The role of history of architecture in project for the valorization of the town: Elbasan (AL)

As everyone knows, the history of architecture is really important in the vocational training of architects working in the field of restoration, preservation and development of the historical monuments. Many students from the first degree technical courses of Civil Engineering-Architecture and Phd students of the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Pisa, have taken part to the “Interlink Project for the understanding, preservation, and development of Elbasan's Kala in Albania”. In this project, the historical analysis has been fundamental for the definition of projects finalized to the conservation and development of the city of Elbasan. The participation of students to the project has been a very positive experience for their historical-architectonic training. Students have been able in fact to study a really chronologically and typologically complex reality, solving problems relatives to the management of human heritage.

The first results of the historical research, carried out with a scientific methodology, were exposed in the congress organized in Elbasan in September 2006. The congress stimulated the citizens' interest about the city's potential development and was also an important occasion for creating an interdisciplinary exchange between history, survey and planning.

The Albanian city of Elbasan has been characterized by a really complex cultural mix, overlapping of structures, and also by many demolitions in the past century, that cancelled many of the most important historical signs. For these reasons, Elbasan needs today a thorough historical analysis, not only about the Kala's citadel, but also about all its urban and architectural consistence, the knowledge of which is fundamental for the definition of every possible project of development in the future.

The history research comprised important phases in the urban and architectural development of Elbasan: roman and byzantine, ottoman, modern. We have completed the study of the town planning, urban spaces and architectural typologies (house building, public architecture, religious architecture).

When Constantinople became the capital of the Empire, the Via Egnatia gained principal importance as a connection to the Western Provinces, the Balkans, and in particular to the Italic peninsula. During this period (already most likely around 320 A.D.) the town of Scampinus (ancient name for Elbasan) was fortified with a surrounding wall which was able to house an entire legion. It was equipped with 26 towers and its main purpose was to protect against the barbaric invasions. The four-sided castrum system established the actual decumanus of the Via Egnatia.

The Ottoman invasion, which occurred after a century of wars and rebellions, marked the end of a long and extraordinary period of Roman-Byzantine architecture. At the same time it gave way to a significant period of urban and architectural development within the city. After the more than four years of Ottoman occupation, the town, including the Roman-Byzantine castle, expanded extensively beyond the ancient enclosure and acquired an outline that was marked by minarets and domes. This fact undoubtedly has historical and architectural importance - which today is only partially attested to, be it as an urban structure as well as an architectural piece, since it was wiped out in successive stages during the last century – and deserved to be examined and studied so as to pass down the memory and offer a useful tool for future changes within the town.

In this attempt to reconstruct the Ottoman period, the map of the town that was drawn up by the Italian Geographic Military Institute in 1938 during Albania’s brief reign in which it was annexed to Italy in the Fascist period, constituted an important work tool. It in fact shows the conformation of the entire habitat with the characteristic outline meshes and all the monumental outgrowths, of which none were yet affected by the subsequent demolitions/changes.

After that we give a short description of two selected themes about The Ottoman town and The buildings of Christian worship in Elbasan.

The Ottoman town

In 1466, during the period of the occupancy of the Skampinus, the Ottomans found a city that was reduced to ruins and completely deserted. Through the initiative of Mohammed the II, immediately after capturing the town reconstruction work on the protective enclosure, or kalà (New Citadel), was undertaken. The Roman type fortifications, which were rebuilt in 1466 by the Sultan Mehmed
Il’s Ottoman soldiers, are still preserved today. For the Turks this constituted an excellent base for their later conquests of surrounding territories.

Thanks to its geographic positioning at the Via Egnatia, Skampinus, whose name was later changed to Elbasan, soon became an important economic and administrative center in the New Empire. The secure trade routes, be it between the west and the east or the northern and southern regions, passed through here. Historical research shows that the city had a rapid demographic increase with a significant growth in the number of craftsmen and merchants. Commercial trade was already well-established abroad during the first half of the XVI century, including trade with the Republic of Venice starting in 1502, with France starting in 1532 and after Ragusa and Florence.

In correspondence to the economic development, starting at the end of the XV century the city enjoyed a great expansion beyond the kalà and over the course of a century increased considerably in size; so much so that by the end of the 15th century it occupied a territory that was two and one-half times bigger with respect to the area inside the walls. The configuration of the inside of the kalà, which took on the role of the Ottoman administrative headquarters and where for a long time in addition to Ottoman families there also resided the military garnitures and the Ottoman officers, gradually changed and was characterized by the density of the new buildings. In accordance with Ottoman customs, the roads took the free paths thus noticeably altering the pre-existing, regular outline of the Roman/Byzantine city. However in this new system of labyrinthical passageways and alleys the old decumanus (Royal route) was preserved. It was demarcated by two Royal doors alongside which the receptive structures and public buildings were established. Those are today attested to by baths. In addition, a large square located at the outlet of the head of the decumanus was found on the 1938 IGM map. Its shape is nearly rectangular and thus completely foreign to Ottoman culture. Its presence leads us to presuppose that it might have to do with the adaptation of the ancient Roman Forum to new functions and roles. Prominent building of houses aligned along the roads and alleys contributed to the new urban setting. These houses were characterized by a certain resemblance in their housing shape, size, constructional approach and materials. Prominent construction of public and religious buildings, among which in addition to the already-mentioned baths the mosque and the Byzantine Church are also preserved, also contributed to the new urban setting. Though granted freedom of worship, during the first period of Ottoman rule Islamization was the provision for living in the city: at the end of the XVI century 79 Muslim families lived inside the Kalà while there were no Christian families at all. The result of this policy was the construction of the mosque in 1466 immediately after the occupancy. It was named after the Sultan, Mohammed the II, and was built above the Royal Door. And a few decades later, in 1492, the Royal Mosque was built in the central area of the city.

Starting probably in XVII century, with the easing up of the discriminatory measures and with a fiscal policy that was more favorable for Christians and their subsequent return to the inside of the castle, the outlines of division by ethnicity and religion began to appear: the area south of the Royal route, in which there were two mosques, was mainly comprised of Muslim houses, while in a centre north of the Royal Route there was a heavy concentration of Christian houses. Their church was also built.

The rise of this new, wide-ranging area whose compositive axis was established from the road that started from that same south door was due to the addition of new building centers which were created around the mosques. The construction of the two mosques with squares opposite to them, the Ballije (1609) and Agait (1640) Mosques, followed by the Pazarit and Tabakeve Mosques, therefore triggered the formation of the centers around it between the end of the XVI century and the beginning of the XVII century. They had public buildings like baths, the Madrasahs, the inns, etc, into which the housing structures joined. In the new urban setting perspective axes which led

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1 The surrounding wall was rebuilt in twenty-five days. Of the reconstruction works see K. Bozhori, F. Lico, Burime Tregjmtare Bizantine per historine e Shqiperise-shek. X-XV, Tirana 1975, pp. 348-349.
2 The secure trade routes, be it between the west and the east or the northern and southern regions, passed through here.
3 There were 465 craftsmen representing 45 professions, and 18 merchants present in the city over the last ten years of the XVI century. At the end of the 17th century the town had more than 30,000 inhabitants with about 11570 of them, about one third, coming from rich families. See S. Pulava, Qytet Shqiptare nën regjimin feudal ushtaraku osman gjatë shkatërue XV-XVI, “Monument”, 4, 1984, pp. 18-49.
5 The existence of the church is remembered in 1656. See N. Marku, Kisha e Shën Mërise, Elbasan, in Elbasani. Enciclopedi, p. 289.
to the mosque were totally absent: one approached the religious building from an opposite square that was almost always irregular in shape, as in the case of the Balljie, Bezistan, and Tabakeve Mosques.

Initially the new installations outside the castle only concerned the south area, but very soon the areas east and west of the castle were urbanized as well.

The intense growth of artisan and commercial activities was attested to by the presence of many stores (mainly positioned inside walled buildings), a number that in 1670 reached an incredible 900\(^\text{6}\). This growth not only influenced the differentiation of building according to social class but also the creation of the area exclusively intended for business, the \textit{bazaar}\(^\text{7}\), by the beginning of the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century. Situated in the area immediately bordering the \textit{kala\textl{\l}}, it gravitated over the Hasan Ballie and Pazarit Mosques and was home to about 580 stores\(^\text{8}\) in the 1830s. This was an area made up of eight main roads, which for the most part were nearly perpendicular between them that demarcated the narrow block along with the outlying stores. This organizational scheme guaranteed free and easy movement for the buyers and at the same time created favorable conditions for the supplying of the stores while protecting the building blocks from the spread of fires. The stores, located in one or two-story buildings, shaped the roads with a certain skillfulness.

The distance from the mosque probably determined the spatial arrangement for craft companies. Normally the more noble and dignified professions settled near the mosques while the more noisy ones (like for example the blacksmith) found a home in the outskirting areas. The craftsmen’s shops had two functions: production and sales. The front part was obviously intended for the exposition of the products while the rear area was intended for their production.

Today the only remains of the \textit{bazaar}, whose physiognomy is attested to by numerous old photographs, are the fountain’s tub and the large plane tree, which at that time were positioned at the center of Bezistan Square. The buildings on the other hand have completely disappeared.

Commercial activity was also concentrated at the Tabakeve Square, which was formed along the Ottoman city’s main accessway from the east. Like in Bezistan Square, the symbol of this site was a majestic plane tree and a fountain with a stone inscription that read “every life is born from water”, from which twelve horses could drink contemporaneously. In addition to the trade of wool, oats, and leather that took place at the stores, fruits and vegetables were sold in the square almost every day. An important document like the Statute of the Masters of Tabakeve, published in 1657, gives evidence to this intense economic climate, which constituted the first and most extensive program of economic, judicial, organizational, and religious fixtures in all the Balkans\(^\text{9}\).

In addition to this, in the squares opposite the mosques weekly fairs took place that featured rural agricultural products like fruits, grains, oil, tobacco, legumes, livestock, dairy products, construction materials, wood, and coal\(^\text{10}\).

Between the end of the XVIII century and the beginning of the XIX century Elbasan became one of the main centers of the country. It had a constructional framework of 200 houses and 900 shops.

Within the new configuration of the Ottoman town the mosques became a coordinating and structurally decisive component. But not just that. They, with the stabilization of the occupation, constituted the most monumental and representative buildings of Elbasan. And with their silhouette characteristics they defined the eastern nature of the city. Their beautiful and simple geometric shapes (made up of a cubic dado, a drum, and a semi-spherical dome), which declined from the classic paradigm which is the result of architectural, mathematic, religious, and astral knowledge, indeed materialized the concepts of the educated architects of the Imperial

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\(^{7}\) See table n.1.


\(^{10}\) Two of these were located in the city in front of the Kala: one was in Bushan (which today is a tourist village) and one near the S. Gjon Vladimir Monastery. This last one was used for the trade of animals.
Court. Among the historical mosques preserved today, only the Royal Mosque displays the domeless room typology11. Though inspired by classic Ottoman solutions, when it came to details these places of worship drew from the local culture, presumably conveyed by the workers to whom the creation was entrusted.

The greatest stylistic expression is found in the Aga Mosque, a work that was assigned to the Elbasanian architect Mehmet Aga Biçakçiu. Here the interpretation of classic Ottoman elements is conveyed quite interestingly. Though it displays those particular stylistic and architectural values, it was excluded from the list of monumental artwork and subsequently demolished. The Naziresha (1599) Mosque-Mausoleum was preserved instead. It was positioned far from the urban center and placed in an enormous cemeterial garden. Declared a cultural monument, as one of the manufactured articles that is most symbolic of Albanian architecture it is striking because of the elegance it expresses within the purity of its lines and the balance of its masses. Just as significant is the surviving testimony of the public baths (hammam) which, with their domes that bestow a peaceable appearance, confirm the skill of the Albanian builders. Their formal posture, mainly as it concerns the planimetical composition, differs from the normal Turkish result. Of these buildings, which were meeting places for the upper class and in addition to the mosques made up a typical center of that period, there are today preserved the kalâ’s bath and the bath that is situated near the Aga Mosque. Both of these are cited by the Celebiu in 1672.

With respect to the receptive structures, no testimony remains today either from caravanserais or inns (hane). Nevertheless we know that many hanes operated within the Ottoman city. In the XVIII century nine main inns were mentioned, of which six were located in the district of Tabakeve. The presence of several of these structures, which were characterized by an installation with a courtyard generally built on two levels (with the stores and stables on the ground floor and the rooms on the first floor) and equipped with wooden arcades, is evidenced by period pictures and also confirmed by the 1938 IGM map.

To crown the landscape of the flourishing city, at the end of the XVII century the clock tower was added to the buildings of Muslim worship. Placed inside the defensive tower of the kalâ, but facing the bazaar, it constitutes an important symbol of eastern culture that came to be after contact was initiated with the European civilizations through business dealings. At three floors and covered by a dome, it is today present in the form in which it was built in 1899 after the previous rebuilding efforts of 1865-69.

Buildings of Christian worship later joined the repertory of Ottoman architecture. They are today represented inside the kalâ by the Saint Mary of the Dormition Orthodox Church, an important example of post-Byzantine architecture.

The architecture of this period, characterized by a merger of Ottoman culture with the local one as is attested to by the buildings of various typologies still preserved today, symbolizes an important heritage of Albanian culture. This architecture has unquestionably reached high levels as far as it concerns churches, mosques, and public bath.

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12 See V. Shtylla, Banjat e mesjetës së vonë në Shqipëri, in “Monument”, 17, 1979, pp. 119-137.
13 E. Celebis, op. cit.
The Mosque Ballije and the *bazaar* in old photo of 1925

The Mosque Aga in old photo of 1918.

The Mosque Fathi built over the south door of the kalâ, in old photo of 1920.
2. Elbasan, IGM map 1938: in evidence the religious buildings Ottoman and Christian, the public buildings, the cemeteries and the main roads (elaboration graphic by G. L. Dalle Luche)
The buildings of Christian worship in Elbasan. The church of Saint Maria della Dormizione - a significant example of the Post-Byzantine architecture

Albania was a purely Christian nation prior to the arrival of the Turks and mass conversions of entire tribes to Islam was more a result of obedience to their leaders than of religious belief. The tradition of buildings of Christian worship dates back to the IV century and is attested to by the Tepe Basilica, which was discovered in 1969 and is situated on the hills west of the city. The research carried out over the last ten years of the last century indicates that the basilica went through several stages of development. During the V century the basilica was transformed into a cemeterial church and underwent significant modifications in shape. The numerous tombs that were found in the vicinity also attest to the basilica’s function, as does the burial of the two Bishops of Scampa which took place around the second half of the V century. A violent earthquake which struck the city of Elbasan around the year 520 seriously compromised the church’s structure, and from that moment on it lost its significance, perhaps in favor of the new basilica that was built inside the Kalà.

Starting at the beginning of the VI century Scampis began to assert itself as an important episcopal center in service of the Archbishop of Durazzo. The city’s important role in the ecclesiastic organization of the country is documented by two VI-century records: in one of them Scampa is cited in Heracles’ list of the most important episcopal centers; the other one, which is made up of two letters dating back to 519 that come from the Vatican Archives of Rome, contains the account of a visit to Scampa. The construction of the Christian basilica inside the kalà probably corresponds to the VI-century episcopal rise to power. This structure is attested to by the remains discovered at the Skampa Hotel during the last decade of the 20th century. Its dimensions and the well-polished and cared for architectural decorations, which can be inferred from several capitals, column fragments, stone decorations, etc that are found exposed at the adjoining hotel, suggest that it was a structure of considerable importance.

The migration of Slavic populations and then the wars, as well as the definitive Ottoman occupation in 1466, contributed to the destruction of the Christian basilicas. New construction of a place of Christian worship most likely had to wait until the end of the XVII century. Though freedom of worship was in fact granted to Elbasan, Christian religion clashed with the Ottoman’s status of power: fiscal policy and the economic and social discriminatory measures compelled the Christians to abandon the city and establish settlements in the surrounding countryside. Just during the XVI century alone the Christian population decreased noticeably in the city of Elbasan; from 62% at the beginning of the century to 21% at the end, until it was completely removed from the kalà.

Against the backdrop of these events the construction of two important Christian churches, the Shën Koll in Shelcan and the Shën Premt in Valesh, was carried out in 1554. These are two significant examples of post-Byzantine architecture that were made precious by the extraordinary artistic participation of the painter Onufri, who frescoed the insides. The two buildings are modest in size and fall into the typology of one-aisle basilical structures with a wooden apse and covering. They are in full compliance with the constructive principals of Byzantine architecture. This is the case even though they are reorganized according to a freer interpretation of models and shapes which should be analyzed within the context of the limited economic possibilities of the setting in which they were built. On the other hand the internal decorative display is abundant. It surpasses the Byzantine stereotypes and engineers a real and actual revolution within the Albanian cultural sphere.

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16 From Archivi Vaticani, a.519, see N. Ceka, The Illyrians to the Albanians, Tirana, 2005.
17 After the Ottoman occupation Elbasan was one of the most Islamized cities after Shkodra, Peje and Vuciterna. Cfr.S. Pulava, Qytet Shqiptare nën regimin feudal ushtarar osman gjatë shekuqitës XV-XVI, “Monument”, 4, 1984, pp. 18-49.
19 The first examples of this typology (longitudinal basilica) were found on Albanian territory in the area of Sarande (at the beginning of the XVI century) and in Berat (1526), followed subsequently by the Churches of Saint Kollit in Kujar te Fieri (1570) and Saint Todrit’s Church in S. Todrit and Saint Denise’s of Vlahemes Church in the Kalà of Beratit (1578). Remember that in parallel to these figures some examples of the domed basilica were constructed, especially in the area of Gjirokaster.
Shën Koll a Shelcan, the schemes of church and affreschi di Onufri.
The Church of Saint Koll in Shelcan, which was built in 1554 incorporating the pre-existing XIV-century structures, constitutes one of the first examples of the basilical typology in post-Byzantine Albanian architecture\textsuperscript{20}. The pictorial frescoed decoration inside the church evolves over different levels and bears the signature of Onufri, perhaps the most important Albanian painter of the XVI century. In Albania, in Shelcan in fact, the first fresco painting of the iconostasis wall plan was realized by Onufri. The wall iconostasis displays a superior, uninterrupted, crowning achievement evolving across its entire width in which Jesus and the twelve apostles are represented in half bust.

The growing role of the Christian community in Elbasan was manifested by the construction of the Church of Saint Mary of the Dormition inside the \textit{kalà}. It was built in the central area to the north of the Royal Route, almost pendant to the not so distant mosque\textsuperscript{21}.

The first post-Byzantine churches, which were built far from the city, are basilical models. The Church of Saint Mary of the Dormition, in its present configuration which is the result of the 19th century reconstruction, is laid out in a longitudinal basilica form covered by domes and vaults, as well as flanked by porticos on two sides. The church of Saint Mary is remembered as building operating between 1656 and 1661\textsuperscript{22}. Only few people know about its original shape because the church was burnt in 1818.

The actual church of the Dormizone of Saint Mary that was reconstructed during 1826-33 represents from the architectural point of view, a particularly interesting example of the Post-Byzantine architecture. But the merits of this building are not immediately perceivable: it is inserted in the urban layout adapting itself to the closed fronts of the Ottoman residences, timidly leans out on the road with a rustic stone wall only pierced by some opening, hiding so its true architectural shape and not disclosing the beauty and the internal articulation with any sign.

Also manifesting the identity of the entire architectural solution (expressed for instance in the porticos, in the supporting roofing of the inside spaces and in the architectural and artistic decoration), the building clearly presents connections with the eighteenth-century basilicas of Gjirokaster, Berat and Korca and especially Voskopoje, where the basilicas represent the most meaningful realizations in the area. It singles out for their dimensions, for the spherical calotte and the artistic decorations\textsuperscript{23}.

Considering the classification commonly used by the researchers of Post-Byzantine architecture\textsuperscript{24} which is found on the plans and on the spatial compositions, we can list the church of Elbasan under the group of the longitudinal basilicas covered by hemispherical domes and other shapes of vaulted roofs.

The client's choice, bishop Krisanth Karamanlisi\textsuperscript{25}, appears much ambitious and articulated compared to the previous solutions: he opts for greatest dimensions and, above all, proposes a sort of synthesis between the most significant experiences of the Post-Byzantine architecture\textsuperscript{26}. As a whole, the architecture is characterized by the simplicity to the outside and the generous use of vaulted structures to the inside: a prismatic volume, standing out on two sides by the porticos, completely hides the complex articulation of the internal space, unifying the spaces that compose the parts of the chamber, of the narthex, of the altar area under a single roof.

As quoted in the memorial inscriptions inserted outside the central apse, the realisation of the works was submitted to masters Stefo, Vlashi, Mitro, Zhapa, Gjergj Batani and Gjon, paid with sixty \textit{tallanta}\textsuperscript{27}. The external wall very attractive, the decorative internal setting and the application of the spherical and vaulted roofing is an evidence of craftsmen skill, both as stone engravers as experts of constructive technique.

\textsuperscript{20} Of the church in particular A. Meksi, \textit{Disa Kapela Bizantine të vendit tonë}, in "Monument", 10, 197, p.83.
\textsuperscript{21} Cfr. table n.2
\textsuperscript{22} N. Marku, \textit{Kisha e Shën Marise}, in \textit{Elbasani}, cit., p. 289.
\textsuperscript{23} See in particular P. Thomo, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 61-76.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 241.
\textsuperscript{25} The client and the workers are mentioned in the memorial inscription on the apse wall.
\textsuperscript{26} For any comparison with Post-Byzantine churches see in particular P. Thomo, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 61-76, 153, 205.
\textsuperscript{27} The workers are mentioned in the memorial inscription on the apse wall.
Typically for the Post-Byzantine architecture the attention is focused on the treatment of the internal space that are characterized here by a high artistic level. The true shapes and dimensions are perceived only inside and the generosity of the bent structures and the to show off of the architectural, pictorial and sculptural decorations. A harmony of the whole is obtained thanks to the application of similar decorative patterns for the architectural and ornamental parts. For instance the interlacements of grapevine branches which make the setting and frames of the icons, correspond to the decorative patterns in the column stems and their capitals. A similar dialogue is gathered in the decorations of the pendentives, of domes and vaults. These decorations are common to popular culture, are affected by the Byzantine tradition and strongly appear marked by the Ottoman culture.

The decorative system of the church examined includes in connection with the prescriptions of the orthodox rite, the fresco (present on the dome, on the pendentives, on the arch intrados and on the wall), the iconostasis and the other functional and liturgical elements. Particularly meaningful in the definition of the inside space of the church is the precious graven wooden iconostasis. It is one of the most important works in this kind, realized in 1859 in master Pjetër Filini's workshop, coming from the region of Reka. The style of this gilded wooden bas-relief on blue background, of high artistic endowed with refined vegetable and zoomorphic ornaments is defined by researchers as Balkans Baroque. Its particular composition including 46 icons of the feast days, finds its roots in

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28 As shown in the inscription located under the same iconostasis the works lasted 10 years.
29 About icons refer to Le icone albanesi XIII-XIX sec, pp. 58, 60, 66, 98, 118, 120, 124.
Church of the Dormizione of Saint Mary, detail of the iconostasi.

Church of the Dormizione of Saint Mary, the fresco with the resurrection of Christ.
the ideations of Onufri of the wall iconostasis, realized 150 years before in the two churches of the zone of Elbasan. The icons present in the wooden system and probably completed before the realization of the iconostasis, are made by Mihal Anagnosti from Samorina.\textsuperscript{30}

As regards the pictorial decoration in fresco, we observe a hierarchy of figures that, departing from the Christ in the dome, performed in 1859, and from the Virgo Maria in the semi-dome of the apse goes down to the prophets, to the apostles and saints to finish on the walls with narrative images, representing the solemnities of the Christian calendar, among which the Ascension and the Dormizione of Maria.

The internal space is conceived as an internal world that plays with the shapes and colours. Symbolic values play a special role in the distribution of space. In short we are in the presence of a place which represents the eternal Civitas Dei where high-level of Post-Byzantine architectural manufactured articles joins the preciousness of sculptural and pictorial items.

This type of longitudinal basilicas covered by domes and vaulted roofs was also supposed to be applied in another church in Elbasan, the Shen Kollit Church. Its original shape, which we only know from a 1942 pictorial depiction, was recently replaced by a structure that is completely different.

Other churches in the city are also buildings from the last century. The Orthodox Church of Shan Thanas, built after 1912, in brick and inside the area of the cemeterial complex on the spot of the altar of that same Saint, reveals a neo-Byzantine, Greek-type eclecticism. However the Byzantine Catholic Church of Saint Peter, built during the first decades of the 20th century, freely and with a modern feel interprets the styles of the Catholic churches, inspired mainly by elements that are characteristic of the medieval period.

As far as the individuality of architectural solutions, in its configuration of the arcades, the supporting coverings of the inside space, and in its architectural and artistic decoration, The Church of Saint Mary of The Dormition constitutes an especially interesting example.

Ewa Karwacka Codini

\textsuperscript{30} On Anagnosti refer to Le icone albanesi XIII-XIX sec., the test of Y. Drishti, Tirana, 2000, p.154.