

Byzantine Cupolas and the Myth of the 'Ancient Origins' of Venice

Hubertus Günther

The *Memorandum* of 1518 explaining the project, commissioned by Pope Leo X, to display ancient Rome suggests that it ought to be easy to distinguish ancient buildings from mediaeval ones.¹ However, the reality was different in those days. Only the pointed arch offered an undeniable stylistic criterion for recognising the mediaeval origin of buildings. Romanesque buildings were sometimes considered ancient. Conspicuous Italian examples include the Baptistery in Florence, the old Cathedral of Arezzo (an irregular octagon with internal ambulatories in the architectural tradition of S. Vitale in Ravenna, destroyed in 1561),² or the Basilica of S. Fedele in Como.³ The reasons for these assessments were apparently the widespread opinion that ancient temples were normally centralised buildings, or in the case of S. Fedele some similarities with the late ancient church of S. Lorenzo in Milan, considered to be a temple of Hercules, which led to S. Fedele also being considered a temple of Hercules. Such reasoning had so much weight that it inhibited plausible counterarguments: in the case of the Baptistery, the old reports that Florence had been completely destroyed by the Goths; in the case of S. Fedele, the sculptural representations of Biblical subjects there. However, these buildings did not really have a strong impact on the Italian architecture of the fifteenth and sixteenth century.⁴ There was only one mediaeval building considered ancient that had a wide-ranging influence on the new architecture: the small, rather inconspicuous

1 F.P. di Teodoro, *Raffaello, Baldassar Castiglione e la 'Lettera a Leone X'*, Bologna 1994, 68, 118, 148.

2 G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italaiani (1568)*, ed. G. Milanesi, Florence 1878–85, vol. 1, 227; G. de Angelis d'Ossat, 'Il Duomo vecchio di Arezzo', *Palladio* 27 (1978), no. 3–4, 7–46.

3 Vitruvius, *De architectura libri decem*, ed. C. Cesariano, Como 1521, 29r, and, even at the end of the sixteenth century, Feliciano Ninguarda. Cf. S. Monti, *Atti della visita diocesana di F. Feliciano Ninguarda, vescovo di Como (1589–1593)*, Como 1892–98, vol. 1, 20s. A.K. Porter, *Lombard Architecture*, New Haven 1915–17, vol. 2, 328s.

4 H. Günther, 'Die sogenannte Wiederbelebung der antiken Architektur in der Renaissance', in: W. Nerdinger (ed.), *Geschichte der Rekonstruktion, Konstruktion der Geschichte*, cat. exh. Munich 2010, 56–77.

church of S. Giacomo di Rialto in Venice. My contribution concentrates on the reasons why this building exerted an unusually large influence.

11.1 Building History of S. Giacomo di Rialto

Today, it is assumed that S. Giacomo di Rialto was founded perhaps in the ninth century, but certainly only as a simple structure, possibly made of wood (figs. 11.1–11.3).⁵ The church may have been renovated in connection with the revival of the market on the Rialto (1097), and it probably received its final form in the late twelfth century (consecration, 1177): a crossed-dome disposition extended towards the front by a narrow bay. The crossing is crowned by a tambour dome resting on four columns; the bays in the corners are groin-vaulted, as was common in mediaeval crossed-dome churches in Italy, unlike the typical Byzantine crossed-dome churches, which usually have subsidiary domes at the corners. The interior, as described in the late sixteenth century, was encrusted with precious stones and decorated with mosaics.⁶ The trunks of the columns supporting the dome and vaults are certainly ancient spolia, but the Corinthian capitals, and furthermore a ring with egg and dart and consoles running under the tambour, date from the eleventh century, even though they faithfully imitate antiquity. In the fourteenth century, a simple porch was blended onto the front of S. Giacomo. The remaining three sides of the building are surrounded by shops and lodgings.

The interior was spared in the great fire of the Rialto in 1514. In 1531, the damaged exterior was restored. Since the church was in a dilapidated condition, it had to be thoroughly restored in 1601. The old decor of the interior was replaced in contemporary style: more windows and a dome lantern were opened. The floor, which was meanwhile about half a metre below the terrain of the Rialto due to the usual process of the rise of the terrain throughout Venice, was raised to such an extent that it is now about half a metre above the terrain of the Rialto, with the result that it projects above the water level during the regular

5 Fundamental is D.L. Gardini, *La chiesa di S. Giacomo di Rialto*, Venice 1966; R. Cessi, A. Alberti, *Rialto. L'isola – il ponte – il mercato*, Bologna 1934; W. Timofiewitsch, 'Genesi e struttura della chiesa del Rinascimento veneziano', *Bollettino del Centro internazionale di Studi di Architettura A. Palladio* 6 (1964), no. 2, 271–282; U. Franzoi, D. Di Stefano, *Le chiese di Venezia*, Venice 1976, 13–15; D. Calabi, P. Morachiello, *Rialto: le fabbriche e il Ponte 1514–1591*, Turin 1987; E. Concina, *Venezia. Le chiese e le arti*, Udine 1995, 130–133; D. Howard, *The architectural history of Venice*, New Haven/ London 2002, 15–17.

6 F. Sansovino, *Venezia città nobilissima et singolare*, Venice 1581, 72v.



FIGURE 11.1 San Giacomo di Rialto, Venice, external view
PHOTO: AUTHOR

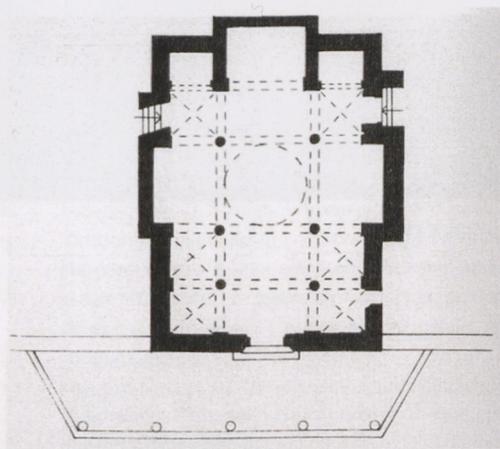


FIGURE 11.2
San Giacomo di Rialto, Venice,
ground plan



FIGURE 11.3 San Giacomo di Rialto, Venice, interior view
PHOTO: AUTHOR

winter floods in Venice.⁷ A report on the restoration gives the impression that the columns, the vaults and the central dome were also raised at the same time in order to preserve the old proportions of the space.⁸ At least the vaults and the dome were secured. The resolution of the Senate on the restoration of 1598 emphasised that the old structure should be preserved: it directs that 'the very ancient church of S. Giacomo, which has almost the most antiquitous origin of the city, must stay in the state and design that is preserved' and gives the order to 'restore the said church, without altering its ancient form, indeed reviving in every part the venerated memory of this temple'.⁹ An inscription attached to S. Giacomo after the restoration assures us that the order was really observed: '*prisca eius forma servata*', and the mediaeval ring preserved under the tambour confirms this. The church was restored again in 1932. The decor from 1602 was removed at this time to bring the interior close to the original appearance, '*alle prime nobili forme*' (as per the inscription on the restoration).

11.2 Diffusion of the Crossed-Dome Church Structure in the Middle Ages

The feature of S. Giacomo di Rialto that stands out from the usual Romanesque architecture is its disposition as a crossed-dome church (or tetrastyle church or quincunx church, fig. 11.4). The crossed-dome church may first have appeared in Persia and is said to have attained its characteristic appearance in Armenia.¹⁰ At the turn of the ninth to the tenth century, it was adopted in Constantinople. It then spread throughout the Byzantine cultural area and became the predominant building type there. In addition, it reached more distant areas such as northern and southern Italy, where Oriental influences

7 The remains of a floor were found at a depth of 1,60 m below the present floor of S. Giacomo. This certainly cannot be explained by an assumption that the ground level throughout Venice had risen so greatly from the High Middle Ages to 1500. G. Marzemin, *Le origini romane di Venezia*, Venice 1937, 270–273.

8 F. Sansovino, G. Stringa, *Venezia città nobilissima et singolare*, Venice 1604, 155v.

9 'l'antichissima chiesa di S. Giacomo, che ha quasi più antiquo principio della città, debba stare nel stato e disegno, con che s'attrova', and that 'faccino restaurar la prefata chiesa, senza alterar punto la sua antica forma, anzi rinovar in ogni parte le venerate memorie di codesto tempo'. Cessi & Alberti, *op. cit.* (note 5), 137; Calabi & Morachiello, *op. cit.* (note 5), 98–99.

10 For the history of the crossed-dome church, cf. R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*, Harmondsworth 1975, 353ss.; D. Lange, 'Theorien zur Entstehung der byzantinischen Kreuzkuppelkirche', *Architectura* 16 (1986), 93–113.

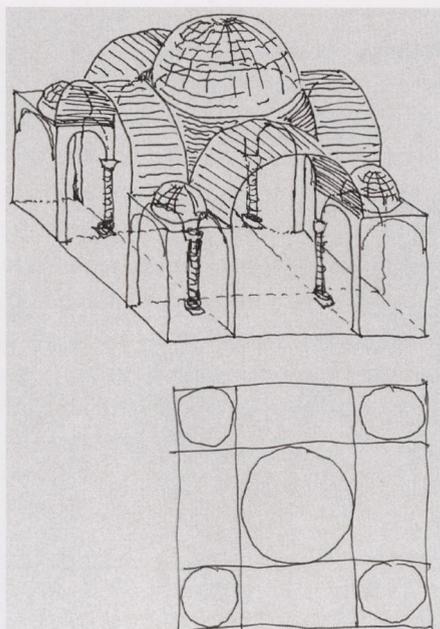


FIGURE 11.4
Scheme of a crossed-dome church
DRAWING AUTHOR

were absorbed to a lesser extent.¹¹ In central Italy, on the other hand, it hardly appeared at all. In the course of the later Middle Ages, this architectural tradition completely died out in Italy. The ultramontane influence of the Gothic displaced the crossed-dome church.

Two medieval crossed-dome churches are known in Milan: the Chapel of S. Satiro¹² and the Basilica of S. Sepolcro, the construction of which was purposely inspired by Byzantine architecture because of the connection with the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (begun in 1100, transformed in the seventeenth and subsequent centuries).¹³ In Venice, apart from S. Giacomo di Rialto, one or two other small mediaeval crossed-dome churches can be identified: S. Lorenzo

- 11 G. Dimitrocallis, *Contribution à l'étude des monuments byzantins et médiévaux d'Italie*. Athens 1971, 43–72; G. Cavallo, *I Bizantini in Italia*, Milan 1982, 239ss.
- 12 G. Chierici, *La chiesa di S. Satiro a Milano*, Milan 1942. Porter, *op. cit.* (note 3), vol. 2, 638ss; U. Kahle, *Renaissance-Zentralbauten in Oberitalien. S. Maria presso S. Satiro. Das Frühwerk Bramantes in Mailand*, Munich 1982, 81ss; G.B. Sannazzaro, 'L'architettura di S. Satiro', in: A. Mazzotta Buratti, S. Scarioni (eds.), *Insula Ansperti. il Complesso Monumentale di S. Satiro*, Milan 1992, 39–63.
- 13 Porter, *op. cit.* (note 3), vol. 2, 643ss; M.T. Fiorio, *Le chiese di Milano*. Milan 1985, 343–345 (M.A. Zilocchi); M. L. Gatti Perer (ed.), *Milano ritrovata. L'asse via Torino*, cat. exh. Milan 1986, 411ss; R. Salvarani, 'San Sepolcro a Milano nella storia delle Crociate', in: G. Andenna, R. Salvarani (eds.), *'Deus non voluit'. I Lombardi alla prima crociata (1100–1101). Dal mito alla ricostruzione della realtà*, Milan 2003, 263–281.

and perhaps S. Giovanni in Oleo.¹⁴ Neither of them has been preserved in its original condition. In terms of the total number of churches in Venice, the quantity of crossed-dome churches is small. However, the most magnificent building in Venice, the Basilica of S. Marco, is related to the crossed-dome archetype (figs. 11.5–11.6). The church is formed by four cross arms of similar length. Five identical domes crown the crossing and the cross arms. The crossing dome rests on four supports, each consisting of four massive pillars. The space within each support is covered by a hanging dome. The system of the crossing is repeated in modified form under the other domes. As such, the interior might seem similar to a connection of several crossed-dome churches, but the four pillars which enclose the interior space of each support stand so near together that they almost seem to be a single pillar. This type of building was also preformed in Byzantine architecture, especially in the Church of the Apostles, which Constantine the Great had built in Constantinople as a burial place for the apostles and emperors and which Justinian had rebuilt. Today it is assumed that S. Marco, as is stated in the early twelfth-century chronicle of the *Translatio Sancti Nicolai*, imitated the Church of the Apostles, because it was also built as an Apostle's Church after the remains of St Mark the Evangelist had been transferred to Venice.¹⁵ After the conquest of Constantinople, this Apostle's Church was first assigned to the Patriarch as his new official seat, but was demolished in 1462 by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror in order to build his mosque there. Nevertheless, the French humanist Pierre Gilles, in the description of his journey to Constantinople (1544–47), was still able to discuss the church in detail on the basis of the information provided by old literary reports about it and by contemporary residents of the region.¹⁶

- 14 Franzoi & Di Stefano, *op. cit.* (note 5), 389, 466–471; A.M. Odenthal, *Die Kirche San Giovanni Crisostomo in Venedig. Ein Beitrag zur venezianischen Sakralarchitektur des späten 15. Jahrhunderts*, Diss. Bonn 1985, 136s. Odenthal's attempted reconstruction of which crossed-dome churches existed in Venice before the Renaissance is a great merit. She lists four of them, but the statement that S. Tomà and S. Angelo Raffaele were among them is based on a misunderstanding.
- 15 O. Demus, *The Church of San Marco in Venice, history, architecture, sculpture*, Washington 1960, 90–100; W. Dorigo, *Venezia origini. Ipotesi e ricerche sulla formazione della città*, Milan 1983, 567; R. Polacco, *San Marco, la basilica d'oro*, Milan 1991, 9–47. On the application of the rhetorical topos of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem as a model for S. Marco in the *Translatio Sancti Marci*, cf. L. Puppi, 'La basilica di San Marco nel mito di Venezia', in: B. Bertoldi (ed.), *La Basilica di San Marco. Arte e Simbologia*, Venice 1993, 11–24.
- 16 P. Gilles, *De topographia Constantinopoleus*, ed. J. Gronovius, in: *Thesaurus Graecorum Antiquitatum*, vol. 6. Venice 1735, 3313; idem, *The antiquities of Constantinople*, transl. J. Ball, New York 1988, 171–174.



FIGURE 11.5 San Marco, Venice, interior view
PHOTO: AUTHOR

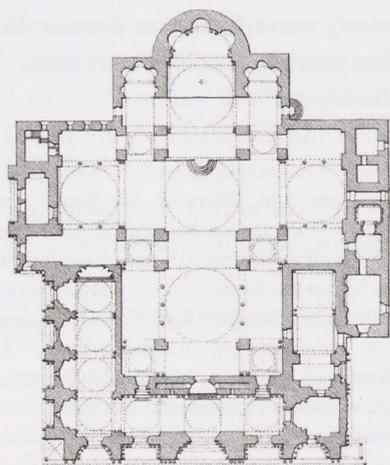


FIGURE 11.6
San Marco, Venice, ground plan

In Venice, the disposition of S. Giacomo di Rialto and that of S. Marco were already linked with each other: Francesco Sansovino, in his foundational 1581 guidebook to Venice, states that the disposition of S. Giacomo was the model for S. Marco: 'The composition of the vaulted hall is so well assembled and maintained by the vaults that support the arches that it is an admirable thing to see, and it can be said that this was the model for the Church of San Marco'.¹⁷

11.3 Crossed-Dome Churches in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Venice

During the period from about 1490 to 1530, the crossed-dome church became the predominant type of sacred architecture in Venice. Most of the new churches adopted this building type, a total of ten altogether.¹⁸ This tendency stands out from what was usual in other places. In the same period, crossed-dome churches were rarely built in northern Italy, and in central and southern

17 'La compositura della testudine è così ben raccolta insieme & mantenuta da i volti che sostengono gli archi, che è mirabil cosa a vedere, & può dirsi che ella fosse il modello della Chiesa di San Marco'. Sansovino, *op. cit.* (note 6), 72v.

18 Timofiewitsch, *op. cit.* (note 5); J. Mc Andrew, 'Sant'Andrea della Certosa', *The Art Bulletin* 51 (1969), 15–28; J.S. Ackerman, 'Observations on Renaissance church planning in Venice and Florence, 1470–1570', in: S. Bertelli, N. Rubinstein, C.H. Smyth (eds.), *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations*, Florence 1979–80, vol. 2, 287–308; J. McAndrew, *Venetian Architecture of the early Renaissance*. Cambridge, Mass. 1980, 528–544; R. Lieberman, *Renaissance architecture in Venice 1450–1540*, London 1982; M. Tafuri, 'Pietas repubblicana, neobizantinismo e umanesimo, Giorgio Spavento e Tullio Lombardo nella chiesa di San Salvador', *Ricerche di Storia dell'Arte* 19 (1983), 5–36; Idem, *Venezia e il Rinascimento. Religione, scienza, architettura*. Turin 1986; Odenthal *op. cit.* (note 14), 79ss; C.E. Burns, *S. Salvatore and venetian church architecture 1490–1530*. New York 1986; N. Huse, W. Wolters, *Venedig. Die Kunst der Renaissance, Architektur, Skulptur, Malerei 1460–1590*. Munich 1986, 94ss; H. Günther, 'Geschichte einer Gründungsgeschichte. San Giacomo di Rialto, San Marco und die venezianische Renaissance', in: A. Amberger, K.J. Heerlein, S. Rehm (eds.), *Per assiduum studium scientiae adipisci margaritam. Festgabe für Ursula Nilgen zum 65. Geburtstag*, St Ottilien 1997, 231–256; Idem, 'Vorstellungen vom griechischen Tempel und der Beginn der Renaissance in der venezianischen Architektur', in: P. von Naredi-Rainer (ed.), *Imitatio: von der Produktivität künstlerischer Anspielungen und Mißverständnisse*, Berlin 2001, 104–143; Idem, *Was ist Renaissance. Eine Charakteristik der Architektur zu Beginn der Neuzeit*. Darmstadt 2009, 56–59; Odenthal states that there was no analysis of the phenomenon of the spread of the crossed-dome church in the Venetian Renaissance. Following on from this, Wolters has already pointed out that the renewed building type goes back to S. Giacomo in Rialto. However, he claimed without any further explanation that this was a recourse to old Venetian building tradition and not a 'revival' of Romano-Byzantine architecture.

Italy only by way of exception. The Renaissance in Venetian architecture began with three crossed-dome churches. It is difficult to decide which of them to give priority to: S. Giovanni Crisostomo (Mauro Codussi, beg. 1497) (figs. 11.7–11.8), S. Nicolò di Castello or di Bari (between 1476 and 1503, since destroyed), or the antechurch of S. Andrea della Certosa (1489–1490 for the eastern part, probably completed 1510, since destroyed). The same type was adopted by S. Geminiano in Piazza di S. Marco (commenced 1505, since destroyed) and S. Giovanni Elemosinario (Scarpagnino, commenced 1527). Besides the pure crossed-dome churches, there were variants, especially with the addition of another bay to the front similar to that of S. Giacomo di Rialto: S. Maria Formosa (Mauro Codussi, from 1491), S. Maria Mater Domini (under construction as of 1504), S. Salvatore (Giorgio Spavento, 1506 onwards) (figs. 11.9–11.10), S. Fantin (Scarpagnino, 1507 onwards) and S. Felice (early 1530s). Sansovino presents S. Marco explicitly as a model for four of the crossed-dome churches recently built in Venice. The disposition of all these churches is obviously related to S. Giacomo, which he presents as the model for S. Marco.¹⁹

In Venetian churches of the Renaissance not only the crossed-dome disposition of Romanesque-Byzantine sacred architecture was adopted, but also the dome with its conspicuous external shell in form of a hemisphere (or even a more complete sphere than that), a lantern and a tambour. Examples of this are S. Marco, S. Maria Formosa or S. Zaccaria, and others. This kind of external cupola shell is not typical of ancient Roman architecture, nor of the mediaeval architecture of central Italy. There are certain exceptions – in Tuscany, the cathedrals of Pisa, Siena and Florence – but the Gothic domes of those examples have a steeper section and ribs. It is outside the scope of this article to explain the origins of all of the many dome types that spread throughout Europe since the fifteenth century; however, we note that Byzantine architecture, Venice and Northern Italy played an important role in their dissemination.

As was generally the case in the Italian Renaissance, the archetype in this instance was not imitated uncritically, but rather altered or supposedly ‘corrected’ according to formal laws that were considered antique. The disposition was regulated according to clear proportions, more light was brought into the interior by windows and sometimes by dome lanterns, and the columns supporting the vaults were replaced by pillars, to which the architectural elements, mostly pilasters, were attached. Usually, the groin vaults in the rectangular bays in the corners – or, where the western arm was extended, in the side

19 Sansovino, *op. cit.* (note 6), 10v, 12v, 47v, 74v (S. Salvatore, S. Giovanni in Oleo, S. Maria Formosa, S. Maria Mater).

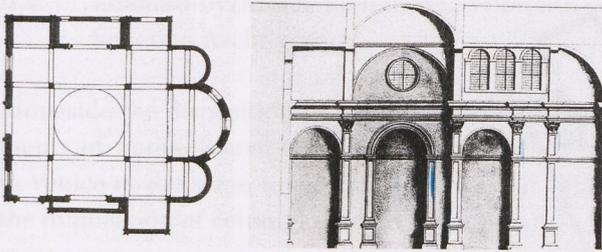


FIGURE 11.7 San Giovanni Crisostomo, Venice, Ground plan and longitudinal section according to a drawing of Antonio Visentini; RIBA London



FIGURE 11.8 San Giovanni Crisostomo, Venice, interior view
PHOTO: AUTHOR

naves – were replaced by hanging or flat domes. As with the adoption of crossing domes, likewise with the transition from the groin vaults to hanging or flat domes, it was characteristic Byzantine architecture that was approached as a standard rather than ancient Roman architecture or the Romano-Byzantine manner that derived from it. In the spaces within the supports of the domes of S. Marco, flat domes on pillars were preformed.

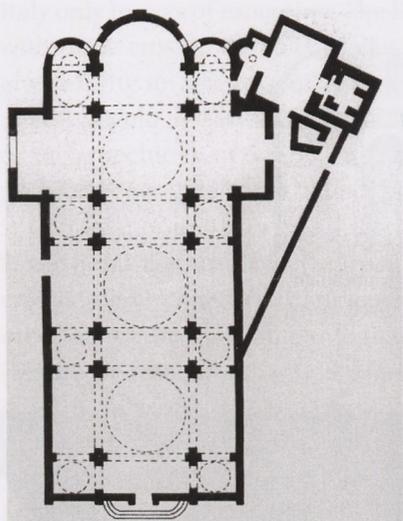


FIGURE 11.9
San Salvatore, Venice, ground plan



FIGURE 11.10
San Salvatore,
Venice, interior
view
PHOTO: AUTHOR

11.4 Romano-Byzantine Elements in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Venetian Architecture

Alongside the disposition of the crossed-dome church, some decorative elements of native Romano-Byzantine architecture were occasionally revived in Venice at the same time, such as the round gables, the rows of niches or the duplication of columns. These elements can all be found in S. Marco. The most conspicuous example of their revival is the splendid façade of S. Zaccaria (commenced 1458, plan amended in 1483; completed in 1500) (fig. 11.11).²⁰ On



FIGURE 11.11
San Zaccaria,
Venice, façade
PHOTO: AUTHOR

20 A. Rosemann, *Die Kirche San Zaccaria in Venedig*, diss. Berlin 2001; M. Ceriana, 'Agli inizi della decorazione architettonica all'antica a Venezia 1455–1470', in: J. Guillaume (ed.), *L'invention de la Renaissance, La réception des formes 'à l'antique' au début de la renaissance* (De Architectura, 9), Paris 2003, 109–142; B. Jestaz, *Monuments vénétiens de la première Renaissance à la lumière des documents*, Venice/Paris 2017, 121–156.

the sides of S. Zaccaria, the Romanesque motif of the arcade frieze recurs. Byzantine formal and iconographic motifs also featured in fifteenth-century Venetian sculpture and painting.²¹ Examples of this are seen in Giovanni Bellini's paintings: the Byzantine form of Mary's bonnet, the golden stripes in her cloak, Greek letters in inscriptions and Byzantine types of physiognomy. Many images of the Madonna were based on the outline of Byzantine icons. However, the minor elements of Romano-Byzantine architecture were not completely replaced by the Gothic. Round gables and arcade frieze were installed, for instance at the Scuola Vecchia della Misericordia, the arcade frieze now formed with pointed arches; the main portal of ss. Giovanni e Paolo is framed by double columns. Recourse to such forms may be understood in general simply as an return to local tradition, although S. Zaccaria, the most striking example of this tendency, also permits a different interpretation, as we will see later. However, the conspicuous dominance of the crossed-dome disposition in fifteenth-century Venetian architecture is an entirely different matter. Previously, as we saw, this type of building had not dominated Venetian sacral architecture so entirely. In this case, a question arises as to the ideological background to this state of affairs.

11.5 The Legend of the Foundation of Venice and of S. Giacomo di Rialto as the Founding Monument of Venice

An intensive local historiography had been developing in Venice since the fourteenth century. It reached its peak at the beginning of the Venetian Renaissance and continued throughout the entire early modern period.²² Contemporary Venetian historians linked the architectural history of S. Giacomo with the foundation of the lagoon city: like the Romans, the Venetians were held to have descended from the Trojans. The Trojan hero Antenor moved to Italy after the conquest of his native city by the Greeks, and founded Padua. When Attila and

21 S. Wilk, *The sculpture of Tullio Lombard: studies in sources and meaning*, PhD. New York 1978, 119–129.

22 Cf. A. Pertusi, *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi*, Florence 1970. There are also detailed essays on the individual chroniclers, which are cited below. F. Tateo, 'Marcantonio Sabellico e la svolta del classicismo quattrocentesco', in: S. Bertelli, N. Rubinstein (eds.), *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations*, Florence 1979–1980, vol. 1 (*Quattrocento*), 41–63; F. Gaeta, 'Coscienza nazionale e politica culturale nella Venezia del Rinascimento', in: G. Arnaldi, M. Pastore Stocchi (eds.), *Storia della Cultura Veneta*, vol. 3.1. (*Dal primo Quattrocento al Concilio di Trento*), Vicenza 1980, 1–91; E. Muir, *Civic ritual in Renaissance Venice*, Princeton 1981, 23–33.

his Huns invaded Northern Italy and conquered Aquileia, the inhabitants of Padua sought refuge in the inaccessible swamps and waters of the lagoon and settled on several islands there. At first they built simple shelters. After a great fire, they began to erect solid and substantial buildings. This was said to have begun – although this is not chronologically accurate (Attila actually ruled 434–453) – with the laying of the foundation stone of S. Giacomo di Rialto in 421 on 25 March, the day of the Annunciation to Mary. The founding legend of S. Giacomo goes back to ancient roots, but in the form described above it is one of the achievements of the Venetian Renaissance. The legend took form in the course of the fifteenth century and then solidified into a widespread belief. We shall follow in detail how it came into being, because this will make it evident how important the connection of the foundation with S. Giacomo was for the Venetians.

The oldest chronicles of Venice report that when the Lombards invaded the lagoon in 569, the Terraferma population fled and founded the city called Venice.²³ The invasion of the Lombards is still considered in today's historiography a reason for the flight into the lagoon, but it is now dated to 552. In the tenth century, the version circulating already asserted that it was the invasions of the Huns under Attila that had given rise to the foundation of Venice. When the Huns destroyed Aquileia (452), the population of the region is said to have sought refuge in the lagoon. Since the High Middle Ages, Attila, the proverbial 'scourge of God', has generally been held responsible for the flight into the lagoon. From the same time onwards, the legend spread that the Trojan

23 For the history and legend of the foundation of Venice cf. V. Lazzarini, 'Il preteso documento della fondazione di Venezia e la cronaca del medico Jacopo Dondi', in: Idem, *Scritti di Paleografia e Diplomatica*. Venice 1938, 99–119; G. Marzemin, *Le origini romane di Venezia*, Venice 1937, 351–373; R. Cessi, *Le origini del ducato veneziano*. Naples 1951; Cessi & Alberti, *op. cit.* (note 5), 588; R. Cessi (ed.), *Origo Civitatum Italiae seu Venetorum. Chronicon Altinate et Chronicon Gradense*. Rome 1933, XLss. 30, 52ss., 57, 61, 133, 157; Pertusi, *op. cit.* (note 22) 1970, 75–126; S. Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, Venice 1972–1975, vol. 10, 3–62; A. Carile, 'Le origini di Venezia nella tradizione storiografica', in: G. Arnaldi, G. Folena (eds.), *Storia della Cultura Veneta*, vol. 1 (*Dalle Origini al Trecento*), Vicenza 1976, 135–166; A. Carile, G. Fedalto, *Le origini di Venezia*, Bologna 1978, 19–123; G. Ortalli, 'Venezia dalle origini a Pietro II Orseolo', in: P. Delogu, R. Cessi (ed.), *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia, Langobardi e Bizantini (Storia d'Italia, vol. 25.1)*, Florence 1981, 5–15; Muir, *op. cit.* (note 22), 65–74; Dorigo, *op. cit.* (note 15), 179–341; M. De Biasi, 'Leggenda e storia nelle origini di Venezia', *Ateneo Veneto* 23 (1985), no. 1–2, 77–101, esp. 81–86; These and other writings treat of the founding legend of Venice, not that of S. Giacomo. As they concentrate on the mediaeval tradition, they do not deal with the relationship between the two versions of the legend discussed here, i.e., they do not mention that the dates of foundation, once distinguished from each other, were conflated in the Renaissance. Cf. Günther, *Geschichte einer Gründungsgeschichte op. cit.* (note 18), 231–256.

hero Antenor had founded Aquileia and Padua and even Venice for the first time. In the late thirteenth century, Padua came up with the idea of combining the foundation of Venice with that of Padua and of linking the menace of the Huns with this city. It was at this point that the date of the foundation of Venice was fixed at 25 March 421. The foundation of Venice was said to have taken place such that the Paduans built the first houses on the Rialto. This new version of the legend, despite its anachronism, appears often from then on in Paduan historical works.²⁴ The Venetians also adopted it. The founding date of 421 is mentioned in a chronicle of Venice whose author lived in 1177, and again several times in the thirteenth century.²⁵ The chronicle of the Doge Andrea Dandolo (1362) reflects this legend in detail.²⁶ Lorenzo de' Monacis adopted it in his *Chronicle of Venice* (1421–28).²⁷ It then reappears, carefully evaluated, in the *Chronicle of Marc Anton Sabellico* (1486).²⁸

After a fire at the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua on 2 February 1420 destroyed the city archives, the old historical accounts were consolidated for better safekeeping. From then on, several copies of a purported founding document for Venice were circulating in Venice, the content of which was based on this legend.²⁹ The legend states that the Paduans on the Rialto began to lay the foundations of Venice (*'principium fundamenti actum fuit'*) at noon on 25 March 421, without specifying which buildings were constructed. In the version of the legend that began spreading in the late thirteenth century, S. Giacomo appears as the first church in Venice, but not yet as the founding building. Rather, a fire which destroyed many houses is said to have broken out in the year 428. In order to extinguish it, the construction of a church was vowed. The sanctuary was dedicated to St Jacob on 8 January 429.

24 G. da Nono, *Liber de generazione* (c. 1320), and later writings. Lazzarini, *op. cit.* (note 23), 105ss; Marzemin, *op. cit.* (note 23), 366ss.

25 Marzemin, *op. cit.* (note 23), 365s.

26 R. Pesce (ed.), *Cronica di Venexia detta di Enrico Dandolo. origini – 1362*. Venice 2010, 6–14; G. Arnaldi, 'Andrea Dandolo doge-cronista', in: A. Pertusi (ed.), *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi*, Florence 1970, 127–268; Antonio Carile, 'Aspetti della cronistica veneziana nei secoli XIII e XIV', in: Pertusi, *Storiografia veneziana op. cit.*, 75–126.

27 Lazzarini, *op. cit.* (note 23); Marzemin, *op. cit.* (note 23); Lorenzo de' Monacis, *Chronicon de rebus Venetis*, Venice 1758, 9s.

28 M. Coccio called Sabellico, 'Historiae rerum Venetarum ab urbe condita libri', in: *Degli Istorici delle Cose Veneziane i quali hanno scritto per Pubblico Decreto*, Venice 1718, vol. 1, 13–18.

29 Lazzarini, *op. cit.* (note 23), 110ss; Marzemin, *op. cit.* (note 23), 367ss; One of these copies is reproduced in the first edition of P.G. Molmenti, *Storia di Venezia nella vita privata*, Turin 1880, 563s.

Following the creation of the purported founding document, the legend was modified in such a way that the date of 25 March 421 was made to refer to S. Giacomo di Rialto. This detail, as far as I can establish, was first reported by the Florentine humanist and historian Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459) in his *Dialogue on the Republic of Venice*, which was intended as a eulogy to Venice: after stating that the first foundations of Venice had been laid on the Feast of the Annunciation in the year 421, he continues that according to some, this was also the day on which S. Giacomo di Rialto had been consecrated, signalling the founding of the state of Venice.³⁰ Being a Florentine, Manetti certainly did not create the new version of the Venetian founding legend himself; it was probably already widespread in Venice. Manetti might have heard it in Venice. He stayed there several times, especially in 1447, 1448 and in 1450 as a Florentine ambassador, he was active in important missions there, and in the years around 1440–53 he was engaged also in politics for Venice.³¹ The Venetian representatives at the Roman Curia might well have been the ones to have conveyed the legend to Manetti, and it may have received its final polish in this circle. During the second half of the fifteenth century, the legend gradually found its way into the Venetian chronicles.

The detailed chronicle of Venice written by Bernardo Giustiniani in 1477–1481, probably the most influential work of its kind in this period, reproduces the entire foundation legend in its high mediaeval form, but refers the date of 25 March 421 to S. Giacomo di Rialto, i.e. the settlement on the Rialto, the building of houses, the fire, the vote, and the construction of S. Giacomo.³² Whether the date applies to the laying of the foundation stone or the consecration of the finished structure is not clear to Giustiniani. When exactly the settlement of the Rialto and the construction of houses commenced also remains open: '*At si originem urbis ab Athila ducemus non erit facile annum et mensem et diem colligere ut supra fecimus de Ecclesia*'.³³ For his new version, Giustiniani expressly refers to the supposed founding document, which he says had been preserved over time.

30 'sunt qui memoriae tradiderint eo, quo dixi, Beatae Virginis Festo die dedicatum fuisse templum D. Jacobo Apostolo sacrum, ab iis, qui tunc erant incolae Rivi alti, primum extractum, unde civitatis ipsius ducta sunt primordia'. G. Manetti, *Dialogus de re publica Venetorum*, ed. N. Crassi, in: J. G. Graevius (ed.), *Thesaurus Antiquitatum et Historiarum Italiae*, vol. 5, 1, Leiden 1722, 26s.

31 Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Vite di huomini illustri del sec. XV*, ed. P. D'Ancona, E. Aeschlimann, Milan 1951, 271ss; N. Naldi, 'Vita Jannotii Manetti', in: L.A. Muratori (ed.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 20, Milan 1731, 529–608.

32 B. Giustiniani, 'De origine urbis Venetorum eorumque gestis libri', in: J.G. Graevius, P. Burman (ed.), *Thesaurus Antiquitatum et Historiarum Italiae*, vol. 5, 1, Leiden 1722, 10s.

33 Giustiniani, *op. cit.* (note 32), 34.

Marino Sanuto introduced the legend in its classical form into Venetian chronology: in both his *Chronicle of Venice* (mentioned in 1483, was continuing in 1493) and in the *Lives of the Doges* (mentioned in 1493, but not completed until 1530).³⁴ In both works, Sanuto adopts Giustiniani's reference to the date of 25 March 421 to S. Giacomo di Rialto and repeats it in his diaries.³⁵ However, he ignores the foregoing account of the fire and the foundation vote. In addition, he refers the date firmly to the laying of the foundation stone. With this assertion, the foundation of Venice is made to coincide with the foundation of S. Giacomo. Sanuto demonstrates the security of the date in the *Lives of the Doges* by reproducing the purported founding document.³⁶ He connects it to S. Giacomo simply by claiming the support of many authors: 25 March 421, it is said, was the date when '*posta la prima pietra di la fundamenta, come molti scrive, di la chiesia di san Iacomo de Riavaolto*'.

From then on, this date for the laying of the foundation stone of S. Giacomo, and with it the date of the foundation of the city, became a firm topos in Venice. During the restoration of 1531, large inscriptions were placed on both sides of the choir, commemorating that day as the foundation of S. Giacomo. In addition, the commemorative inscriptions of the 1531 and 1601 restorations indicate the year 421 as the founding date of Venice and of S. Giacomo indirectly, by dating the restoration 1110 and 1179 respectively *ab urbe condita*. Francesco Sansovino, in his guidebook to Venice, mentions the flight of the population of Aquileia from the Huns to the lagoon, and yet sticks with the earlier foundation date for S. Giacomo.³⁷ Foreign visitors to Venice, such as Felix Faber in 1483–1484, and the Bolognese historiographer Leandro Alberti in his great *Guide to Italy* (1550), also assumed that date.³⁸

-
- 34 M. Sanuto, *De origine, situ et magistratibus urbis Venetae ovvero la città di Venetia*, ed. A. Caracciolo Aricò, Milan 1980, 12; idem, *Le vite dei dogi*, ed. G. Monticolo, in: L.A. Muratori (ed.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 22. 4, Città di Castello 1900, 18.
- 35 M. Sanuto, *Diari*, Venice 1879, XII 80 (26. III. 1511): S. Giacomo was founded on 25 March 421 'principiando la città di Veniexia'.
- 36 Sanuto, *Vite dei dogi*, *op. cit.*, (note 34), 5s.
- 37 Sansovino, *op. cit.* (note 6), 72s. In the chronological list at the end of his guidebook of Venice, he gives the following data: 407 'prima origine di Venetia', when the Venetians fled from Radagaisus and his Goths into the lagoon. – 413 'seconda origine di Venetia', when the Venetians fled into the lagoon from Alaric, who conquered Padua. – 418 Fire on the Rialto and vote for the construction of a church. – 421 Construction of S. Giacomo. – 453 'terza origine di Venetia', when the inhabitants of Aquileia fled to the lagoon from Attila.
- 38 For example, F. Faber, *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem*, ed. K.D. Haßler, Stuttgart 1843–49, vol. 3, 401; Hieronymus Megiser, *Venediger Herrlichkeit und Regiment*, Frankfurt 1602, 38–39; Leandro Alberti, *Descriptione di tutta Italia*, Bologna 1550, 451v–452r; B. Cladders, *Französische Venedig-Reisen im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. Wandlungen des Venedig-Bildes und der Reisebeschreibung*, Geneva 2002, 90–94.

In Florence and Como, critical voices rose against the dating of the Baptistery and of S. Fedele in Roman antiquity.³⁹ In Venice, the critical examination of historical evidence so typical of the Renaissance did not apply to the founding legend. However, several foreign historians were more cautious in this respect: for example, Niccolò Machiavelli recalled the legend that the invasion of Attila in northern Italy in 451 had led to the foundation of Venice, and Biondo Flavio, in the innovative source research characteristic of him, went back to the earliest chronicles and thus dated the foundation of Venice to the year 556.⁴⁰ Moreover, Biondo thought that the foundation of Venice should be located where S. Marco was later built, and considered the Church of, founded in the later curtilage of S. Marco, to be the first sanctuary in Venice. The Venetian historians of the Renaissance without exception rejected Biondo's opinion.

As unanimously as with the dating, the Venetian historians believed that the original building of S. Giacomo was still preserved. Lorenzo de' Monacis, in his Chronicle of Venice cited above, declared already that in the existing building he could recognise the traces of its old age: '*Aedem ad hunc diem inter Rivalentinas mensas cum vestigio vetustatis cernimus.*' The later chronicles, as well as the travelogue of Felix Faber and the Italian guidebook of Leondro Alberti repeat this declaration, either verbatim or in essence. Francesco Sansovino adduced a concrete detail in order to confirm the great age of S. Giacomo: that the level of the floor of the church was below that of the adjacent area.⁴¹ It is certainly no coincidence that the mediaeval building of S. Giacomo had been preserved despite its inconspicuous appearance. It was apparently maintained and conserved because it was considered to be the founding monument of

39 B. Giovio, *Historiae patriae libri*, c. 1532–1534. Cited by Porter, *op. cit.* (note 3), 326s. Against him, Ninguarda, *op. cit.* (note 3).

40 N. Machiavelli, *Historie fiorentine*, Florence 1532, 10v; Biondo Flavio, 'De origine et gestis Venetorum liber', in: Graevius, *op. cit.* (note 30), vol. 5. 1, 1. Idem, 'Populi veneti historiarum liber', in: B. Nogara (ed.), *Scritti inediti e rari di Biondo Flavio*, Rome 1927, 82; Idem, *Decades*, Venice 1543 (translated by L. Fauno), 29r (with polemic against the dissenting opinion of Lorenzo de' Monacis), 42v. Idem, *Italia illustrata*, Venice 1542, 169v–170v.

41 'Et in questo si discende nella guisa che si fa in San Iacomo di Rialto, apertissimo argomento della sua struttua fatta già per molte centinaia d'anni, percioche essendo cresciuto il terreno dalla parte di fuori, il primo suolo della antica Città rimasto nel fondo, ne dà segno dell'opere che sa far la natura ne gli elementi', in connection with S. Tomà. Sansovino 1581, 64r. On fol. 72r, Sansovino reports that Doge Domenico Selvi restored S. Giacomo in 1071 after the construction 'andava in rovina'. However, the damage and the restoration apparently did not affect the building substantially, because the construction of S. Marco, for which Sansovino presents S. Giacomo as a model, is said to have been completed 'nella forma che si vede' in 1043, i.e., before the restoration of S. Giacomo. The Doge Dom. Selvi is said to have provided S. Giacomo with mosaics in 1071. In the same year, he is said to have initiated the mosaicing of S. Marco.

Venice. That is why it was so important to emphasise that its original form should be preserved and why it really did remain preserved during the restorations. Its simplicity and compact dimensions demonstrated to him that the building had arisen at the initial settlement on the Rialto. This process is reminiscent of the continuous preservation of the temple of Capitoline Jupiter in Ancient Rome despite its primitive Tuscan appearance. In this case, too, the shape remained constant, while the decor was altered over time.

The chronicles of Venice from the very beginning regularly highlight the religious significance of the city's foundation on 25 March: Venice was founded on the same day on which God placed Christ immaculately in Mary's body with the annunciation of his birth and on which he had also created Adam, i.e. on the date when the foundations for humanity and Christianity alike were laid. The artificial connection between the date of the foundation of Venice and that of S. Giacomo was apparently intended to give Venice a special position in the divine plan of creation. In addition, Giustiniani assumes that God intervened with a miracle at the foundation: '*Video hanc aedem miraculo potius factam atque agente Dio quam humano consilio*'.⁴² Giustiniani's thinking here paved the way for the Venetian historiography of the Renaissance. After the Rialto fire of 1514, it was said that S. Giacomo had been miraculously saved from destruction. Even the Roman Curia was induced to support this view. Pope Leo X declared in two breviaries of 1516 and 1520, granting indulgences to S. Giacomo, that the church had been founded by a miracle and had overcome the fire of the Rialto by a miracle as well.⁴³

Giustiniani praised this purported foundation monument of Venice as the most sublime and most holy church in Venice, despite the magnificence of S. Marco and the higher rank of the Cathedral: '*Nullum est enim in civitate aedificium templo augustius sanctiusve*'.⁴⁴ Francesco Sansovino called S. Giacomo the most beautiful and venerable of all the Venetian churches, though it was small and narrow: '*Et ancora il tempio sia picciolo et angusto, però per pietre eccellenti et fini, per pitture antiche, per ornamenti d'altari et per reverenda divotione è forse la principale*'.⁴⁵ This background makes it understandable why he cited S. Giacomo as the model for the disposition of S. Marco. After the restoration of 1531, S. Giacomo received a special status, one befitting its position as the founding monument of Venice. The church was removed from the jurisdiction of the religious authorities and, like S. Marco, directly subordinated to the

42 Giustiniani, *op. cit.* (note 32), 34.

43 Texts reproduced by Gardini, *op. cit.* (note 5), 66–72.

44 Giustiniani, *op. cit.* (note 32), 34.

45 Sansovino, *op. cit.* (note 6), 72v.

Doge. The bull with which Pope Clement VII sealed the transfer emphasises the position of S. Giacomo as the founding monument of Venice.⁴⁶

The history of the founding legend of S. Giacomo is characteristic of the strong sense of tradition and the special state mentality that prevailed in Venice.⁴⁷ In itself, the glorification of one's own city or state through the creation of a suitable founding legend was quite normal. Many Occidental cities, states or ruling houses besides Venice pretended to have been founded by the Trojans about the same time as Rome, or even earlier. However, the religious exaltation present in the foundation account of Venice stands out from these legends. In the course of the early Renaissance, the Venetians artificially created a national narrative which aimed to create a perfect connection between their state and religion; one that found numerous parallels in the external representation of the Venetian state.⁴⁸ The tendency of the Venetians to sacralise their own state was already noticed as a peculiarity during the fifteenth century. Pope Pius II criticised the fact that the Venetians regarded their state as a deity and that nothing else was sacred to them.⁴⁹ This observation was widespread: a French visitor confirmed it as early as 1490.⁵⁰

11.6 The Crossed-Dome Church as an Antique Building Type of Greek or Eastern Roman Origin

The foundation date of 421 would mean that S. Giacomo di Rialto was founded before the Western Roman Empire perished, i.e. in Roman Antiquity, according to the conception found in the plan of Ancient Rome begun on behalf of Pope Leo X, which was to include all buildings up to the time of Emperor

46 Texts reproduced by Gardini, *op. cit.* (note 5), 73ss.

47 Muir, *op. cit.* (note 22), 13–61.

48 This phenomenon is well known, including in art history. Cf. S. Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall. Studies in the religious iconography of the Venetian Republic*. Rome 1974; Idem, 'L'immagine della repubblica di Venezia', in: L. Puppi (ed.), *Architettura e Utopia nella Venezia del '500*, Milan 1980, 40–49; W. Wolters, *Der Bilderschmuck des Dogenpalastes. Untersuchungen zur Selbstdarstellung der Republik Venedig im 16. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 1983; K. Imesch-Oehry, 'Serenissima und "Villa". Skizze zu einer Rhetorik der architektonischen Form in Palladios venezianischen Villen der Terraferma', *Georges-Bloch-Jahrbuch* 2 (1995), 74–85.

49 'Hypocrite sunt; vulgo videri christiani volunt, ne vera nihil de Dio sentiunt; quibus preter rem publicam, quam veluti numen habent, nihil sanctum, nihil religiosum est ... Vos, Veneti, Romanam contemnitis ecclesiam'. Pius II, *Commentarii*, ed. A. van Heck, Città del Vaticano 1984, vol. 2, 687, 689.

50 Cladders, *op. cit.* (note 38), 179.

Honorius (395–423).⁵¹ In the Renaissance, the crossed-dome disposition could even be harmonised with the description of the temples given by Vitruvius.⁵² To understand this, one must set aside today's interpretation of the text and recall instead how differently from what is valid today outstanding scholars such as Leon Battista Alberti or Fra Giocondo understood the Vitruvian description of the Etruscan temple.⁵³

Vitruvius writes in the chapter about the 'composition of the holy temples' (3.2): 'A temple will be *in antis* when it has *antae* in front of the walls which enclose the cella, and in the middle, between the *antae*, two columns, and above the pediment ...'. Today, the *antae* are interpreted as far-protruding wall tongues, but this reading is nowhere confirmed in ancient literature. There, the terms *antae* or *antes* mean only the first of a row, for example of vine stocks or the like.⁵⁴ Therefore, in the Renaissance, *antae* were usually understood to be pillars or pilasters jutting out from the corners of the front wall. Examples of scholars taking this interpretation are the pioneering Vitruvian edition of Fra Giocondo (1511), the famous Vitruvian commentary of Guillaume Philandrier (1544) and even as late as the Vitruvian dictionary of Bernardino Baldi (1612).⁵⁵ The columns between the *antae* of Vitruvius are therefore on the front wall.

In the chapter on 'the interior of the temple and the distribution of the pronaos' (4.4) Vitruvius repeats that between the *antae* there should be two columns, and then he continues: 'If the width be more than forty feet, columns are to be placed towards the inner part (*introrsus*) on the same line as the columns between the *antae*. They should have the same height as the columns in front (*in fronte*) ...'.⁵⁶ According to today's interpretation of the term

51 F.M. Molza, 'Canzone in mortem Raph. urbin. pict. et archit. ad Le. X.P.M.', in: Di Teodoro, *op. cit.* (note 1), 243; H. Günther, *Das Studium der antiken Architektur in den Zeichnungen der Hochrenaissance*, Tübingen 1988, 318–327.

52 Günther, *Vorstellungen vom griechischen Tempel*, *op. cit.* (note 18), 135–138.

53 L.B. Alberti, *Zehn Bücher über die Architektur*, transl. M. Theuer, Leipzig 1910, 619s, 464, Anm. 44; R. Krautheimer, 'Alberti's templum etruscum', *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 12 (1961), 65–73; E.J. Johnson, *S. Andrea in Mantua*, Pennsylvania/London 1975, 52; G. Morolli, 'Vetus Etruria'. *Il mito degli Etruschi nella letteratura architettonica nell'arte e nella cultura da Vitruvio a Winckelmann*, Florence 1985, 47; Idem, 'Gli etruschi e la letteratura architettonica del classicismo', in: F. Borsi (ed.), *Fortuna degli Etruschi*, cat. exh. Florence 1985, 82; Günther, *Studium*, *op. cit.* (note 51), 183–197.

54 For the term *antae* or *antes* in antique literature and in the Renaissance, cf. Günther, *Vorstellungen vom griechischen Tempel*, *op. cit.* (note 18), 141–143.

55 Vitruvius, *De architectura*, ed. Fra Giocondo, Venice 1511, 23v ss., 38v; G. Philandrier, *In decem libros M. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura annotationes*, Venice 1544, 62; B. Baldi, *De verborum vitruvianorum significatione*, Augsburg 1612, 13.

56 Cf. also the translations of Francesco di Giorgio (*Il 'Vitruvio Magliabechiano' di Francesco di Giorgio Martini*, ed. G. Scaglia, Florence 1985, 123) and of Fabio Calvo (*Vitruvio e*

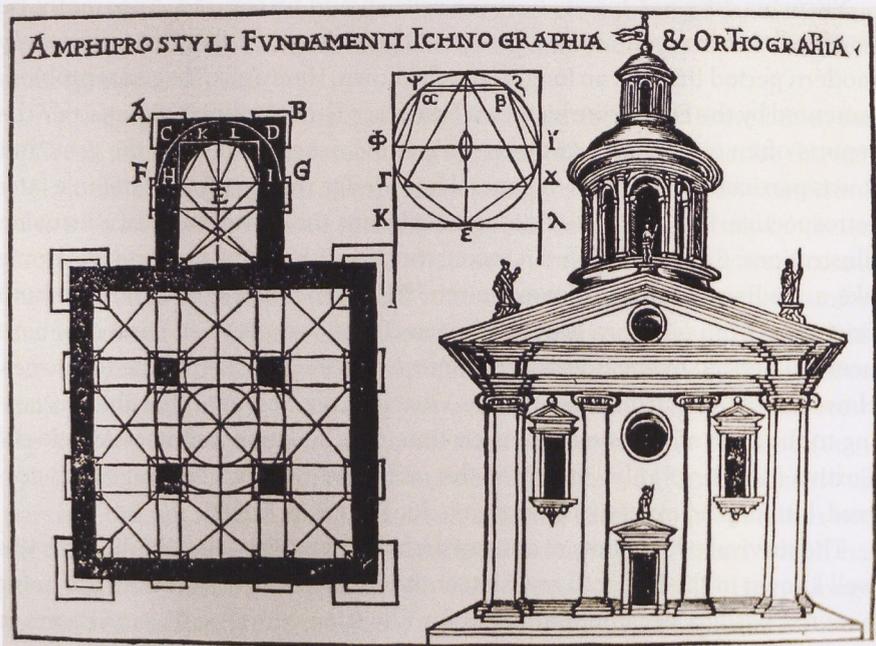


FIGURE 11.12 Cesare Cesariano, reconstruction of the 'Amphiprostylos' in his edition of the treatise of Vitruvius, Como 1521

antae as protruding tongues of the wall, the columns placed inside appertain to a vestibule of the temple. However, in accordance with the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century understanding of the word *antae* as a corner pilaster, they would belong to the interior of the cella.

The ensuing text by Vitruvius seems to confirm this interpretation: why should Vitruvius specifically clarify that the columns placed *introrsus* are as high as the columns at the front if they all belong to the vestibule? In that case, such would be almost self-evident. In addition, the columns placed *introrsus* are said to have been designed differently from those in front: they are considerably slimmer in proportion and have more fluting. Vitruvius then recommends this design of columns generally for use in confined spaces and in closed spaces (*in angustis locis et in concluso spatio*). Fra Giocondo and Cesare Cesariano (1521), in their illustrations of this passage of Vitruvius, depict four columns in the interior of the cella with equal distances from the walls and from each other, as in a crossed-dome church (fig. 11.12).

Raffaello. *Il 'De architectura' di Vitruvio nella traduzione inedita di Fabio Calvo Ravennate*, ed. V. Fontana, P. Morachiello, Rome 1975, 182).

Vitruvius does not specify how the cella should be covered. Apparently, he assumed that everyone in his day knew the ceiling was flat, but in the early modern period this was no longer so well known. Here arose the usual problem lamented by the Florentine historian Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540):⁵⁷ the reports often omit what was taken for granted or self-evident at the time, but it was particularly this kind of general knowledge that would be vital in a later retrospective. Fra Giocondo does not represent the elevation in his Vitruvian illustrations; Cesariano shows it reconstructed with vaults and a central dome like a mediaeval crossed-dome church.⁵⁸ Fra Giocondo and Cesariano both originated from northern Italy (Verona and Como respectively) and may have been influenced by the Romano-Byzantine buildings in their home territories. However, their interpretation of the Vitruvian text is quite plausible according to the state of knowledge of their time. The Venetian architect Angelo dal Cortivo (1462–1536) also imagined the *peripteros* with domes and vaults covered, but he paid excessive attention to local architecture.⁵⁹

The survival of elements of ancient architecture during the Middle Ages was well known in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the greatest example being how the basilica became the model for Christian churches. Vasari reports in his outline of the development of the arts that the Romanesque basilica of ss. Apostoli in Florence was built by Charlemagne and that although it was only of modest size, it was built with good artistic understanding and thus demonstrated that in Tuscany some good architecture (of antiquity) had survived or had been revived. It was for this reason that Brunelleschi had taken ss. Apostoli as a model for his basilicas of S. Spirito and S. Lorenzo.⁶⁰ In his treatise *De Roma triumphante* (1459), speaking of the central courtyards of the Florentine palaces of his time, Biondo Flavio states that ancient architecture had been adopted by continuing a mediaeval tradition, apparently because the ancient type of construction had survived during the Middle Ages. He describes the development as follows: according to many ancient writings, the first Christian churches were established in Roman private dwellings, because Christian worship was not yet allowed in public. The cloisters of monasteries will therefore have derived from the courtyards of Roman houses.

57 F. Guicciardini, *Ricordi diari memorie*, Pordenone 1981, 214s. (no. 143).

58 Vitruvius 1521, *op. cit.* (note 3), 52r–v, 67r.

59 Cod. Zichy, fol. 129. M. Biffi, 'Una proposta di ordinamento del testo di architettura del codice Zichy. Le origini della produzione teorica di Francesco di Giorgio Martini', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa Cl. Lett. e Fil.*, Ser. 4, 2. 2 (1997), 531–600; A. Foscari, 'A proposito del Codice Zichy. Angelo Cortivo designator (forse per Pietro Lombardo)', *Arte Documento. Rivista e Collezione di Storia e Tutela dei Beni Culturali* 31 (2015), 73–77.

60 Vasari, *op. cit.* (note 2), vol.1, 235.

The courtyards of *all'antica* palaces should, then, resemble mediaeval cloisters. From this, Biondo concludes that the courtyards must ultimately originate from Roman antiquity.⁶¹

According to Vitruvius, the disposition of Roman temples derived from that of Greek temples. The Greek technical terms used by him to describe the temples would also suggest this. Some types of temples treated by him existed only in Greece and not in Rome. Little was known in early modern Italy of ancient Greek architecture. The ancient Greek temples in southern Italy were consistently ignored. In the early fifteenth century, Ciriaco d'Ancona and Cristoforo Buondelmonti brought material about ancient buildings in the Levant to Italy. However, in contrast to the progress made in Roman archaeology, studies of ancient Greek architecture flourished for a short time only. The most important report from Greece came from the Venetian scholar Urbano Bolzanio (1443–1527).⁶² He stayed several times in the Levant from 1475 onwards. Bolzanio apparently did not concur with Ciriaco's archaeological findings but rather with the confused legends about the remains of antiquity in Athens which had arisen in the Middle Ages, similar to those spread in Rome.⁶³ He no longer recognised the Parthenon in Athens as a work of Phidias, but presumed it was a '*tempio antiquo de' romani*'.⁶⁴ In the sixteenth century, knowledge vanished even more completely. Reports of journeys to Greece consistently decreased in number and in intellectual level; in the end, Italians hardly reported on such journeys. From the sixteenth century onwards, it was mainly the French who explored the Levant. The book on antiquities published by Sebastiano Serlio in Venice in 1540 demonstrates how little knowledge of classical Greece was left in Italy at that time. Serlio lists only one building from ancient Greece, and even that report is completely fantastical.⁶⁵

In such circumstances, it was plausible that the crossed-dome churches seemed to confirm Vitruvius' assertion that the disposition of the Roman temples was derived from the ancient Greek. Already in the fifteenth century the

61 Biondo Flavio, *De Roma triumphante libri decem*, Basel 1531, 188–190; Cf. H. Günther, 'Albertis Vorstellung von antiken Häusern', in: K.W. Forster (ed.), *Theorie der Praxis: Leon Battista Alberti als Humanist und Theoretiker der bildenden Künste*, Berlin 1999, 157–2002.

62 E. Zibarth, 'Ein griechischer Reisebericht', *Athenische Mitteilungen* 24 (1899), 72–88; L. Beschi, 'L'Anonimo Ambrosiano: Un itinerario in Grecia di Urbano Bolzanio', *Atti dell'Accademia Naz. dei Lincei. Rendiconti*, Cl. scienze mor., stor., fil. Ser. 8, 39 (1984), 3–22; See also V. Fanelli, 'Il Ginnasio greco di Leone X a Roma', *Studi Romani* 9 (1961), 375–388.

63 Cf. especially the Athenian Mirabilia of the Viennese Anonymus of c. 1456–1458. C. Wachsmuth, *Die Stadt Athen im Alterthum*, Leipzig 1874–90, vol. 1, 735.

64 Zibarth, *op. cit.* (note 62), 73.

65 S. Serlio, *Il terzo libro nel qual si figurano e descrivono le antichità di Roma e le altre che sono in Italia e fuori de Italia*, Venice 1540, 96v–97r.



FIGURE 11.13 Giovanni and Gentile Bellini, *St. Mark preaching in Alexandria*, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

building type was associated with Eastern Roman rather than Western Roman antiquity. According to legend, it was a Greek who initiated the construction of S. Giacomo.⁶⁶ It was assumed to have been the master shipbuilder Entinopos of Candia (Heraklion) who vowed to construct the church after his house burned down. Already the Spanish writer Pero Tafur reported about Venice after his journey around the Mediterranean (1435–39) that S. Marco was ‘made with chapels in the Greek manner.’⁶⁷ Giorgio Vasari and Francesco Sansovino characterised the architectural system of S. Marco as ‘*maniera greca*’.⁶⁸ Vasari, who had presumably been informed about the matter in Venice, does not use the term negatively here, as he does when judging mediaeval painting as artless, but rather topographically or typologically: he is claiming that S. Marco was built by Greek architects. Bernardo Giustiniani had already recorded this attribution in his *Chronicle of Venice*,⁶⁹ and it recurs in the second edition of Sansovino’s guidebook to Venice in the form that the best architects there were in Constantinople at the time had been commissioned for the new building of S. Marco.⁷⁰ In the first edition, Sansovino only repeats the legend that the construction of S. Giacomo was initiated by a Greek,⁷¹ but he certainly connected the church with Greek architecture as well, since he presents it as a model for S. Marco and S. Marco in turn as a model for the many Venetian churches

66 According to the chronicle of Andrea Dandolo. Text by Gardini, *op. cit.* (note 5), 17.

67 ‘esta es fecha à capillas à la manera Greçia’. P. Tafur, *Andaças é viajes por diversas partes del mundo avidos (1435–39)*, ed. M. Jiménez de la Espada, Madrid 1874, vol. 1, 205–206.

68 Sansovino, *op. cit.* (note 6), 30v; Vasari, *op. cit.* (note 2), vol. 1, 236.

69 Giustiniani, *op. cit.* (note 32), 184.

70 Sansovino, Stringa, *op. cit.* (note 8), 6r.

71 Sansovino, *op. cit.* (note 6), 72v.



FIGURE 11.14 San Marco, Venice, external view
PHOTO: AUTHOR

in the line of S. Giacomo. Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, in their painting of the *Sermon of St. Mark in Alexandria*, visualise the urban landscape in an effort to reproduce the oriental metropolis in the heyday of the Roman Empire (figs. 11.13–11.14).⁷² The temple appearing in the centre, probably the famous sanctuary of Serapis in Alexandria, resembles S. Marco, somewhat approximated to antiquity by elements from the Renaissance and Hagia Sophia. This gives rise to the impression that the architectural system of S. Marco had been prefigured in the East since antiquity.

Vasari's outline of the development of the arts, which continues to influence views of the Renaissance to this day, is altogether aligned to Florence and Rome and marginalises the development taking place in Northern Italy and its influence on Central Italy. Nevertheless, even it occasionally reflects the Venetian view of the revival of architecture. Immediately after the treatment of ss. Apostoli as a model for the revival of antiquity by Brunelleschi, he continues: 'The same can be noticed at the church of S. Marco in Venice.'⁷³

⁷² J. Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, Stuttgart 1985, 87–102; P. F. Brown, *Venetian narrative painting in the age of Carpaccio*, New Haven/London 1988, 203–209.

⁷³ 'Il medesimo si può vedere nella chiesa di San Marco di Venezia'. Vasari, *op. cit.* (note 2), vol. 1, 235.

Thus, Vasari considered S. Marco, like ss. Apostoli, to be a testimony to the continuation or renewal of an ancient building tradition in the early Middle Ages: the ancient building tradition, in the context of S. Marco, obviously does not hark back to Roman architecture but the early Byzantine or the Justinian architecture in Constantinople. Moreover, the sentence seems to indicate that S. Marco, like ss. Apostoli in Florence, had served as a model for the dawn of Renaissance architecture in Venice. Apparently because of the important art-historical position that S. Marco is given here, Vasari gives its building history an unusually detailed treatment, and he proves to be well informed in terms of the state of knowledge at that time. He states that the church had been begun after the transfer of the body of St Mark from Alexandria in 828 and was renovated from 973 onwards on top of the original foundations, due to considerable damage sustained.

11.7 Constantinople as a Second Rome

In Constantinople, from late antiquity through the Middle Ages to the early modern period, it was repeatedly emphasised that the city continued the tradition of Rome and it was described as a new Rome.⁷⁴ Manuel Chrysolaras spread this view in Western Europe at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Chrysolaras, a relative and friend of Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, had come to Venice in 1394 or 1395 as a Byzantine envoy. In the following years, until 1402, he taught Greek in Florence, Milan and Pavia. From 1407 to 1415, he travelled throughout Europe on political missions and stayed at the Roman Curia. Most of the prominent Greek scholars were his pupils. Even beyond this circle, Italian humanists held Chrysolaras in high esteem.

In 1411, in a letter to the Byzantine Emperor, Chrysolaras made a comparison between Constantinople and Rome. His treatise *Synkrēsis* is based on a comprehensive knowledge of the relevant classical and post-classical literature and follows the ancient patterns, with the highest degree of rhetorical competence.⁷⁵ Chrysolaras sees many similarities between Rome and Constantinople, which he says resembles Rome as a daughter resembles her mother. In his opinion,

74 E. Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae*, diss. Munich 1968.

75 The letter was widely distributed during the Renaissance (Latin translation c. 1424). It was often reprinted until the eighteenth century and even later. F. Grabler (ed.), *Europa im XV. Jahrhundert von Byzantinern gesehen*, Graz/Vienna/Cologne 1965, 111–141; Similar in tenor is the letter to Johannes Chrysolaras, *op. cit.*, 142–145; Cf. H. Homeyer, 'Zur "Synkresis" des Manuel Chrysolaras, einem Vergleich zwischen Rom und Konstantinopel', *Klio* 62 (1980), 525–534; On the influence of Manuel Chrysolaras on the humanists, see G. Cammelli, *Manuele Crisolara*, Florence 1941, 43–106.

the more beautiful of the two is the daughter: 'The mother is beautiful and well formed, but in many ways the daughter is more beautiful.' To substantiate this comparison and evaluation, Chrysolaras cites the buildings and technical installations of Constantinople, especially those of ancient times: churches, palaces, theatres, sports fields, racecourses, gymnasiums, honorary columns, etc. The *Synchrēsis* culminates in a eulogy to the Hagia Sophia (fig. 11.15). Perhaps the Hagia Sophia confirmed to him the view that the crossed-dome church had its origin in the Eastern Roman Empire. In terms of its tectonics, Hagia Sophia is similar to a crossed-dome church, since the thrust of the dome is absorbed by annex spaces at the four corners. It can be compared with a crossed-dome church, according to its description in the panegyric on Justinian's public works written by Procopius of Caesarea during the reign of that emperor, or according to the late-fifteenth-century Codex Barberini, copied from a design by Ciriaco d'Ancona (fig. 11.16). Following a long Byzantine tradition which praised the Hagia Sophia as 'heaven on earth', Chrysolaras repeats incessantly that the church is more sublime and magnificent than any other building. He concludes from its masterful construction that the architect was also extremely well versed in theories such as that of correct proportions, geometry and statics. Accordingly, he argues, architecture in Constantinople not only grew in beauty, but also its theoretical foundations developed further. The overall tenor of the *Synchrēsis* is that Roman architecture lived on in Constantinople and that it had increased in quality, at least until Justinian. The Hagia Sophia was celebrated in both the Orient and Occident, as well as in Italy, as the most magnificent building anywhere in the world.

The topos of describing Constantinople as a new Rome continued into the early modern period.⁷⁶ Chrysolas' view that the beauty of architecture in Constantinople had increased was also well received in Venice. In his *Chronicle of Venice*, when speaking of S. Marco, Bernardo Giustiniani praises the superiority of Christian over pagan sanctuaries in general and he presents the Hagia Sophia as a paradigm of that superiority.⁷⁷ This is repeated in the second edition of Sansovino's guidebook of Venice.⁷⁸

In the Italian Renaissance, the question of how much of Roman heritage survived in Byzantine architecture was rarely explicitly raised, but the idea circulated that ancient traditions had continued unbroken in the East. Vespasiano da Bisticci wrote that at his time, the Greeks still dressed as they did 1,000 or 1,500 years earlier, i.e. as they were clothed under the Roman

76 See, for example, V. Scamozzi, *L'Iddea della architettura universale*, Venice 1615, vol. 1, 158.

77 Giustiniani, *op. cit.* (note 32), 185.

78 Sansovino, Stringa, *op. cit.* (note 8), 6v.

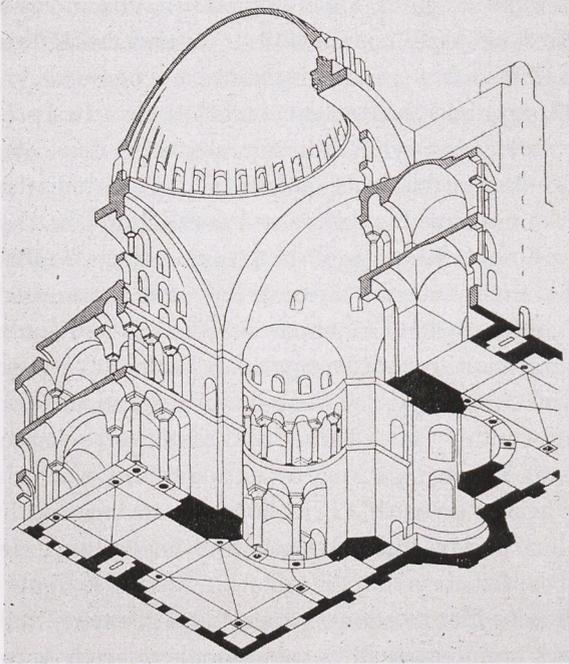


FIGURE 11.15
Hagia Sophia, Istanbul,
isometric view

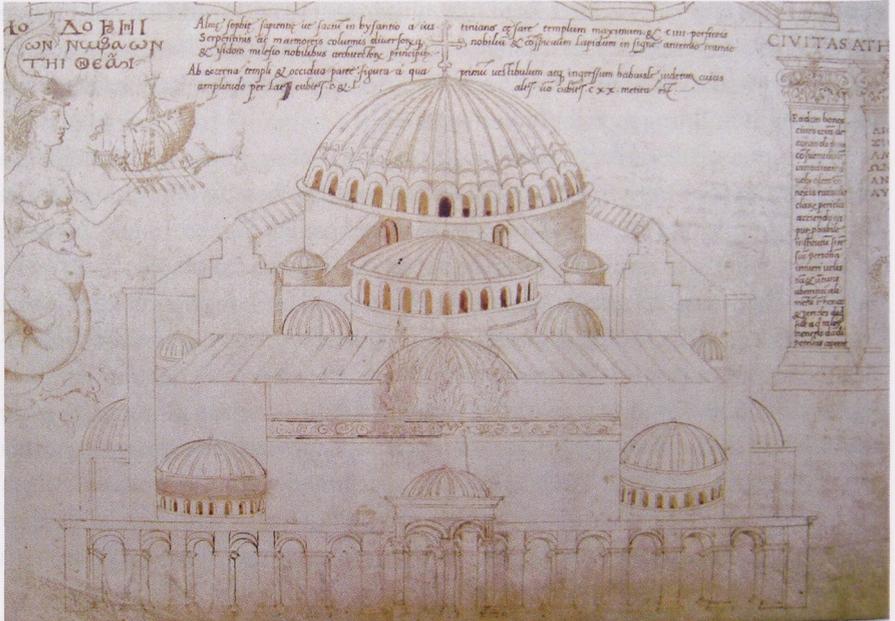


FIGURE 11.16 Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, external view; copy of a design by Ciriaco d'Ancona in the Codex Barberini of Giuliano da Sangallo, Vatican Library

emperors.⁷⁹ He was referring to the apparel worn by Emperor John VII Palaiologos when he visited Italy in 1438 to participate in the Council on the Unification of Christian Churches in East and West. Piero della Francesca depicted Constantine and Pilate with the same regalia as John VII, as if the regalia of the rulers had remained unchanged from the Augustan era past Constantine to the current Byzantine Emperor.⁸⁰ The visit of Manuel II Palaiologos to Paris between 1400 and 1402 had a similar effect. In the *Book of Hours* by the Duke of Berry, the oldest of the three Magi appears in the same robe as the Byzantine Emperor.⁸¹ On the occasion of the visit of Manuel II, medals of the emperors Constantine and Heraklius were cast according to Byzantine models. For a long time, they were considered antique and apparently inspired the revival of the genre of the medal of the Eastern Roman type in Italy.⁸² Vasari adopts the idea that the Roman legacy continued to live on in Byzantium when, in his outline of architectural history, he claims that Constantine had transferred all the good artists from Rome to Constantinople, leaving only modest artists behind in Rome, so that architecture there was losing its artistic value.⁸³ Even during a debate at the Paris Academy in 1668, the depiction of the deacon's garments of St Stephen as being based on the Byzantine model, in a picture by Agostino Carracci, was justified by the argument that the 'Greek church' was closer to original Christianity in place and time than the 'Latin church'.⁸⁴

In the Peruzzi Chapel (S. Croce, Florence), Giotto depicted the raising of Drusiana by St John the Evangelist against the background of a city from which a sanctuary prominently stands out (fig. 11.17). This miracle took place near Ephesus. For an educated observer, it was therefore self-evident to regard that prominent sanctuary as the famous Artemision of Ephesus, the ancient Greek temple that had been one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Giotto gives the building a disposition that was unusual in Florentine architecture,

79 Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Vite di uomini illustri del sec. XV*, ed. P. d'Ancona, E. Aeschlimann, Milan 1961, 16, 87.

80 In the fresco cycle in Arezzo and in the 'Flagellation of Christ'. L. Borgo, 'New questions for Piero's "Flagellation"', *Burlington Magazine* 121 (1979), 547–553. C. Ginzburg, *Erkundungen über Piero*, Berlin 1981, 168s. Ginzburg ties political ideas to this, which has been contested several times.

81 *Europa und der Orient 800–1900*, cat. exh. Berlin 1989, 166.

82 R. Weiss, 'The medieval medallions of Constantine and Heraclius', *Numismatic Chronicle* Ser. 7, 3 (1963), 129–144; Idem, 'Le origini franco-bizantine della medaglia italiana del Rinascimento', in: A. Pertusi (ed.), *Venezia e l'Oriente fra tardo Medioevo e Rinascimento*, Venice 1966, 339–350.

83 Vasari, *op. cit.* (note 2), vol. 1, 226.

84 H. W. van Helsdingen, 'Summaries of two lectures by Philippe de Champagne and Sébastien Bordon, held at the Paris Académie in 1668', *Simiolus* 14 (1984), 177.



FIGURE 11.17 Giotto, *Life of St. John the Evangelist, raising of Drusiana*, in the Peruzzi Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence

namely a sequence of domes over the nave, which is similar to that of S. Marco or the Santo in Padua.⁸⁵ Thus, both representations give the impression that the architectural system of S. Marco already existed in ancient Greece. In fact, the view was circulating that Greek antiquity lived on in Constantinople: this opinion was already included in the epic published by Jean Molinet under the title *Les Faictz et Dictz or Complainte de Grece or Complainte de Constantinople* in 1464, eleven years after the conquest of Constantinople,⁸⁶ and Sir Christopher Wren still maintained it in his *Tracts on architecture*, where he insists regarding the pendentive dome of the Hagia Sophia: ‘*I question not but those at Constantinople had it from the Greeks before them ...*’⁸⁷

11.8 The Relationship of Venice with Constantinople as a Basis for Her Independence

From the beginning of the Venetian Renaissance, Venice was often praised as a new or second Rome.⁸⁸ This metaphor made itself felt even in daily life: as we

85 M.V. Schwarz, ‘Ephesos in der Peruzzi-Kapelle, Kairo in der Bardi-Kapelle’, *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 27–28 (1991/92), 23–57.

86 M. Santucci, ‘Jérusalem, Rome et Constantinople dans l’oeuvre de Molinet’, in: D. Poirion (ed.), *Jérusalem, Rome et Constantinople. L’Image et le Mythe de la Ville*, Paris 1986, 137–148.

87 L.M. Soo, *Wren’s “Tracts” on Architecture and other Writings*, Cambridge 1998, 163.

88 B. Marx, *Venezia – altera Roma? Ipotesi sull’umanesimo veneziano*, Venice 1978. Idem, ‘La tentazione dell’Impero. Roma antica e Venezia umanistica a Confronto’, in: G. Kamecke,

saw with the example of S. Giacomo, the Venetians sometimes dated events in their city, after Roman model, *ab urbe condita*, albeit here admittedly with reference to the year 421 AD. Likewise, the Senate signed its acts 'S(enatus) P(opulus) Q(ue) V(enetus)', along the lines of SPQR(omanus). However, the Venetians saw themselves as descending from Rome by way of Constantinople: Venice was the granddaughter of Rome, so to speak. The Venetian Renaissance sometimes shows a pronounced anti-Roman component among literati, one which was even directed against ancient Rome.⁸⁹ The Venetians occasionally contrasted the legend of the foundation of their city with a Christian church favourably against the foundation of Rome, which was denounced as pagan, or again contrasted the bourgeois self-determination of the Republic with the despotism of the monarchy, or the continuous blossoming of Venice with the decline of Rome, etc. Foreign visitors, too, took on such assertions, as for instance the Canon of Mainz, Bernhard von Breydenbach. In the report of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1486, he stated that Venice had been founded long before Rome, by cultivated citizens who had fled from sacked Troy, and not by shepherds like Rome, just as one could still see at the present that the Venetians were nobler, more industrious and wittier than the Romans.⁹⁰

The Byzantine tradition was more pronounced in Venice than anywhere else in Italy. It was linked to the history of the origins of the lagoon settlement, which we have already mentioned in connection with S. Giacomo di Rialto. The Germanic tribes conquered Rome and took possession of the whole of Italy, with the exception of the marshes in the Venetian lagoon to which the Venetian population had fled, because these were barely accessible to the invaders. This small region was the only Occidental territory left in the possession of the Eastern Roman (or Byzantine) Empire. Consequently, it remained connected to Constantinople as its metropolis. The region in time became an

B. Klein, J. Müller (eds.), *Antike als Konzept. Lesarten in Kunst, Literatur und Politik*, Berlin 2009, 87–111; D.S. Chambers, *The imperial age of Venice 1380–1580*, London 1970, 12–30; A. Mazzacane, 'Lo stato e il dominio nei giuristi veneti durante il "secolo della terraferma"', in: G. Arnaldi, M. Pastore Stocchi (eds.), *Storia della Cultura Veneta dal primo Quattrocento als concilio di Trento*, Vicenza 1980, vol. 3. 1, 577–650; Wolters, *op. cit.* (note 48), 265–267; P. Fortini Brown, *Venice & Antiquity. The Venetian Sense of the Past*, New Haven/ London 1996, 231, 263–277.

89 G. Toffanin, *Machiavelli e il 'Tacitismo': La 'politica storica' al tempo della controriforma*, Padua 1921, 11–14; F. Gaeta, 'Alcune considerazioni sul mito di Venezia', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de la Renaissance: Travaux et Documents* 23 (1961), 58–75.

90 L. Quirini (1420–1479), *Tre trattati sulla nobiltà, Luro Quirini umanista*, ed. V. Branca, Florence 1977, 87–90, commentary 107–113; B. von Breydenbach, *Die heyligen reyßen gen Jherusalem zuo dem heiligen grab*, Mainz 1486, latin ed. of the same year with the title *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam*, chapter *Sequitur oratio commendaticia civitatis et dominationis veneciarum*.

independent administrative unit of the Empire, headed by a *magister militum*. His title *Dux* (allegedly dating from 713–716), from which the name ‘Doge’ derives, refers to the Eastern Roman (or Byzantine) hierarchy. After Charlemagne had accepted the title of Emperor and thus claimed the succession of the Western Roman emperors, he tried to occupy the lagoon, but in vain. In the Peace of Aachen, he was obliged to acknowledge that the region belonged to the Eastern Roman Empire rather than the Western. In the following centuries, the bond with Constantinople was maintained; however, Venice increasingly asserted its independence. The power of the emperors in the East faded away during the course of the Middle Ages. In 1204, the Venetians availed themselves of the Fourth Crusade to conquer Constantinople. The situation now virtually reversed: part of the Eastern Roman Empire’s territory came under Venetian sovereignty, and the Doge assumed the title *dominator* (or *dominus*) *quarte partis et dimidie totius imperii Romani*. Various chronicles of the sixteenth century state that the Senate even deliberated on whether the Doge should go and reside in Constantinople.⁹¹ This phase of history would prove to be a short episode: the old imperial Palaiologan dynasty soon returned to the throne. However, Venice remained especially connected to the Eastern Roman Empire. There was a large Greek colony in the city, estimated at 5,000 people, which maintained its ancestral language and religion.⁹² In 1453, when Constantinople was conquered by the Ottomans, many Greek scholars and Byzantine books came to Venice.⁹³ These contributed substantially to the development of Renaissance culture.

The city’s connection with the Eastern Roman Empire remained in the consciousness of the Venetians for a long time. It was evident in the public representation of the government and in the sacral sphere: in the insignia and

91 Cf., for example, Chambers, *op. cit.* (note 88), 18; Fortini Brown, *op. cit.* (note 88), 17; M. Brusegan, *Miti e leggende di Venezia*, Rome 2007, 90; D.M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, Cambridge etc. 1988, 148–165.

92 D.J. Geanakoplos, *Hellenism and the first Greek war of liberation (1821–1830)*, Thessaloniki 1976, 62; A. Pertusi, ‘L’umanesimo greco dalla fine del secolo XIV agli inizi del secolo XVI’, in: G. Arnaldi, M. Pastore Stocchi (eds.), *Storia della Cultura Veneta*, vol. 3.1, 1980, 177–264; D. Apostolopoulos, ‘Das Weiterleben von Byzanz nach dem Fall von Konstantinopel (1453)’, in: J. Frings (ed.), *Byzanz. Pracht und Alltag*, cat. exh. Bonn 2010, 124–127.

93 D.J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium and the Renaissance. Greek scholars in Venice. Studies in the dissemination of Greek learning from Byzantium to Western Europe*, Cambridge, Mass. 1962, 2. Idem, *Interaction of the ‘sibbling’ byzantine and western cultures in the Middle Ages and the italian Renaissance (330–1600)*, New Haven/London 1976.

ceremonial of the institution of the Doge⁹⁴ or in coins and medals,⁹⁵ in the rite of the liturgy,⁹⁶ in the title of the Patriarch, in the veneration of saints, in images of saints,⁹⁷ and in other characteristics.⁹⁸ It even stood out in the cityscape. Echoing the use of the Hagia Sophia as the palace church of the emperors, S. Marco, as the palace church of the Doges, formed the sacral hub of the city. The official cathedral, a merely average building, stood far away in the industrial area near the Arsenal, in the outskirts of the city. The church of S. Marco preserved spectacular treasures from Constantinople. The bronze *quadriga* on the façade recalled the local culture's descent from Ancient Greece through Rome and Constantinople up to the founding of Venice: according to legend, it was made by Lysippus for Rhodes, Nero brought it to Rome to be placed on his mausoleum, Constantine took it to Constantinople, and the Venetians captured it there during the Fourth Crusade.⁹⁹ In 1468, Cardinal Basilios Bessarion, the titular Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, donated his great library of Latin and Greek codices to the city of Venice, since, as he put it, it would not befit any other place, because this was where people from all over the world, and especially Greeks, came together. When approaching Venice from the sea, he continues, they seemed almost to be entering another Byzantium.¹⁰⁰

94 A. Pertusi, 'Quedam regalia insignia: ricerche sulle insegne del potere ducale a Venezia durante il medioevo', *Studi veneziani* 7 (1965), 3–123; Muir, *op. cit.* (note 22), 114, 117, 207, 253, 300.

95 From the conquest of Constantinople in 1204, coins followed Byzantine models both formally and in motifs. Motif: St Marco hands over the Vexillum to the Doge and various depictions of Christ, from 1284 gold ducats with Christ standing in Mandorla, to the Doge Cristoforo Moro (1462–71) portrait coins in Byzantine style. A.M. Stahl, *Zecca. The mint of Venice in the Middle Ages*, Baltimore/London/New York 2000; E. Montenegro, *I dogi e le loro monete*, Novara 2012; G. Zaccariotto, "Lavora in zecca di conio": Camelio, le oselle e la circolazione di temi e stili dentro e fuori la serenissima nel primo Cinquecento', in: L. Simonato (ed.), *Le arti a dialogo. Medaglie e medaglisti tra Quattro e Settecento*, Pisa 2014, 63–80; Kind reference of Martin Hirsch, Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich.

96 G. Fasoli, 'Liturgia e cerimoniale ducale', in: Idem, *Scritti di Storia medievale*, Bologna 1974, 530–561; Carile, Fedalto, *op. cit.* (note 23), 400.

97 A. Niero, S. Tramontin, *Culto dei Santi a Venezia*, Venice 1965, 171; Carile & Fedalto, *op. cit.* (note 23), 394–399; N. Gockerell, *Kirchen mit Alttestamentarischen Patrozinien in Venedig, Materialien zu Geschichte und Ikonographie der Kirchen S. Giobbe, S. Geremia, S. Moisè, S. Samuele, S. Simeone und S. Zaccaria*, Venice 1978; G. Morello, G. Wolf, (eds.), *Il volto di Cristo*, cat. exh. Rome 2000/01, 67–76 (cap. mandylion, H.L. Kessler), 103–114 (cap. Veronica, G. Wolf).

98 Wilk, *op. cit.* (note 21), 123–129.

99 Sansovino, *op. cit.* (note 6), 232v–233r. Cladders, *op. cit.* (note 38), 122.

100 'Dehinc intelligebam nullum locum a me eligi posse commodiorem ac nostris praesertim hominibus aptiorem. Cum enim in civitatem vestram omnes fere totius orbis nationes

The Venetian historians emphasised their connection with Constantinople. All the Renaissance chronicles of Venice also associate the first churches built in Venice after S. Giacomo – S. Teodoro, the predecessor of S. Marco, and S. Geminiano opposite it on the Piazza di S. Marco – with Byzantium.¹⁰¹ Narses, the commander of Emperor Justinian's army, was said to have founded them personally after defeating the Goths. It was also known that in 827 the Eastern Roman Emperor Leo V had had the Doge build S. Zaccaria and had sent craftsmen from Constantinople to erect it. This is emphasised repeatedly in the reports about the foundation of the church contained in the Venetian chronicles.¹⁰² S. Zaccaria had great importance for the state ceremonial of the Republic and for the many pilgrims from all over the western world who embarked at Venice to sail to the Holy Land. Therefore, it was intended that the church should be rebuilt in a more magnificent form than all other churches in Venice except S. Marco. As already noted, it incorporates an extraordinarily high number of Byzantine architectural elements. Above all, the capitals of the columns in the nave are decorated with large eagles, which, as Francesco Sansovino explains in his guidebook to Venice, represent the emblem of the Eastern Roman Emperor, similar to the capitals that were in the old church, and thus commemorate him as its founder (fig. 11.18).¹⁰³

Moreover, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Senate of Venice sometimes behaved as if the Republic was still united with the Eastern Roman Empire. From February 1453 onwards, they were keen to take measures to help save Constantinople from the Turks, based on their pretension that Venice had rights and jurisdiction in the city of Constantinople, which they considered to be their own (*quam tenemus & reputamus e(sser)e. n(ost)ram*

maxime confluent, tum praecipue graeci, qui, e suis provinciis navigio venientes, Venetiis primum descendunt, ea praetera vobiscum necessitudine devincti, ut ad vestram appulsi urbem, quasi alterum Byzantium intrire videantur'. H. Omont, 'Inventaire des manuscrits grecs et latins donnés à Saint-Marc de Venise par le cardinal Bessarion (1468)', *Revue des Bibliothèques* 4 (1894), 129–163, esp. 139; D.J. Geanakoplos, *Greek scholars in Venice. Studies in the dissemination of Greek learning from Byzantium to Western Europe*, Cambridge, Mass. 1962, 35; idem, *Byzantine East and Latin West: two worlds of Christendom in Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Hamden 1976 (2nd ed.), esp. 113; Fortini Brown, *op. cit.* (note 88), 145 (English translation).

101 Giustiniani, *op. cit.* (note 32), 71; M. A. Sabellico, *Le historie vinitiane*, Venice 1554, 6r; Sanuto, *De origine*, *op. cit.* (note 34), 14; Idem, *Vite dei dogi*, *op. cit.* (note 34), 3.

102 G. Rösch, *Der venezianische Adel bis zur Schließung des großen Rats*, Sigmaringen 1989, 142, 199; Rosemann, *op. cit.* (note 20), 13.

103 Sansovino, *op. cit.* (note 6), 26r.



FIGURE 11.18
San Zaccaria, Venice, capital of a column
in the nave
PHOTO: AUTHOR

p(ro)pr.(iam)'.¹⁰⁴ On 20 November 1473, two decades after the conquest (in which the Emperor had been killed), the Senate resolved that the Greek Empire had devolved 'in the absence of male heirs to the Prince of Moscow, as a result of his illustrious marriage'.¹⁰⁵ Ivan III had married the Emperor's daughter Sophia Palaiologa, at the instigation of Venice and the Pope, in 1472. On 4 December of the same year, the Senate addressed a letter of the same tenor to Ivan III.¹⁰⁶ This was the first ever mention of the claim of the Grand Duke of Moscow to succession of the Eastern Roman Emperor. It was only under Ivan IV that the claim was officially asserted in Russia. However, at first it took form unofficially, apparently including in Venice, because at the New

104 'Civitatis Constantinopol. quam tenemus & reputamus e(sser)e. n(ost)ram p(ro)pr.(iam) Jura et Jurisd(ict)io(n)es quas semp(er) h(ab)uimus et de p(raese)nti habem.(us) in illa. In illa e(n)is elevatur publice vexillum n(ost)r(u)m. et tenemus n(ost)rm. bailum et rectore(m) cum mero & mixto Imp(er)io qui dacia & gabellas no(m)i(n)e n(ost)ro exigit'. Archivio di Stato, Venice, Deliberazioni Mar (06. 09. 1450-09. 07-1453), fol. 187v: 8 May 1453. F. Braudel, *Modell Italien 1450-1650*, Stuttgart 1999, 30; D. Shvidkovsky, *Russian architecture and the West*, New Haven/London 2007, 74.

105 P. Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège*, Paris 1896, vol. 1, 180.

106 'othomani occupatoris imperij orientis, quod quum stirpe mascula deesset imperatoria ad vestram illustrissimam dominationem jure vestri faustissimi conjugij pertineret'. E. Cornet, *Le guerre dei Veneti nell'Asia 1470-1474. Documenti cavati dall'archivio ai frari in Venezia*, Vienna 1856, 112s.

Year's Mass of the Doge in S. Marco in 1493 the Russian legation was placed in rank before that of the King of Naples.¹⁰⁷ The invention of this claim had no sufficient basis. Sophia Palaiologa had no right to the heritage of the Eastern Roman Empire, because she had two living brothers. The initiative of the Senate of Venice had only been based on the intention to gain Moscow as an ally against the Turks.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, what is important that the Senate behaved as if Venice represented the Eastern Roman Empire as the only part of it spared from the Turkish invasion. In 1480, the Senate again acted similarly, but on this occasion it turned to Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror for aid, telling him that he had been entirely within his rights to have seized Brindisi, Taranto and Otranto in Puglia, on the grounds that these places, being Greek settlements, formed part of the former Byzantine Empire, which was to be granted in its entirety to him as the Emperor of Constantinople.¹⁰⁹ The unusually intense reception of Romano-Byzantine elements was thus likely intended to demonstrate the connection with Constantinople.

Francesco Petrarca called Venice 'a world of its own'.¹¹⁰ Many visitors admired the uniqueness of the city. They found many aspects to be incomparable: the city's setting in a lagoon, her appearance with no outer fortifications, the state constitution, the social structure and the way of life, the splendour of the palaces, of the Grand Canal and of S. Marco. Moreover, the Venetians, from the chronicle of Lorenzo de' Monacis to the guidebook of Francesco Sansovino, pointed out that their republic occupied a special position even under international law:¹¹¹ since Venice had come into being as part of the Eastern Roman Empire, it was the only region of the Occident that did not belong to the Western Roman Empire. This situation secured various practical advantages for the city, guaranteeing it in the early modern period complete independence and even limiting the supremacy of the popes over the church

-
- 107 M. Gukovskij, 'Il Rinascimento italiano e la Russia', in: V. Branca (ed.), *Rinascimento Europeo e Rinascimento Veneziano*, Venice 1967, 121–136.
- 108 P. Nitsche, 'Moskau – das dritte Rom', in: A. Lulinska (ed.), *Der Kreml. Gottesruhm und Zarenpracht*, cat. exh. Bonn 2004, 101–109; Idem, 'Moskau – das Dritte Rom?', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 42 (1991), 341–354; Shvidkovsky, *op. cit.* (note 105), 73–77; D. Svidkovskij and others (eds.), *Mille anni di architettura italiana in Russia*. Turin 2013, 15, 59–112.
- 109 F. Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit. Weltenstürmer einer Zeitenwende*, München 1953, 430, 455.
- 110 'Atque Adrie imperitans alterque Venetia mundus'. F. Petrarca, *Epistolae metricae* 3.9.315; D. Girgensohn, *Kirche, Politik und adelige Regierung in der Republik Venedig zu Beginn des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 1996, vol. 1, 15–30.
- 111 Lorenzo de' Monacis, *op. cit.* (note 27), 22; B. Giustiniani, *Historia dell'origine di Vinegia e delle cose fatte da Vinitiani*, Venice 1545, 181v; Sansovino, *op. cit.* (note 6), 216r–217r.

in Venice.¹¹² The connection to Constantinople fostered Venice's close trade relations with the Levant, on which the wealth of the city was based. By exhibiting this connection by means of the many new churches that followed the model of the Byzantine shrine of S. Giacomo di Rialto, or by the Imperial eagles in S. Zaccaria, the Republic underlined its autonomy, one which was ultimately anchored in its connection with Constantinople.

11.9 Conclusion and Outlook

The demonstration of political, social or sacred ideas by the choice of special models for buildings was a practice that had many parallels. An example of how the ancient origin of a city was evoked is the transformation of the cathedral of Como that commenced under Tommaso Rodari and Cristoforo Solari in 1513.¹¹³ The enlargement of the choir and the transept partly took the Romanesque basilica of S. Fedele in Como as a model, because the building was supposed to have been an antique temple. Moreover, statues of the two Plinies were placed on the façade to underline that in Como they were considered to be natives of the city – while the Veronese counted them instead among *their* ancestors and had statues of them set up on the façade of their Loggia del Consiglio.

Other examples of the choice of models to demonstrate special ideas likewise involve the type of the crossed-dome church. From the conquest of Constantinople onwards, the Ottoman sultans shaped their mosques so obviously that many visitors easily recognised them, following the example of the Hagia Sophia as the church of the Eastern Roman emperors. Previously, they had adhered to their older Turkish architectural forms. Even Murat II continued this tradition, at the mosque which he had built in Edirne (Adrianopolis) shortly before his son Mehmet II conquered Constantinople (1437–1447).¹¹⁴ The new mosques of the sultans typically came even closer to the crossed-dome disposition than the Hagia Sophia did. When the Grand Duke of Moscow, Ivan III, began to renovate the Kremlin, he appointed the Italian architect Aristotele Fioravanti to adopt the antique style that had been revived in Italy. However, he determined that the new main church, the Cathedral of

112 G. Cozzi, 'Note su Giovanni Tiepolo, primicerio di San Marco e patriarca di Venezia: l'unità ideale della chiesa Veneta', in: B. Bertoli, *Chiesa Società e Stato a Venezia. Miscellanea di Studi in Onore di Silvio Tramontin*, Venice 1994, 121–150; Girgensohn, *op. cit.* (note 110), 79–128.

113 Cf. D.S. Monti, *La cattedrale di Como*, Como 1897, 80.

114 D. Kuban, *Ottoman architecture*, Woodbridge 2010; H. Günther, *Was ist Renaissance. Eine Charakteristik der Architektur zu Beginn der Neuzeit*. Darmstadt 2009, 174–183.



FIGURE 11.19
 Founding medal for the new
 construction of St. Peter's Basilica
 in Rome, ascribed to Caradosso,
 1505/06; Munich, Staatliche
 Münzsammlung

the Dormition (1475–1479), should be modelled after the eponymous cathedral in Vladimir (1185–1189), formerly the mother church of Russia, and sent Fioravanti to Vladimir to become acquainted with it.¹¹⁵ This was his way of demonstrating that the Russian Metropolitan then resided in his capital, Moscow. Both of these cathedrals are crossed-dome churches, instances of an indigenous Russian type. Ivan III came to appoint Fioravanti through the support of the Senate of Venice.

Bramante's ideal project for the new building of St Peter's Basilica in Rome completely abandons local Roman and central Italian tradition by adopting the disposition of the crossed-dome church in the parchment plan (GDSU 1) and, on the founding medal, by resembling Hagia Sophia and especially its elevation in the Codex Barberini, more than all other Christian sanctuaries (figs. 11.19, 11.16). Probably, this shaping is intended to refer to Constantinople in terms of the quest to surpass the most beautiful sanctuary ever constructed in Christendom, but which by then had been converted into a mosque, as well as to rival the splendid mosque formed on its principles that Sultan Bayezid II

115 I.E. Danilova, 'L'architettura della cattedrale dell'Azzunzione del Fioravanti e i principi di composizione spaziale nelle opere di Dionij', *Arte Lombarda* 44–45 (1976), 173–180; D. Chvidkovski, 'La Renaissance et la transformation de l'architecture russe à la fin du XV^e siècle et dans le premier tiers du XVI^e', in: J. Guillaume (ed.), *L'invention de la Renaissance. La réception des formes 'à l'antique' au début de la Renaissance* (De Architectura, 9), Paris 2003, 79–87; Kreml, Gottesruhm und Zarenpracht, *op. cit.* (note 108); Günther, Renaissance, *op. cit.* (note 114), 67–70.

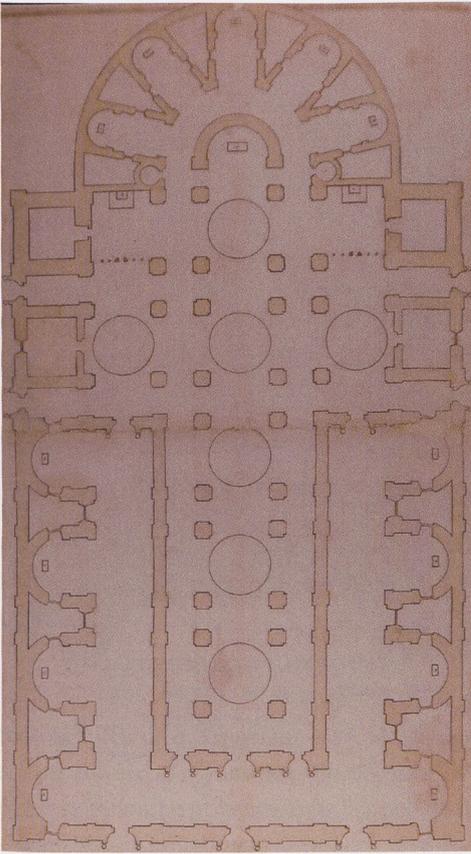


FIGURE 11.20
Fra Giocondo, Ideal plan for the new
construction of St. Peter's Basilica in
Rome, 1505/06; Gabinetto dei disegni e
delle stampe, Uffizi, Arch. 6, Florence

had finished in the same year in which the planning of the new building of St. Peter's was to commence.¹¹⁶

Fra Giocondo presented an alternative ideal plan for St Peter's Church, one which also ignores local tradition by assuming an obviously Byzantine model, in this case S. Marco in Venice and its derivative S. Antonio in Padua (GDSU 6) (fig. 11.20).¹¹⁷ Such a great intellectual and connoisseur of ancient architecture as Fra Giocondo had certainly thought more about this than simply absent-mindedly paraphrasing the architecture that he was familiar with for Rome. His proposal makes sense only if it is understood to demonstrate that St Peter's is an Apostle's Church like S. Marco, and above all like its model in

¹¹⁶ F. Graf Wolff Metternich, C. Thoenes, *Die frühen St. Peter-Entwürfe 1505–1514*, Tübingen 1987, 13–52; Günther, Renaissance, *op. cit.* (note 114), 62–66.

¹¹⁷ Metternich & Thoenes, *op. cit.* (note 116), 52–58. See also M. Tanner, *Jerusalem on the Hill. Rome and the Vision of Saint Peter's Basilica in the Renaissance*, Turnhout 2011.

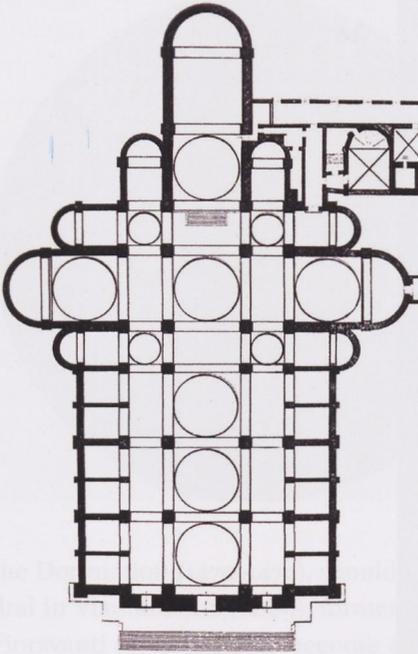


FIGURE 11.21
Santa Giustina, Padua, ground plan

Constantinople that Mehmet the Conqueror had destroyed to build his own mosque in its place. A similar disposition was subsequently achieved in the magnificent Basilica of S. Giustina in Padua (commenced 1521), which is also an Apostle's Church, since the body of St Luke the Evangelist and some relics of St Matthew the Evangelist are kept there, exhibited in a pair of monumental sarcophagi at each end of the transept (figs. 11.21–11.22).¹¹⁸ In the largest church to have been built c. 1500 in Venice, S. Salvatore opposite the Rialto on the other side of the Grand Canal, the crossed-dome system – similar in principle to that of S. Marco – is arranged three times over in a row (cf. figs. 11.9–11.10). The similarity between them, as well as its prodigious dimensions in S. Salvatore, was apparently meant to indicate that the relics of the first patron saint of Venice, S. Teodoro, were transferred from S. Marco to S. Salvatore after the body of St Mark the Evangelist had been transferred to S. Marco.¹¹⁹

118 B. Kilian, *S. Giustina in Padua. Benediktinische Sakralarchitektur zwischen Tradition und Anspruch*, diss. Frankfurt a.M. etc. 1997; A. De Nicolò Salmazo, 'Le reliquie di San Luca e l'abbazia di Santa Giustina a Padova', in: G. Canova Mariani e.a. (eds.), *Luca Evangelista. Parola e Immagine tra Oriente e Occidente*, cat. exh. Padua 2000, 155–186.

119 Jestaz, *op. cit.* (note 20), 247–308; G. Guidarelli (ed.), *La chiesa di San Salvador, storia arte teologia*, Padua 2009.



FIGURE 11.22 Santa Giustina, Padua, external view
PHOTO: AUTHOR

In less prominent cases, one may assume that the reception of the Romano-Byzantine disposition was simply a revival of old local traditions – if there was any such reception at all.¹²⁰ However, if it is borne in mind that iconography plays a role in architecture and that considerations of social relations can also be reflected in architectural designs, then, in my opinion, establishing formal criteria is not enough for an appropriate understanding of the reuse of such old, so-called traditional, architectural elements. Rather, one should ask what ideas stood behind such prominent examples, as has been demonstrated in this paper.

120 For further crossed-dome churches in the Italian Renaissance, see J. Niebaum, *Der kirchliche Zentralbau der Renaissance in Italien: Studien zur Karriere eines Baugedankens im Quattro- und Cinquecento*, Munich 2016.