show that a few other Christian shrines, as for instance, those in figs. 6 and 7 below, were influenced by its plan of

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Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 47, Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1957, part 6, pp. 857-917. See also G. DOWNEY, "The Builder of the original church of the Apostles at Constantinople: A Contribution to the Criticism of the "Vita Constantini" attributed to Eusebius", Washington D. C., 2010: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Dumbarton Oaks Papers 54, 2000; and Nikolaos MESARITES. *Die Palastrerevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, Publisher: Würzburg, Stürtz, 1907; A. HEISENBERG., *Grabeskirche und Apostlekirche. Zwei Basiliken Konstantins. Untersuchungen zur Kunst und Literatur des ausgehenden Altertums*, Leipzig, 1908, vol. 2; and "Die Modestoslegende des Mesarites", in *Beiträge zur Gesch. Des Christl. Altertums und Der biz. Lit., Festgabe Albert Ehrhard*, Bonn: Schroeder, 1922, pp. 218-227.

<sup>82</sup> FORLATI, "Il primo San Marco", in *Arte Veneta V* (1951): pp. 70-85.

<sup>83</sup> K. DARK and F. ÖZGÜMÜŞ. "New evidence". pp. 393-413.

<sup>84</sup> DEMUS. "Preface" to *The mosaics of San Marco, Chicago and London*. 1984, vol. 1, p. ix; DEMUS, *The mosaic decorations of San Marco. Apostoleion*. p. 5.

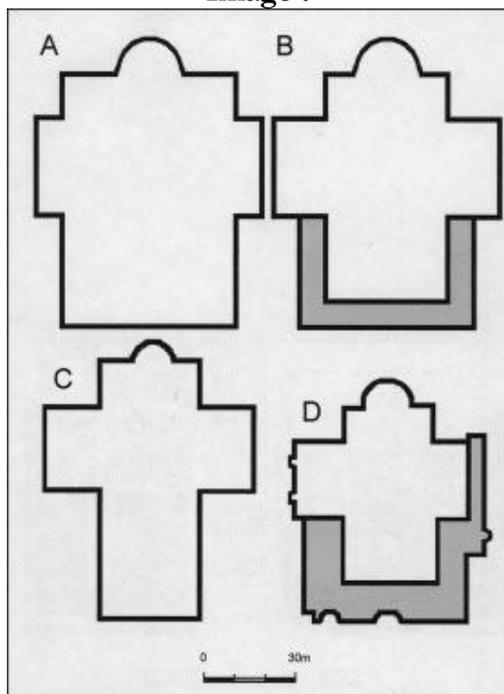
<sup>85</sup> DEMUS. *The mosaic decorations of San Marco*, p. 5. See also J. LANSDOWNE. "Echoes of the Fourth-century Apostoleion". 4 and all the material in footnote 15.

<sup>86</sup> GRABAR, André, *L'iconoclisme byzantine: Dossier archéologique*, Paris: Collège de France, Fondation Schlumberger pour les études byzantines, 1957, p. 256



construction<sup>87</sup> this fact partially contradicts Papacostas's opinion (on p. 19 of this article).

**Image 7**



Comparative outline plans of the Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantinople (a, b), St. John Church, Ephesus (c), and St Mark's (San Marco), Venice (d).<sup>88</sup>

Dark and Özgümüş explain the plans in figure 6 thus (I have slightly modified their description for the sake of clarity):

Plan A = Plan of the Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantinople – reconstructed on the basis of directly observable on-site evidence; east end conjectural;

Plan B = Plan of the Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantinople - reconstructed with a narrow chancel and an ambulatory. Alternatively, one could envisage side porticoes and a western narthex occupying the same space as the ambulatory;

<sup>87</sup> K. DARK and F. ÖZGÜMÜŞ, "New evidence...". pp. 408 and 410 (fig. 15, plan C).

<sup>88</sup> K. DARK, and F. ÖZGÜMÜŞ. "New evidence". p. 410, fig. 15. The authors use evidence from Fatih Camii.



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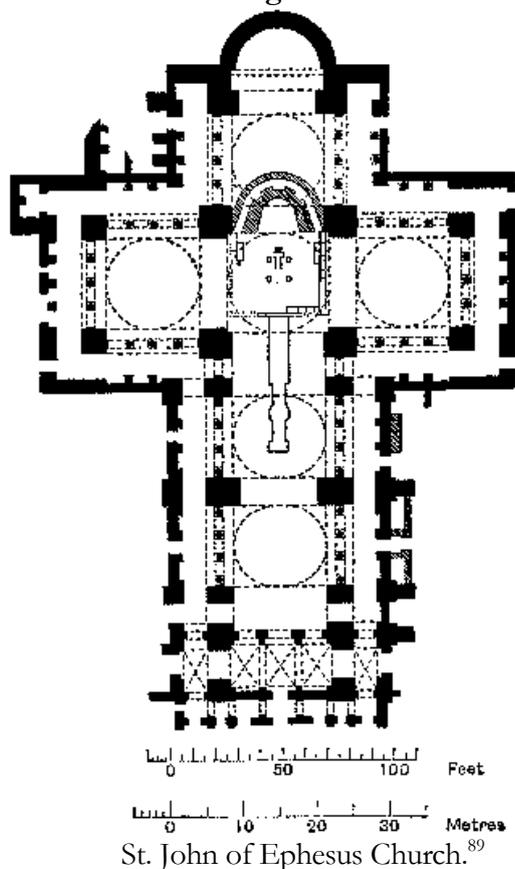
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Plan C = Outline plan of St John's, Ephesus;

Plan D = Outline plan of St Mark's (San Marco), Venice. The so-called 'Atrium' and the ambulatory area are shaded in order to make more evident the cruciform plan that exists at the core of the structure.

The authors mention in a parenthesis that the plans were drawn by K.R. Dark in 2001. They also say that the outline of St John Church in Ephesus is based on one by M. Büyükkolancı that follows H. Hörmann's indications, and that the outline of San Marco Cathedral in Venice is based on a plan by O. Demus. The plans of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople are reconstructed on the basis of evidence recorded in 2001. Procopius, in *On Buildings*, also emphasised the cruciform outline of St. John Church in Ephesus, as fig. 7 illustrates and its caption details.

Image 8



<sup>89</sup> PROCOPIUS, *On Buildings*, vol. 7, I iv; the plan of the sixth century building (the first building, erected in the fourth century above the tomb of St. John the Evangelist, had apparently only five



When Constantinople fell to the Ottomans in 1453, the Holy Apostles briefly became the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church. Three years later the edifice, which was in a dilapidated state, was abandoned by the Patriarch, and in 1461 it was pulled down by the Ottomans to make way for the Fatih Mosque which, as we have noted, is still on the site now,<sup>90</sup> albeit in a reduced size and in an eighteenth century form.<sup>91</sup>

Dark and Özgümüş did their research in the area around it; they say about their results: “Fieldwork in 2001 recorded walls pre-dating the fifteenth-century phase of the [Fatih Camii]<sup>92</sup> complex still standing above ground level and apparently including a large rectilinear structure. This is identified as the Church of the Holy Apostles and an adjacent enclosure may be that containing the mausoleum of Constantine the Great.”<sup>93</sup>

Finally, one have to accept that the question remains if any of the renderings of San Marco and the Apostoleion, including the image in fig. 1 and, as I wondered earlier, that

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domes, that in the sixth had six domes, as visible in the plan above. But the addition of an extra-dome did not alter the basic cruciform outline of the building. The church was decorated in the tenth century with frescoes representing Jesus, St John, and another saint. The church was transformed in a mosque in the fourteenth century. See KARYDIS, Nikolaos. “Different Approaches to an Early Byzantine Monument: Procopius and Ibn Battuta on the Church of St. John at Ephesus”. NESBITT, Claire and Mark JACKSON (eds.). *Experiencing Byzantium*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, p. 98 [pp. 89-110]. See also DARK and ÖZGÜMÜŞ., “New evidence...”, pp. 408, 410.

<sup>90</sup> The Church of the Holy Apostles was situated on a prominent hill in the west of the Constantinian city, very near the ‘Aqueduct of Valens’. Its approximate location is not in doubt. Byzantine and early Ottoman-period textual sources suggest that the church was either located on the hilltop occupied today by the early Ottoman imperial mosque of Fatih Camii or at the imaret [kitchen] of this mosque; C. MANGO, *Le Développement urbain de Constantinople (IVe–VIIe siècles)*, Paris, 1990, 27; BERGER, Albrecht, “Streets and public spaces in Constantinople.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54, 2000, pp. 161-72; DARK and ÖZGÜMÜŞ. “New evidence”. p. 394.

<sup>91</sup> W. MÜLLER-WIENER. *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls: Byzantion, Konstantinupolis, Istanbul bis zum Beginn d. 17 Jh.* Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1977, p. 406.

<sup>92</sup> The name Fatih Camii means ‘the Mosque of the Conqueror’; the structure was constructed under Mehmet II ‘Fatih’ (1451–1481). Its site is just south of Tabhane Medresesi, the boys’ Koranic school of the present Fatih Camii mosque; HAKKI AYVERDI, Ekrem. “Osmanli Mi’marisinde Fatih Devri 855-866 (1451-1481)” III. *İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti yayını*, Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1973, vol. 3, esp. figs. 631-632; AHUNBAY, Zeynep, “Fatih Complex, Istanbul, Turkey”, ĆURĆIĆ, Slobodan, and HADJITRYPHONOS, Evangelia (eds.). *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans 1300–1500 and its Preservation*. Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997.

<sup>93</sup> DARK and F. ÖZGÜMÜŞ. “New evidence...”, p. 39.



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in fig. 4 (or even the representation in fig. 3), are precise enough to justify a strong position concerning the exterior of these two churches and also their common elements, especially as they were discernible in the eleventh century.

But Forlati, Dark, and Özgümüş's findings and, in addition, the characteristics of the remains from the church of the Holy Apostles which today lie in the yard of Hagia Eirene in Istanbul,<sup>94</sup> are decisive in reaching a conclusion about the form of the Byzantine church and of San Marco in the period under discussion. These new data are conclusive evidence of the influence the important Byzantine church exercised on other similar edifices of its time, and hopefully also on some of the aspects regarding a connection between the two important churches examined here, located in Venice and respectively Constantinople.

But, the most relevant aspect here is that all these debates and controversies do not diminish the fact that eleventh century was a momentous period for the church in Venice.

#### **IV. A tentative sketch of the eleventh century San Marco church**

With respect to how the church dedicated to St. Mark looked in the eleventh century, a recent and relatively 'authoritative' reconstruction of its façade has been attained after the last restoration; that was carried out in 2009. The images reproduced in figs. 9-11 and 16, 18 show some fragments from the church's masonry that were part of the building at that time.

The effort involved in carrying out the reconstruction has led to the conclusion that later beautifying elements were inserted during many extensions and repairs which the building underwent (the façade accomplished in 1260 is most documented, but so is, to just a little lesser extent, that from the sixteenth century<sup>95</sup>). According to the catalogue edited by Orsoni, during the church's latest marbling in the nineteenth century, among the restoration of other architectural elements, capitals dating from 1080 were re-faced (figs. 16, 18).<sup>96</sup>

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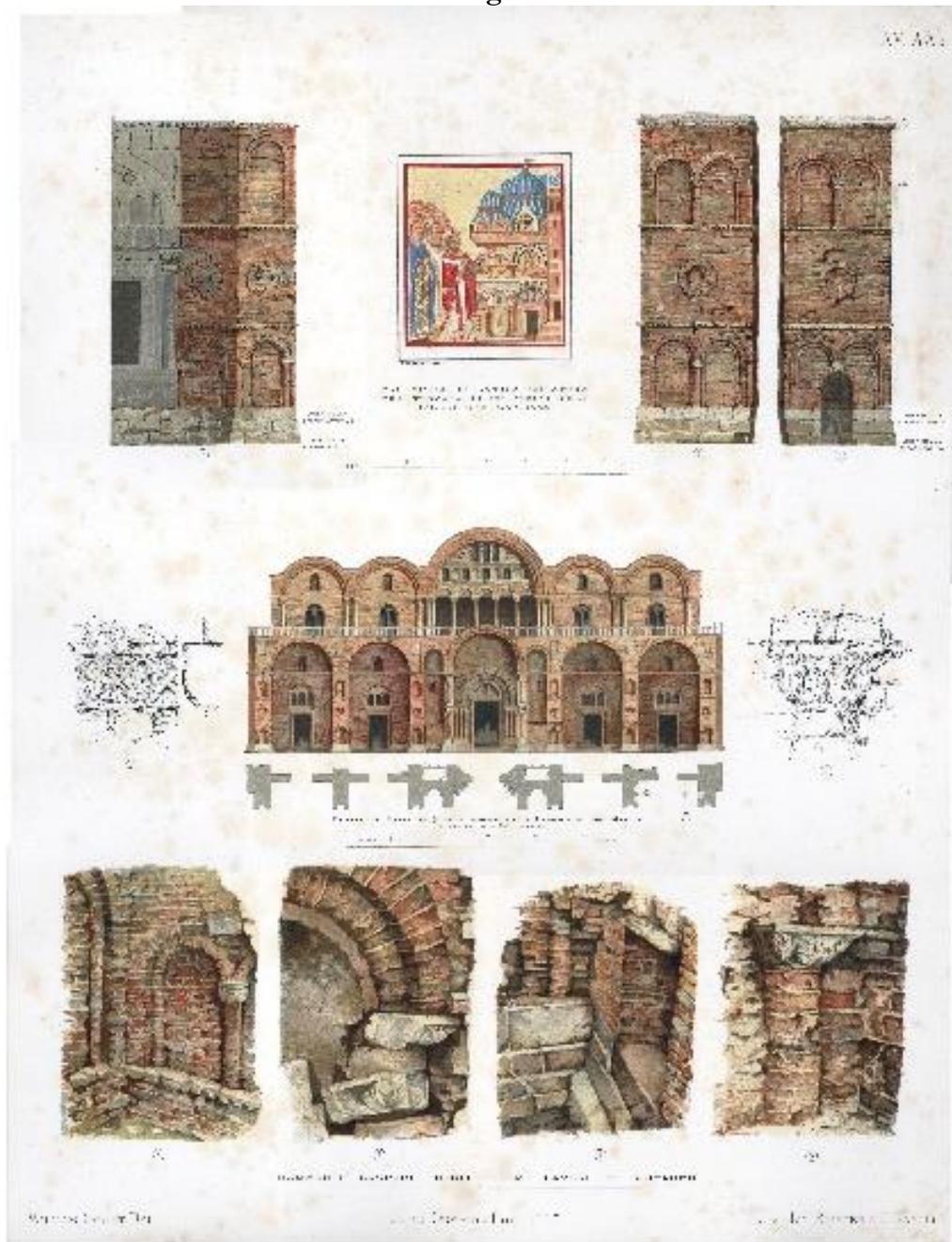
<sup>94</sup> Hagia Eirene in Istanbul is near Topkapı Palace; the church is located in the outer courtyard of the latter.

<sup>95</sup> CONTARINI, Pietro. *Argo Voluptas*. Venice 1541, 25v–36r. The poem is the first full-length description of San Marco's façade.

<sup>96</sup> ORSONI et al. (eds.). *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*. p. 179; caption p. 178.



Image 9

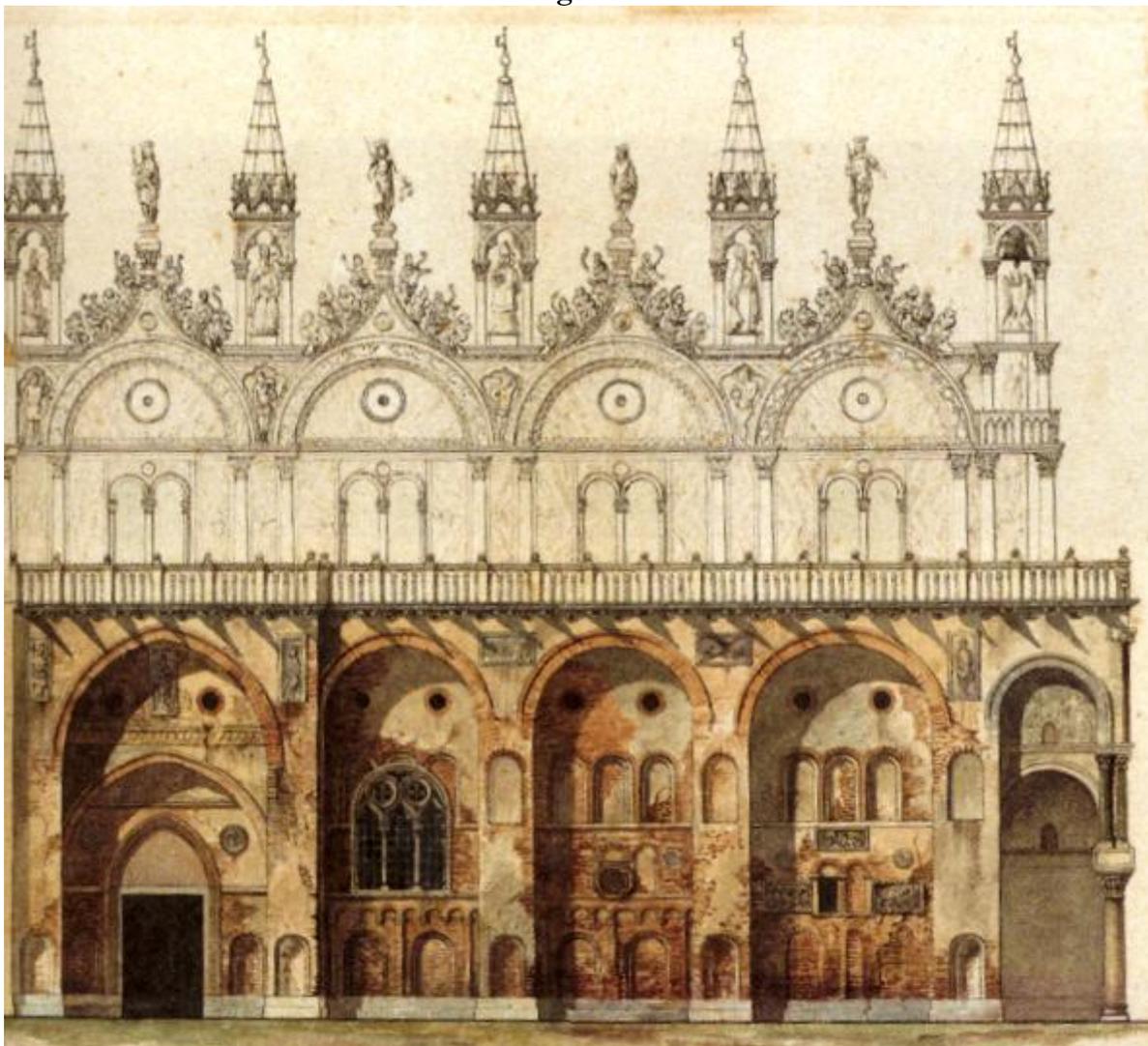


Reconstruction of San Marco's façade from the eleventh century on the basis of discoveries made during the recent restoration.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>97</sup> The image here is a reproduction of a drawing by PELLANDA, Antonio after G./SCOTT, William, *Prospetto primitivo congetturale della facciata e frammenti. XI secolo.* (Chromolithography Richter & C. Napoli). In ORSONI et al. (eds.). *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*, p. 118, image p. 119.



**Image 10**



Church of San Marco. Reconstruction of the eleventh century North and South façades and of the apse realized by Napoleone Girotto in c. 1800 (in a plan discovered on the occasion of recent restoration).<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> ORSONI et al. (eds.). *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*. p. 118.



Images 11 and 12



Detail of the above. Orsoni et al. (eds.), *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*, pp. 58-59.

Image 13



Architectural elements and capitals from the eleventh century.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>99</sup> These elements belong to the third Venetian church and have been dated to 1080. The details and the watercolour are in W. SCOTT, *Prospetto primitivo congetturale della facciata e frammenti. XI secolo* (Plate



Concerning its interior decoration, it is very likely that at the eleventh century consecration basilica had a mosaic of the Ascension in its main apse; this scene was usually represented in the central apses as we have seen in fig. 4 reproducing an image from BNF, Ms. Gr.1208 by Jakobos Kokkinobaphos), and this is so even today. Before that probably San Marco had a fresco rendering it; a cupola still exhibits this scene today (fig. 15 b), and it is still called ‘the Dome of the Ascension’. Is this scene in the same place it was 932 years ago? There is no reason to believe otherwise and even today this is usually the place where such a scene is depicted. As early as the fourth century this scene was central in the decoration of Byzantine churches; fig. 12 displays one of them as it has survived in the cylindrical structure of the church of St George in Thessaloniki.<sup>100</sup>

**Image 14**



Christ's Ascension; the church of St George/Agios Georgios (Rotunda) in Thessaloniki, early fifth century (?).<sup>101</sup>

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VIII and IX from the *Raccolta di Fac-simili*). ORSONI et al. (eds.). *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*. p. 179; caption p. 178.

<sup>100</sup> The building, called also ‘The Rotunda’, is located 125m northeast from the Arch of Galerius. The cylindrical structure was built in 306 on the orders of the tetrarch by that name; it was thought that it was intended to be his mausoleum, but it was probably a temple. The god to whom it was initially dedicated is not known.

<sup>101</sup> SALAH NASRALLAH, Laura, “Empire and Apocalypse: Thessaloniki: Interpreting the Early Christian Rotunda”. in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (4), 2005, pp. 465-508. The author shows



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Such a piece existed also in the Apostoleion, probably even before the remarkable work of Eulalios (who was already known in the twelfth century) about which Nicholas Mesarites, in his ekphrasis of the Constantinopolitan church written sometimes between 1198 and 1203, said that it was not known whether Christ descended to show the artist the reality of that event or whether the artist was taken in heaven to witness it.<sup>102</sup>

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that Rotunda in Thessaloniki was originally part of the palace complex of the emperor Galerius. It was converted to a Christian church by the late fourth or early fifth century, “a conversion which included the addition of a magnificent mosaic program within the dome of the Rotunda,” p. 465. See also MENTZOS, Aristotle. “Reflections on the Interpretation and Dating of the Rotunda of Thessaloniki.” *Egnatia* 6 (2001-2002), p. 61; VELENIS, G. “Some Observations on the Original Form of the Rotunda in Thessaloniki.” *Balkan Studies* 15.2 (1974), pp. 305-306; HODDINOTT, Ralph F. *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia: A Study of the Origins and the Initial Development of East Christian Art*. London and New York: Macmillan, 1963, p. 109; WARD-PERKINS, John Bryan, *Roman Imperial Architecture*. New Haven: The Yale University Press (Pelican History of Art series), 1981; repr. Penguin, New York, 1990, pp. 112-114.

<sup>102</sup> GREGORY NAZIANZEN and PROCOPIUS described the architecture and the interior decoration of the Church of the Apostles in the Byzantine capital. The information they provided was supplemented later by Constantine of Rhodes in the aforementioned poem and by Nikolaos Mesarites (who visited it) in his ekphrasis; they not only refer to the general splendour of its mosaics and paintings, but describe also its decorative scenes in same detail. Within the limits imposed by the rhetorical purpose of their works, they manage to complement one another in providing useful information. But sometimes there are discrepancies between them as, for example, in the case of the Crucifixion where Constantine says that Christ is represented “gymnos” (naked) and Mesarites says that he is “phaia peribleblēmenos stolēn” (“dressed in a grey garment”). Some inconsistencies are to be expected given the fact that the two authors lived about 200 years apart. (Heisenberg and Demus commented on these discrepancies; my own opinion is that in the respective interval of time some restorations must have taken place – with the inevitable alterations that occur in such situations). Moreover, no description can be exhaustive.

We shall enlist here the content of the compositional schemes (considered Middle Byzantine by Demus), as they occur in Mesarites’s ekphrasis (except for the first one): the Pantocrator in the main dome (either painted by Eulalios, or just attributed to him), and then (in the order followed by Mesarites), The Communion of the Apostles, The Transfiguration, The Crucifixion, The descent of the Holy Spirit, Matthews with the Syrians, Luke preaching at Antioch, Simeon among the Persians and the Saracens, Bartholomew preaching to the Armenians, Mark in Alexandria, The Annunciation, The Nativity, The Baptism, Christ Walking on the Water, The Raising of Lazarus, The Betrayal and Arrest, The Women at the Tomb, Christ appears to the Women, The Priest bribes the soldiers and persuade Pilate, The Women with the Disciples, The Disciples on the Way to Galilee, Christ appears to Thomas and to Other Disciples, Christ appears to the Disciples on the sea of Tiberias, and The Draught of Fishes.



As in Byzantium, the Ascension episode exists even now in Orthodox Christian edifices, both in fresco and on wooden panels, in a similar manner to that noticeable in the church of St. George above.

Also the Pentecost was represented in San Marco in the eleventh century, according to Orsoni's catalogue. The mosaic rendering it today seems to be the same (fig. 13 a, b). This scene is an invariable component of both early and present-day Orthodox churches. In this context, Demus can be quoted again, this time with his reminder that "The Venetians were never averse to repeating time and again what was held to be important".<sup>103</sup>

#### Images 15 and 16



a) The mosaic of the Pentecost Dome in San Marco; c. 1063 -1180.<sup>104</sup>

This religious episode was also an important part of a decorative programme from very early in human history – as notable, for instance, in the above mentioned church at the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Hosios Loukas, eleventh century (fig. 17).

<sup>103</sup> DEMUS (with KLOOS). *The mosaic of San Marco*. p. 22.

<sup>104</sup> a) Photograph from the corpus of mosaics of San Marco, now in the Photo Archives of the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC: [www.nga.gov/resources/dlidesc.shtm](http://www.nga.gov/resources/dlidesc.shtm), retrieved on the 30th of January 2014; b) ORSONI et al. (eds.). *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*. p. 157.



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**Image 17**



Pentecost image in the dome of the church at Hosios Loukas, Greece, before 1050.<sup>105</sup>

It is plausible that at the moment of San Marco's consecration in 1084, when the original mosaics were laid, the general aspect of the interior of the church was similar enough to what one can see in today's basilica, fig. 15b; some of the representations might have been differently placed, but the splendour might have been the same. Demus affirms that in the cathedral's decorative programme "all later mosaics of the interior are substitutions for earlier ones". He also said that they "partly change the original program";<sup>106</sup> i.e. if the process of modification has not been complete, there is a chance that one can still find some original elements within the church.

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<sup>105</sup> We also see here the Mother of God 'Kyriotissa' representation in the apse; the latter is similar to the image of Mary in Torcello Church. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 licence.

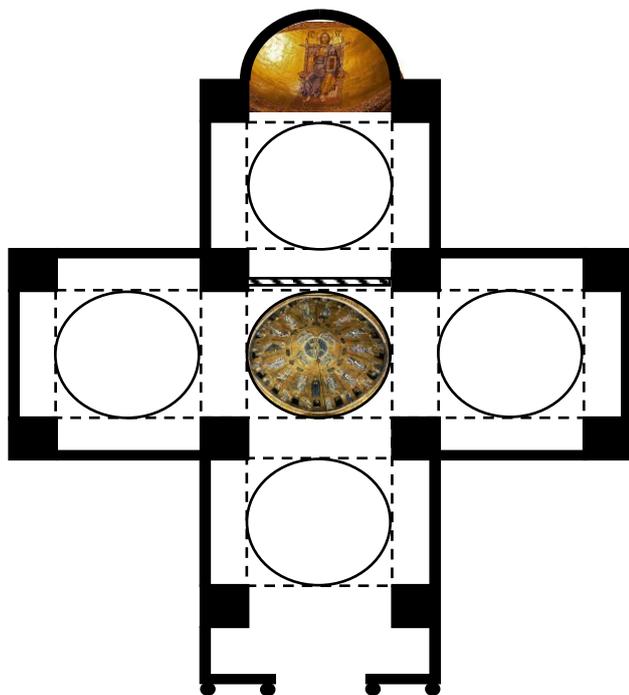
<sup>106</sup> DEMUS (with KESSLER, eds.). *The mosaic decorations of San Marco*. 11, emphasis added; and DEMUS (with a contribution by KLOOS), *The mosaic of San Marco in Venice*, Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, vol. 1, 1984, p. 20.



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### Images 18 and 19

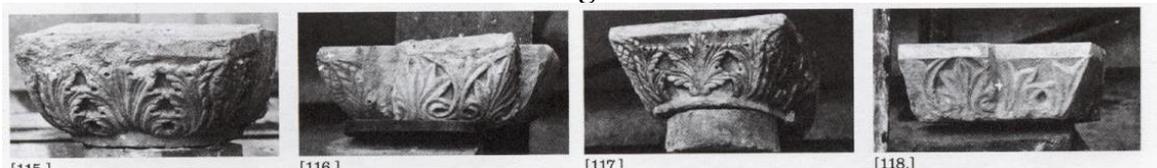


a. My sketch of the eleventh century San Marco with the mosaics of the Ascension in the dome and Christ's Ascension in the main apse (it is rendered in the same blue which is visible in today cathedral, even though on the drawing this is not very evident); b. The identical scenes in San Marco today; one can easily notice that the images are similar and they are located in the same place.

What one sees today at San Marco is a nineteenth century transformation which involved mainly the covering in marble of the medieval and later pre-nineteenth century stone-work which was not faced in the thirteenth century. The result of that process is clearly seen when one examines the capitals (as those in figs. 16 and 18) and the façade, especially when comparing the old one (represented in figs. 8, partially 9, and 10) with the nineteenth century/present front of the cathedral (fig. 22).

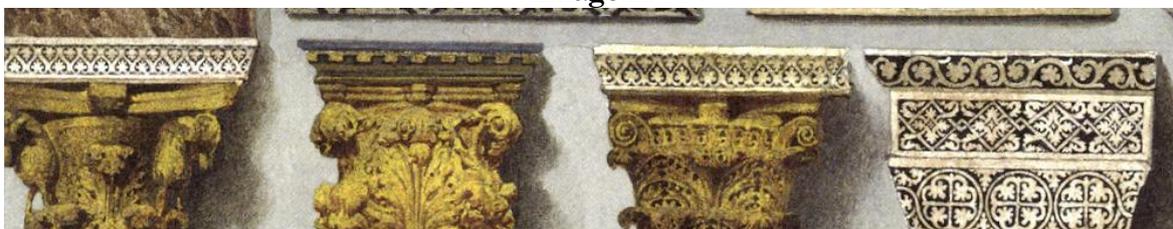


Image 20



Capitals from the eleventh century which were covered in marble at the end of the nineteenth century. They belong to the third church and have been dated to 1080.<sup>107</sup>

Image 21



Columns from San Marco after the nineteenth century.<sup>108</sup>

Images 22, 23 and 24



Capitals from 1080 (left) covered in marble at the end of the nineteenth century (middle, right). Orsoni et al., *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*. p. 180, fig. 119.

<sup>107</sup> ORSONI et al. (eds.). *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*. p. 179; caption p. 178.

<sup>108</sup> ORSONI et al. *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*. p. 80.

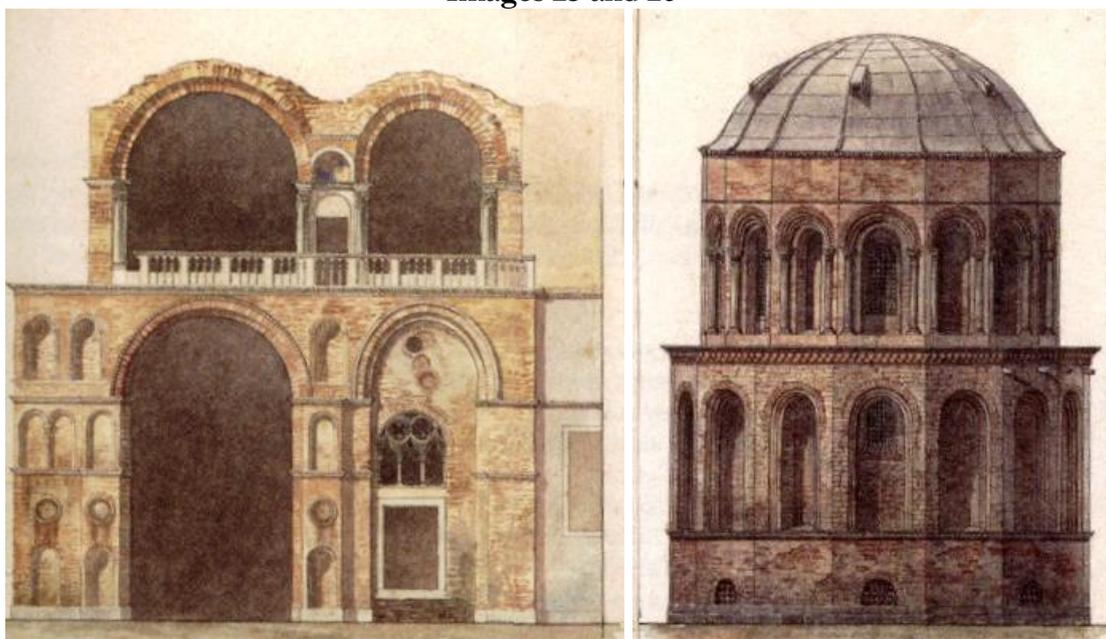


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As shown to some extent by the reproductions in figs. 5, 8, 9, 10, and 19, the exterior of the Italian cathedral before the marbling was similar to, for example, that of the present church of the Twelve Apostles in Thessaloniki, which was constructed at the beginning of the fourteenth century and is still functional (figs. 20-21). That should not be unexpected since they represent San Marco before it had affixed to it the spolia adornments reflected in Bellini's above-mentioned work and in the thirteenth century self-image above the Porta Sant'Alipio. At first sight there seems to be a great distinction between the eleventh-twelfth (fig. 19) century and the post-nineteenth century basilica (fig. 22), but underneath the covering the differences are not substantial.

#### Images 25 and 26



External view of San Marco in the twelfth century.<sup>109</sup>

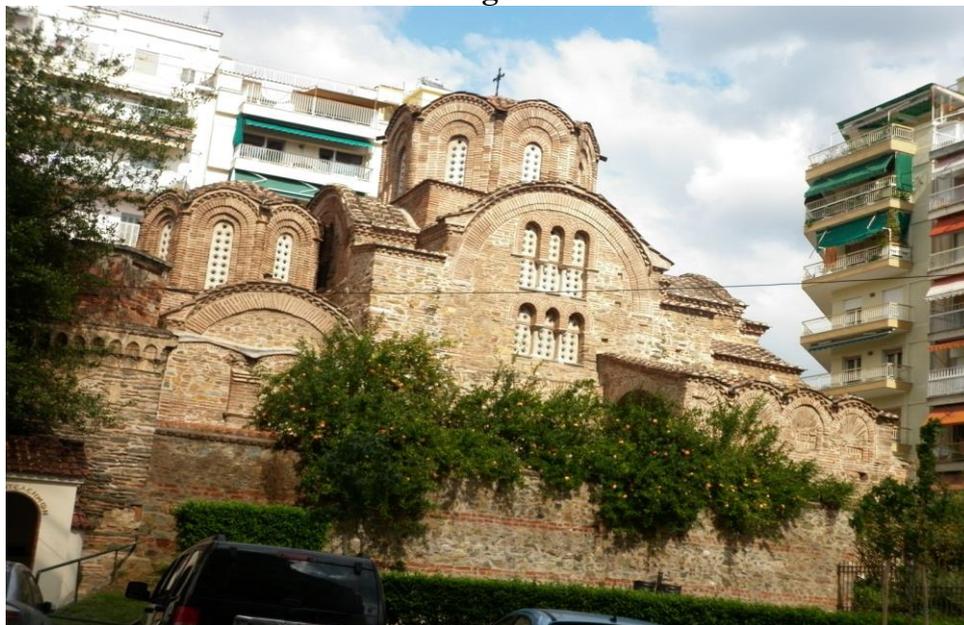
<sup>109</sup> N. GIROTTO's drawing; Chromolithography DOYEN, F. Lli), ORSONI et al. (eds.). *Ferdinando Ongania. La Basilica di San Marco*. p 118 (bottom).



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**Image 27**



The information provided above leads us to believe that the exterior of San Marco before the nineteenth century (i.e. afore the marbling) was similar to, for example, that visible here. The illustration represents the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Thessaloniki, fourteenth century; it has been well preserved and today it is a fully functional church. My photo, September 2011.

**Image 28**



The Byzantine wall surrounding the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Thessaloniki.



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**Image 29**



San Marco today. My photo, September 2011.

## **Conclusion**

The archaeological and scientific discoveries regarding the church of St. Mark in the eleventh century compensate for the imprecision of some other sources. The corroboration of various types of research output leads to its portrayal as a cruciform structure with a glittering interior made out of tesserae brought from Constantinople (and which, as we have seen, would constitute learning stimuli and guidance to future local masters). This evidence appears to confirm a strong resemblance between the third San Marco and the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople (a stronger similarity than the latter had with any other church for which it served as a model).

Certainly the high quality of the craftsmanship revealed by the eleventh century remnants from the edifice that hosts the relics of the evangelist indicates that the period 1000-1099 was a remarkable time both for the medieval Venetian church itself and for the city that built it; in our opinion that was the church's greatest medieval moment.

The knowledge about the past of this monument and of its environs sheds light not only on Venice's culture and on its inhabitants, but also on farther places with which the Venetians were in contact during this thriving epoch.



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