

### Byzantine Influence

Much of early Byzantine architecture was built from a continuation of Roman architecture but having influences from the near east and from Greek cultures. The Byzantine Empire was located at the center of the capital of Constantinople. The Byzantine Empire started during the end of the Roman Empire. The empire lasted over a thousand year from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to 1453. After the death of emperor Theodosius I, the Byzantine Empire had completely separated from the Roman Empire.

Being a direct lineage to the Roman Empire, most of the Byzantine Empire's structures were fabricated from old Roman structures. Some of the most influential architectural systems from the Roman Empire include arches and domes. The Hagia Sophia is a perfect example of Roman influence in Byzantine structures as the dome on top of the Hagia Sophia is very similar to the dome on the Pantheon. Arches from the Roman period are also evident in the Hagia Sophia and in the Basilica of Saint' Apollinare Nuovo. The Byzantine Empire built arenas that were similar to the Coliseum in Rome. They had stadiums just like the Circus Maixmus that was also located in Rome. The Byzantine Empire also used the remains of the Roman aqueducts into their own aqueduct system.

The Greeks were very influential throughout history in Roman architectures and later in Byzantine structures. The Byzantines, in an effort to distinguish themselves from the Romans, were more oriented towards Greek culture. Most of the Byzantine Empire were pre-dominantly Greek-speaking rather than Latin-speaking and focused more on Christianity rather than roman paganism. Byzantine scholars concentrated on subjects such as literature, history and philosophy,

rather than natural sciences or medicine. Most of the people who traveled through and lived in the Byzantine Empire were Greek or from some other area in the eastern Mediterranean. One of the most influential Greek element found in the Byzantine Empire were the Greek columns. These columns can be found in most of the basilica in the Byzantine Empire such as the basilica of San Vitale. Another Greek architecture found in the Byzantine Empire is the Greek cross plan used in most of the church's structure. The Byzantine churches also had clerestory which could have been adapted from Greek buildings such as the Parthenon. The Byzantine Empire, however, had many differences from Greek architecture. The biggest difference would be their domes. Another difference would be the sheer size and height of the Byzantine buildings compared to the Greek's. The adaption of the roman arch enabled the Byzantine to reach heights that the Greeks could not have achieved. The Byzantine Empire was not as strict as the Greeks in terms of symmetry in their buildings. Unlike Greek structures that were mostly simple in terms of color and decorations, the Byzantine Empire enjoyed the splendor of color, decorating their churches with gold decorations and colored marble. The Byzantines also had other influences from the eastern regions of the world.

There were many other influences from the East that is evident in the decorations on the walls of Byzantine architecture. One of the most significant reasons of eastern influence on the Byzantine Empire was probably due to the fact that it was located on an important trade route connecting Europe and Asia. Kufic writing can be seen on the exterior forms of brick walls. This type of decoration can most likely be of Persian influence. Mosaics and frescos that adorned the walls of the Byzantine churches could have been influenced from Crete or Mycenae. The Byzantine Empire themselves had been a great civilization and had many influence on other cultures. Russia had many influences from the Byzantines as Byzantine art and architecture can

be found in Kiev and other Russian cities. The onion domes in early Russian churches were an attempt to imitate the domes structures of the Byzantine Empire using primarily wood. Byzantine architecture ultimately paved the way for Romanesque and Gothic architecture. They also had a lot of influence on Islamic architecture. These influences can be seen in monuments such as the Dome on the Rock in Jerusalem. Such influence can be clearly seen in the plan and partially in decoration to Byzantine art.

The different influences on Byzantine architecture are clearly evident in its buildings. Many of the Byzantine structures were renovated from old Roman architectures with influences from other culture to show a mix of Roman architecture and others. It can be said that the greatness of the Byzantine Empire comes from a fusion of three main civilizations: Roman, Greek, and other eastern cultures.

## **Bibliography**

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