



Manastir Mescidi

Summary :

Manastir Mescidi is located in the western part of Constantinople, near the Topkapı, the Byzantine gate of Romanos, and it was probably part of a monastery. The building has been severely altered. It might have been originally a basilica or a cross-in-square church, with an outer ambulatory surrounding the core from the north, south, and west. The identification with the monastery of Saints Menodora, Nymphodora and Metrodora remains conjectural.

Date

14th c. (?)

Geographical Location

Constantinople

1. Introduction

Manastir Mescidi is located in the northwestern part of [Constantinople](#), near the Topkapı, the Byzantine gate of Romanos. The superstructure of the church has been seriously altered as it is now covered by a wooden roof. The original openings, doors and windows, have been modified. The interior decoration has been lost, with the exception of two carved capitals, part of the triple arcade that marked the transition from the **narthex** to the naos.¹

2. History, Architecture, Identification

As it stands today Manastir Mescidi is a fairly small single nave building with the typical three projecting **apses** to the east and a narthex to the west. Some of the structure's original features were clarified by an excavation, which Pasadaios conducted in the 1960s.² Pasadaios found parts of two parallel lines of foundation walls running east-west in the naos, obviously for the church's internal supports, as well as the continuation of walls that separated the three parts of the bema. Foundations of an **ambulatory** that originally surrounded the building in the north, south, and west sides were also uncovered. Pasadaios reconstructed the building as a vaulted **basilica**, similar to those in Kastoria, an opinion shared by Ćurčić. Mathews, on the other hand, suggested that the church belonged to the **cross-in-square** type. It is also unclear whether the outer ambulatory was vaulted or not.³ The masonry points to the [Palaiologan era](#), although Pasadaios argues for an 11th century date.

The small size of Manastir Mescidi indicates that it was probably a chapel within a monastery rather than its main church (katholikon). Paspates has suggested that it should be identified with the monastery of Saints Menodora, Nymphodora and Metrodora, which was founded in the first half of the 14th century near the Gate of Romanos by a certain Phokas Maroules.⁴ This identification, based solely on the building's proximity to the aforementioned gate, remains necessarily speculative.

The chapel was transformed into a mosque by Mustafa Çavuş, page of [Mehmed II the Conqueror](#).

1. For these capitals see Kautzsch, R., *Kapitellstudien* (Berlin 1936), p. 191.

2. Pasadaios, A., *Ἐπί δύο Βυζαντινῶν μνημείων τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἡ γνώστου ὀνομασίας* (Athens 1965), pp. 56-101.

3. See Sl. Ćurčić's «Review of *The Byzantine Churches of Istanbul. A Photographic Survey* by T. Mathews,» in *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 36:4 (1977), pp. 280-282; see also the letters of both Ćurčić and Mathews in *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 37:3 (1978), pp. 228-229.

4. Paspates, A.G., *Βυζαντιναί Μελέται. Τοπογραφικά καί Ἱστορικά* (Constantinople 1877), pp. 376-377.



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	Manastir Mescidi http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/html/Byzantine/index.htm?http&&www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/html/Byzantine/21.htm
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Glossary :

	ambulatory (byz. arch.) A continuous passage that envelops the <i>naos</i> or the centrally planned core of a structure. In a cross-domed church, where the dome is supported on four masonry piers and between each pair of piers two columns are inserted, the ambulatory is formed by the lateral aisles and western part of the church. Later on, an ambulatory could also envelop a cross-in-square core. During the Palaeologan period, ambulatories, usually serving as funerary chambers, were added to many middle-Byzantine churches of Constantinople.
	apse An arched structure or a semi-circular end of a wall. In byzantine architecture it means the semicircular, usually barrel-vaulted, niche at the east end of a basilica. The side aisles of a basilica may also end in an apse, but it is always in the central apse where the altar is placed. It was separated from the main church by a barrier, the templon, or the iconostasis. Its ground plan on the external side could be semicircular, rectangular or polygonal.
	basilica In ancient Roman architecture a large oblong type building used as hall of justice and public meeting place. The roman basilica served as a model for early Christian churches.
	cross-in-square church Type of church in which four barrel-vaulted bays form a greek cross; the central square of their intersection is domed. The cross is inscribed into the square ground plan by means of four corner bays.
	narthex A portico or a rectangular entrance-hall, parallel with the west end of an early Christian basilica or church.