

The hagia sophia-- research proposal sample

[History](#), [Middle East](#)



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Facts and History

The Hagia Sophia is a structure in Istanbul, Turkey. The current rendition of the structure was built between 532 and 537 AD, although the site existed as a cathedral for some time before the current structure was erected.

Historical records indicate that the structure was commissioned by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, who wanted the site to be home to an Orthodox patriarchal basilica. When the previous cathedral was destroyed by rioters, Justinian employed a physicist and a mathematician-- Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, respectively-- to design the Hagia Sophia.

Initially designed as an Orthodox patriarchal basilica, the basilica was initially dedicated to the Logos, or the second part of the Holy Trinity, an incredibly important figure in Orthodox religious beliefs. Logos, whose approximate equivalent in English is the concept of Jesus Christ, was the central figure for worship at the Hagia Sophia while the basilica was still in use as a religious center.

The idea that the basilica would be used to worship Christ and His literal human embodiment of God was one of the reasons that the basilica was

created in such a grand and expansive manner. During the years when the basilica was constructed, Christianity was growing, but it was also facing pressures from Islam and other religious sects (and fissures within the Christian religion itself). Large, grandiose structures and expressions of wealth, faith, and power were common during these years, and would only become more common into the Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque eras of art and architecture in Europe.

According to most sources, once the structure was completed, it became the central focal point for the Eastern Orthodox religion for nearly a thousand years, until the Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople and Istanbul. Once the Ottoman Empire conquered Turkey, the Hagia Sophia became a mosque and remained the principal mosque for Islam in the region.

Visual/Formal Analysis

According to Kinross, the Hagia Sophia has “ A vast oblong interior, 102 ft by 265 ft, [which] is thus created from a succession of domical elements that build up to the main dome, 102 ft in diameter and 184 ft high, in which a corona of 40 arched windows sheds a flood of light on the interiorAt the east end of the nave is the vaulted sanctuary apse and at the west end a great narthex or vestibule, beyond which an exonarthex opens to the forecourt, or atrium. Flanking the nave to the north and south are side aisles with galleries over them. Their massive vaults, carried at both levels by monolithic columns of green and white marble and purple porphyry, serve as buttresses to receive the thrust of the great dome and its supporting arches” (Kinross). Perhaps the most notable aspect of the structure is the dome: it is considered one of the most remarkable examples of high Byzantine

architecture in the world today. However, the minarets, which are placed at the four cardinal points of the structure, were not added until later when the Ottoman empire overtook the Byzantine empire; the Ottoman Turks removed much of the Christian symbolism inside the structure, and added the four minarets outside the structure.

The dome is the most notable and remarkable visual marker of the Hagia Sophia, however. The dome was a relatively new architectural endeavor when the structure was built, and yet, the dome of the building itself was innovative and new. The cupola of the dome is built upon a square of spherical, triangular pendentives. This style of building a cupola was designed for the Hagia Sophia; no other known Byzantine structure utilized this architectural innovation.

However, the dome of the Hagia Sophia has been problematic since the construction of the building. Because of the weight of the dome and the type and amount of mortar used in the construction process, the walls of the Hagia Sophia bowed outward under the weight of the dome, causing a collapse at at least one point during her history.

Iconography/Icononology

When the Hagia Sophia was used as a Orthodox patriarchal basilica, the mosaics and other artwork in the basilica was in the typical Byzantine Christian style. Although not quite the two-dimensional work of the Medieval period, the Byzantine art of the Hagia Sophia did not have the realism or hyper-realism that is associated with the Renaissance. The altar, similarly, was not the ornate type of altar that came into fashion in Christianity during the years leading up to the Renaissance. Like the Orthodox religion, the

mosaics were strictly religious, but beautiful in their own stark way. Some of these original mosaics have been restored, while some of the newer mosaics have been left.

However, once the Ottoman Turks overtook Turkey and transformed the Hagia Sophia into a mosque, the mosaics in the basilica were changed. God, according to Islam, cannot be depicted in human form, and the mosaics and other artwork became much more abstract. The geometric patterning that is so typical of Islamic art is in full effect in many areas of the interior of the structure. The influence of Islam on the structure is still clear to this day; although the Hagia Sophia is no longer used as a place of worship, people from all sects of the Judeo-Christian religions often make trips to the museum of the Hagia Sophia.

Works cited

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