Russia's Early Modern Orthodox Patriarchate:

Apogee and Finale, 1648-1721

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Chapter 4

Patriarch Nikon's Hierotopy: The New Jerusalem Hermitage as a Seventeenth Century Spatial Icon

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In the context of hierotopy, a discipline that studies the creation of sacred spaces as a specific spiritual and artistic creative activity, two new research problems have been postulated: sacred space creators as a phenomenon, and the re-creation of the Holy Land as the foundation of medieval Christian spiritual culture.[1] The present paper seeks to address these problems by analyzing one of Patriarch Nikon's most original and significant hierotopic projects that we believe to be critical to the understanding of seventeenth-century Russian culture.

Creators of Sacred Spaces

Patriarch Nikon (1652–1666) belongs to a special category of artists best described as creators of sacred space, or hierotopy masters. Reflections on the boundaries of art history raises questions about the practices of reducing medieval art history to studies of "object creation"

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[1] LIDOV, Aleksei. M.: Ierotopiia. Prostranstvennye ikony i obrazy paradigmy v vizantiiskoi kul'tury. Moscow 2009; IDEM: The Creator of Sacred Space as a Phenomenon of Byzantine Culture. In: L'artista a Bisanzio e nel mondo cristiano-orientale. Ed. by: Michèle BACCI. Pisa 2006; LIDOV, Aleksei. M: Novye Ierusalimy. Pereneshenie Sviatoi Zemli kak porozhdaiushchaia matritsa khristianskoi kul'tury. In: New Jerusalems. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces/Novye Ierusalemy. Ierotopiia i ikonografiia sakral'nykh prostranstv. Ed. by: IDEM: Moscow 2009, pp. 5-10. See also: www.hierotopy.ru.

and relegating the artist's role to the sphere of higher crafts. Introducing the unique phenomenon of sacred space creator broadens the scope of investigation and understanding. Such individuals were distinctly different from the creators of "art objects," including architecture, sculpture, paintings, liturgical objects or fabrics. At the same time, their role went beyond merely financing a project, as it included a significant artistic component. In a certain sense, a sacred space creator was an artist whose creative activity is comparable to that of a modern film director organizing the work of various skilled craftsmen. This perspective considers sacred space creators as an art historical phenomenon. These individuals are well known but their true roles remain obscured by the generic term "patron." Yet, not every patron was a sacred space creator, although in many cases, their functions overlapped.

In the Western European tradition, no one exemplifies the phenomenon better than Abbot Suger (1081–1151) who developed a conceptual framework for the first Gothic space in the St. Denis Cathedral in the 1140s.[2] His role in the project cannot be reduced to functions such as financing the project, hiring workers, advancing a theological program, developing new church rituals, or introducing iconographic and stylistic innovations, even though he dealt with all of these activities. As Suger himself wrote in his treatises, his main goal was to create a special kind of spatial environment.[3] Employing various methods, including both traditional artistic means and unique "installations" composed of relics, architectural elements, candles and lampadas he created scenarios that "came alive" as new church rituals were performed. Numerous inscriptions of biblical verses placed at focal points in the church served as commentaries illuminating the underlying concept of the sacred space. These texts provided a key to understanding the dramaturgy of light that defined the St. Denis Cathedral's innovative spatial environment.[4]

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[2] PANOVSKY, Erwin, and Gerda Panofsky-Soergel. Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St. Denis and its Art Treasures. Princeton NJ 1979.

[3] See for instance: 'De rebus in administratione sua gestis:' PANOVSKY, Abbot Suger, pp. 62-65.

[4] For a modern analysis of the neoplatonic sources of Abbot Suger's conception see: HARRINGTON, L. M.: Sacred Place in Early Medieval Neoplatonism. New York 2004, pp.158-164.

Importantly, Suger pointed directly to his models in Jerusalem and Constantinople, especially, Hagia Sophia. He clearly referred to something other than architectural design or church decoration, as these were dramatically different in the first Gothic edifice he created. Most likely, Suger alluded to the spatial images created by Christian emperors that served as inspiration and models for the all of Christendom.

For centuries, the Byzantine emperors who became sacred space creators followed the example of Justinian, the holy builder of the "Great Church." Justinian's role in selecting master builders and guiding the efforts of thousands of craftsmen was convincingly described by his contemporary and biographer Prokopios in the sixth century[5] and eloquently related in the "Tale of Hagia Sophia's Construction (*Diegesis peri tis Agias Sofias*)." This text recorded both historic facts and mythologems about the construction that circulated in Byzantium in the ninth and tenth centuries.[6] It was not merely a panegyric to an all-powerful ruler, but an attempt to describe the emperor's true role in the project. Prokopios emphasized that Justinian not only financed the Great Church's construction, but also poured out his creative and spiritual energies into the project, actively collaborating with and the architects Anthemius of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus.[7]

The semi-legendary story of the unique sacred space creator acquired its final shape in the "Tale of Hagia Sophia's Construction."[8] According to the story, the image of the Great Church had been revealed to the emperor in a dream by an angel in a vision. In a different episode, an angel wearing imperial vestments and purple sandals appeared to one of the architects commanding him to have three windows made in the central apse to symbolize the Holy Trinity. According to the "Tale," all decisions on the church decoration were made under Justinian's direction.

[5] PROCOPIUS OF CAESAREA: De Aedificis (= Procopii Caesariensis opera mmnia, Ed. by: Jakob HAURY, 2). Leipzig 1962–1963; IDEM: (PROKOPII KESARIISKII): Voina s gotami. O postroikakh. Translated by S. P. KONDRAT'EV. Moscow 1996, 1, pp. 21-78, 147-154.

[6] Διήγεσις περι τῆς οἰκοδομῆς … τῆς .. ἁγίας Σοφίας. In: Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum. Ed. by: Theodorus PREGER, 1. Leipzig 1901, pp. 74-108; DAGRON, G.: Constantinople imaginare. Études sur le recueil des Patria. Paris 1984.

[7] PROCOPIUS, De Aedificis, 1. 67-73.

[8] DAGRON, Constantinople imaginare.

These included the planning of the altar space, and the system of multiple doors as well as the central nave's internal partitioning into four sacred zones through the use of the so called "rivers of paradise" (*Diegesis*, 26), the traces of which are visible on the church marble floor today.[9] Moreover, Justinian ordered to embed relics in Hagia Sophia's cupola and columns. By transferring highly revered relics to the church, the emperor created distinct sacral zones inside the church. A typical example is the Well of the Samaritan Woman that the emperor transferred from Samaria and installed in the southeastern corner of the church to recreate a particular area of the Holy Land. Even though they might seem like a slightly odd mix of disjointed activities at the first glance, all of Justinian's activities related to the construction of Hagia Sophia, ranging from the most practical to highly artistic, can be interpreted as constituting an integral whole because an organizing logic holds them together. It is telling that the biblical description of how Solomon built his Temple, relates the same mix of activities.[10] Justinian competed against Solomon when he built his "Great Church." The "Tale" explains that during a ceremonial entry into the newly completed Hagia Sophia, Justinian ran to the ambo, lifted his hands and solemnly proclaimed: "Glory be to God who blessed me to complete such an undertaking. I have triumphed over you, Solomon" (*Diegesis,* 27).[11]

Rivalry with King Solomon, the greatest Temple's famed creator, was a stable paradigm for medieval church creators working on large projects.[12] An essential element of the rivalry was the understanding that King Solomon merely carried out a God's project under divine guidance. The Byzantine emperors who strove to equal or surpass King Solomon always kept in mind that the Temple or any other sacred place was first

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[9] MAJESKA, George.: Notes on the Archeology of St. Sophia at Constantinople: The Green Marble Bands on the Floor. In: Dumbarton Oaks Papers 32 (1978), pp. 299-308; LIDOV, A.M.: Raiskie reki i ierotopiia vizantiiskogo khrama. In: Zhivonosnyi istochnik. Voda v ierotopii i ikonografii khristianskogo mira, Ed. by: A. M. LIDOV. Moscow 2014, pp. 53-60.

[10] SCHEJA, G.: Hagia Sophia und Templum Salomonis. In: Istanbuler Mitteilungen 12 (1962), pp. 44-58.

[11] KODER, J.: Justinians Sieg über Solomon in Thymiama. Athens, 1994, pp. 135-142.

[12] The Temple of Solomon. Archeological Fact and Medieval Tradition in Christian, Islamic and Jewish Art. Ed. by: J. GUTMANN. Missoula 1976.

and foremost God's creation. In each case, the ruler's role was no more than to carry out a divine plan and follow instructions of the Almighty Creator. Moreover, all of the rulers viewed their construction projects as derived from the supreme prototype described in the Book of Exodus (Ex 25-40) according to which God appeared as the creator of the Tabernacle's sacred space. It followed that He gave instructions to Moses on Mount Horeb describing the entire design plan for the Tabernacle, from the general spatial layout to technical details on how to make sacred vestments.

It is noteworthy that *tavnit*, the biblical term to describe the comprehensive project, means image, model and project. God chose artisan Bezalel to implement his project, and thus, for ages to come, established a model for the relationships between sacred space creators and "object creators" referred to as "masters" in the biblical text (Ex 35: 30–35).[13] Sacred space creation by earthly rulers can, thus, be interpreted as iconic behavior in relation to the Master of Heaven. It reaches far beyond the confines of "commissioning" (and patronage), as it is normally understood. Attention to this process has recently become a vast new field of research prompting a series of historic reconstructions of specific sacred spaces.[14]

The transposition (transfer) and recreation of sacred spaces from the Holy Land was a key element in most projects.[15] The hierotopic approach has revealed that the transfer of sacred spaces, creation of New Jerusalems and images of the Holy Land were highly significant aspects of medieval culture. In our opinion, it served as the very foundation of spiritual life and as a generative matrix for all other forms of liturgical and

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[13] In the new academic translation of the Old Testament into Russian the word *umeltsy* (masters, artisans) is used to differentiate from the canonical, but blurred *mudrye serdtsem* (wise by heart) Kniga Iskhoda. (Series Vetkhii Zavet. Perevod s drevneevreiskogo): Ed. and trans. by: M.G. SELEZNEV and S.V. TISHCHENKO. Moscow 2016, pp. 102-103.

[14] One such idea related to the miraculous icons in Hagia Sophia and to Emperor Leo the Wise (886–912) was recently reconstructed as an important test of the new methodology: LIDOV, A.: Leo the Wise and the miraculous icons in Hagia Sophia. In: The Heroes of the Orthodox Church: New Saints of the Eighth to Sixteenth Centuries. Ed. by: E. KONTOURA-GALAKI. Athens 2004, pp. 393-432.

[15] LIDOV, A.M.: Novye Ierusalimy, pp. 5-10.

creative activity, namely architectural monuments, iconographic programs, liturgical objects, even new church rites, dramaturgy of light, olfactory environments, and literary texts.

This thinking gives rise to the highly complicated issue of distinguishing between a "holy site" and "sacred space," which at times are combined under the more general term "topos."[16] The transfer of a spatial image does not result in the disappearance of a site. Moreover, a concrete topographic reality serves as a source of the spatial image's miraculous properties and power. Hierotopic activity with various degree of literalness – from somewhat ephemeral to almost copy-like – constructs an intricate system of interactions between a fixed site-matrix and "flying" space, which at any time can materialize in a new location. This is evidenced in projects recreating the Holy Land throughout the Christian East and West.[17]

Patriarch Nikon's "New Jerusalem"

It has been established that the creation of sacred spaces undertaken by Patriarch Nikon and initially supported by Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich were not intuitive creative explorations or unique undertakings, but rather continued a deeply rooted and extensive Christian hierotopic tradition that had produced impressive results in Byzantium, the Latin West and ancient Rus'.

A vast body of recent literature is devoted to Patriarch Nikon and the New Jerusalem he built near Moscow.[18] However, the essence of the

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[16] SMITH, Z.: To Take Place. Toward Theory in Ritual. Chicago-London 1987; OUTERHOUT, R.: Flexible Geography and Transportable Topography. In: The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art. Ed. by: Bianca. KÜHNEL. Jerusalem 1998, pp. 402-404. For a discussion of the problems see: WOLF, Gerhard: Holy Place and Sacred Space. Hierotopical Considerations concerning the Eastern and Western Christian Traditions. In: Ierotopiia: issledovanie sakral'nykh prostranstv. Materialy mezhdunarodnogo simpoziuma. Ed. by: A.M. LIDOV. Moscow 2009, pp. 34-36.

[17] LIDOV, A.M.: Tserkov' Bogomateri Farosskoi Imperatorskii khram-relikvarii kak konstantinopol'skii Grob Gospoden'. In: Vizantiiskii mir. Iskusstvo Konstantinopolia i natsional'nye traditsii. Ed. by: M.A. ORLOVA and O.I. PODOBEDOVA. Moscow 2005, pp. 79-108.

[18] See: SEVAST'IANOVA, S.K.: Materialy k "Letopisi zhizni i literaturnoi deiatel'nosti patriarkha Nikona." St. Petersburg 2003.

Russian patriarch's hierotopic project has not been revealed.[19] Nikon's ambitious plans, which were fully supported by the tsar, were not limited to the creation of "Russian Palestine" near Moscow. The tsar and patriarch were inspired by the idea of creating an image of Holy Rus' in Muscovy,[20] and of transforming the whole realm into the new Holy Land. This conception involved a network of monasteries, urban and rural churches, small chapels in deserted places, and even micro-sanctuaries with icons put on trees deep in impenetrable forest.[21] This master idea drove the introduction and development of numerous liturgical rites, new cross-bearing processions and a massive transfer of holies, relics and miracle-making icons. This process was exemplified by the creation and transfer of the Kii Cross – a life-size replica of the Golgotha cross made of cypress and brought from Palestine to Moscow into which 300 Christian relics (Byzantine and Russian) were inserted.[22] Then the cross journeyed solemnly across the country to the small Kii Island in the White Sea where it became a sacred centerpiece of a new monastery and holy object of a national significance. The universal religious and political message was clear: "Holy Rus'" was meant to become a chosen place of the Christ's Second Coming and to gain preeminence among Christian nations. According to Nikon, the Kii Cross served as viable substitute of the Holy Land, a site of new pilgrimage, comparable with the traveling to Palestine.[23] This pilgrimage could be more difficult than travel to Palestine given the rough environmental conditions in the White Sea region. The Patriarch did not want to simplify the goal. A lack of practical usefulness

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[19] For Patriarch Nikon in the context of hierotopy see: LIDOV, A.M.: Ierotopiia: sozdanie sakral'nykh prostranstv kak forma tvorchestva i predmet issledovaniia. In: Gosudarstvo, Religiia, Tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom 2009: 2, pp. 60-76.

[20] ZELENSKAIA, G.M.: Patriarkh Nikon – zodchii Sviatoi Rusi. Moscow 2011.

[21] To this day, such "illogical" holy sites are found in the Russian North.

[22] SHCHEDRINA, K.A.: Nekotorye istoriko-bogoslovskie aspekty monastyrskogo stroitel'stva patriarkha Nikona. In: Nikonovskie chteniia v muzee Novyi Ierusalim. Sbornik statei, Ed., by Galina Zelenskaia. Moscow 2002, pp. 15–22; GNUTOVA, S.V. and K.A. SHCHEDRINA.: Kiiskii Krest, Krestnii monastyr' i preobrazhenskie sakral'nogo prostranstva Patriarkha Nikona. In: Ierotopiia. Sozdanie sakral'nykh prostranstv v Vizantii i na Rusi. Ed. by: A.M. LIDOV. Moscow 2006, pp. 681–694; KAIN, Kevin M.: Before New Jerusalem: Patriarch Nikon's Iverskii and Krestnyi Monasteries. In: Russian History 39.1-2 (2012), pp. 173-231, especially pp. 218-228.

[23] KAIN, Before New Jerusalem, p. 222.

and absence of common reasons in this project seem to be deliberate and born out of same underlying and all-encompassing master idea meant to activate an image-based iconic mentality of the people, with functional usefulness not allowed overshadowing a symbolic image.   Patriarch Nikon's special contributions to the Holy Rus' project are well known. Among them were the three grand new monasteries he conceived and founded. Valdai-Iverskii Monastery connected iconically with the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos, was especially revered by the Moscow patriarch. The abovementioned Monastery of the Holy Cross on Kii Island symbolically referenced Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, which stood at a place where the Tree of the True Cross grew. The core project, a "spiritual capital" of a new Holy Land, was the Resurrection Monastery on the Istra River near Moscow which Patriarch Nikon, following Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's lead called "New Jerusalem." Construction of the monastery began in 1656 and its main church was modeled after the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. It was to become a sacred center of a vast area of over 60 square kilometers, measuring six kilometers from west to east, and 12 kilometers from north to south. In this area near Moscow, the holy sites of New Testament Palestine, including Bethany and Galilee, the Mount of Olives and Mount Tabor, the Garden of Gethsemane and Oak of Mamre, Pool of Siloam and Well of the Samaritan Woman, and many others were mapped, and small churches or architectural markers erected. Waters in the landscape were also reinterpreted, and, as a result, the Istra River became recognized the Jordan River replete with a site of Christ's baptism.[24] An attempt was made to replicate as accurately as possible the historic topographic map of the New Testament Palestine, paying attention to the relative sizes of and distances

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[24] At least Dutch traveler Nicolaes Witsen perceived it in this sense when he visited Voskresenskii Monastery in 1665: "Outside of this monastery called Jerusalem and around it, little places are located in such a distance as they stand in reality in Jerusalem: Bethlehem, Kana, Mount of Olives, Garden of Gethsemane etc.": VITSEN, Nikolaas: Puteshestvie v Moskoviiu, 1664–1665. Dnevnik. St. Petersburg 1996, p. 182. Seventeenth century Russian pilgrims observed this congruence of New Jerusalem with the real Holy Land.

between the new holy sites.[25] The underlying master plan could be hardly anything else than creating a spatial icon of the Holy Land from a bird-eye view.

Image 4.1
Bird-eye view of the New Jerusalem Monastery complex. The Resurrection (*Voskresenskii*) Cathedral is in the very center. The Hermitage or *Otkhodnaia Pustyn'* can be found outside the monastery walls on the top right. The Istra River flows next to it.

Without doubt, the iconic principle determined Patriarch Nikon's master plan. Proof can be found in Nikon's "Refutation" of the charges, raised by Paisios Ligarides and Boyar Streshnev in August 1662, that his New Jerusalem Monastery "dishonored" and even antiquated the prototypical Jerusalem. Therein, the Moscow patriarch invoked the Orthodox teaching on icons and its cornerstone thesis on the relationship between an image and the proto-image, which through the visual embodiment could become accessible to a praying person.[26]

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[25] ZELENSKAIA, G.M.: Sviatyni Novogo Ierusalima. Putevoditel'. Moscow 2002; SHMIDT, V.V.: Palestina Sviatoi Rusi. In: Gosudarstvo, Religiia, Tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom 2009: 2, pp. 177-258.

[26] Vozrazhenie, ili razorenie, smirenogo Nikona Bozieiu milostiniu patriarkha,

Nikon was a practicing iconographer. However, in this case, he was apparently alluding to a representation not on a flat surface but in space. Thus, we could affirm that the "spatial icon" concept is not just our interpretation, but a mental category that existed in the mind of New Jerusalem's creator (even though the term itself is, indeed, of our coinage).[27] It appears that Patriarch Nikon, who was a known visionary most likely, came to discern a New Palestine in the topography of the Moscow region, which bore little resemblance to the original, through a mystical vision.[28] The very *raison d'etre* of a spatial icon is the actualization of a vision-image.

The Hermitage or Otkhodnaia Pustyn'

It is important to keep in mind that the New Jerusalem complex as a whole was a system of interrelated sacred spaces conceived by Patriarch Nikon but built and actualized in different historic periods. One can analyze each space as a separate hierotopic project evolving in time and requiring a specific historical reconstruction. This study examines one of the most original, symbolically important and well preserved of Patriarch

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protivo voprosov boiarina Simeona Streshneva, ezhe napisa Gazkomu mitropolitu Paisiiu Ligaridu, i na otvety Paisiovy. In: Patriarch Nikon on Church and State. Nikon's "Refutation." Ed. with introduction and notes by: V. TUMINS and G. VERNADSKY. Berlin et al. 1982, p. 155. See also: Patriarkh Nikon i ego ierotopii (izvlecheniia iz Vozrazheniia ili Razoreniia protiv voprosootvetov Streshneva-Ligarida Nikona, Bozh'iu milost'iu Patriarkha). In: Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom 2, 2000, pp. 73-75; Lepakhin, V.V.: Ikonicheskoe zodchestvo patriarkha Nikona. In: Nikonovskii sbornik. Moscow 2006, pp. 17-54; VOROB'EVA, N.V.: Istoriko-kanonicheskie i bogoslovskie vozzreniia patriarkha Nikona. Omsk 2008, pp. 305-309. See also: KAIN, Kevin M.: "'New Jerusalem' in Seventeenth Century Russia: The Image of a New Orthodox Holy Land." In: Cahiers du Monde Russe, 58.3 (2017), pp. 371-394. [The political ideas in Nikon's "Refutation" are analyzed by Donald OSTROWSKI below in Chapter 6 –eds.]

[27] For the concept of a "spatial icon" see: LIDOV, A.M.: Ierotopiia. Prostransvennye ikony i obrazy-paradigmy v vizantiiskoi kul'ture. Moscow 2009.

[28] On Patriarch Nikon's visions see: SEVAST'IANOVA, S.K.: Èpistoliarnoe nasledie patriarkha Nikona. Perepiska s sovremennikami. Moscow 2007, pp. 136-175. Galina Zelenskaia develops and substantiates the "predetermination" of New Jerusalem, envisioned and acquired by Nikon as a concealed, but then proving to be miraculous icon: ZELENSKAIA, G.M: Novyi Ierusalim pod Moskvoi. Aspekty zamysla i noye otkrytiia. In: Novye Ierusalimy. Ierotopiia i ikonografiia sakral'nykh prostranstv. Ed. by: A. LIDOV. Moscow 2009, pp. 745-773.

Nikon's projects: his Hermitage, *Skit* or *Otkhodnaya Pustyn'* (literally "a wilderness to which one retreats"). As the patriarch's contemporaries and monastery registries testify, Nikon retreated there during fasting periods for solitary life, prayers and ascetic endeavors.[29]

Image 4.2
The Hermitage or *Otkhodnaia Pustyn'*. Istra River is on the right. The site was conceived of as a Garden of Paradise. Nikon envisioned a space of exceptional holiness that would have a higher sacral status than the neighboring monastery.

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[29] Izvestie o rozhdenii i vospitanii i o zhitii Sviateishego Nikona, Patriarkha Moskovskogo i vseia Rossii, napisannoe klirikom ego Ioannom Shusherinym. Moscow 1871, p. 51; transl.: SHUSHERIN, Ioann: From Peasant to Patriarch. Account of the Birth, Uprising, and Life of His Holiness Nikon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Written by his Cleric Ioann Shusherin. Ed. and trans. by: Kevin M. KAIN and Katia LEVINTOVA. Lanham MD 2007, pp. 60-61. It is important to note that the place was called (a/the) *skit* only in the nineteenth century. For the most comprehensive collection of written reports and architectural constructional sources see: GORIACHEVA, M.Iu.: Otkhodnaia Pustyn' Patriarkha Nikona. Materialy issledovanii. In: Nikonovskie chteniia v muzee "Novyi Ierusalim": Sbornik staei. Ed. by: Galina Zelensakaia. Moscow 2002, pp. 23-36.

The *Pustyn'* was built close to the Resurrection Monastery and adjacent to the site replicating Christ's Baptism (Theophany)[30] on the Istra-Jordan River and was, according to its location named *Bogoiavlenskaia Pustyn'* (Theophany Hermitage). The construction process took place in two periods between 1657 and 1662 under Nikon's personal supervision. The first building was constructed in 1658. It was radically rebuilt in a most original form after Nikon's return from Kii Island in 1660.

The Hermitage was located on an island developed specially by digging a canal that diverted water from the river around it.[31] The site was conceived of as a Garden of Paradise, housing exotic plants and rare birds, e. g. "peacocks, peahens and swans."[32] Nikon envisioned a space of exceptional holiness that would have a higher sacred status than the neighboring monastery. As work on the project took place in 1658–1662, after the break in the relations between the patriarch and tsar, Nikon pleaded (in July of 1658) that Alexei Mikhailovich allow him to reside not in the Resurrection Monastery itself, but in his little *"pustyn'ka."*[33] The project acquires special significance in the context of the patriarch's eschatological ideas that emerged from his conflict with the tsar. Nikon made numerous allusions to the Book of Revelation and its image of the Woman of the Apocalypse "Clothed in the Sun," traditionally interpreted by theologians as the period in which the Church of Christ flees

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[30] That is, Christ's initial public theophany in the Orthodox tradition –*eds*.

[31] The most recent archeological research suggests that the site was a natural island, which was later developed by Patriarch Nikon in the context of the project of symbolic irrigation which included 'Cedron chanel' around the monastery: ERSHOV, I.N. "Kedronsky potok" i ostrov "Bogoiavlenskoi pustyni" v Novom Ierusalime: legendy i archeologicheskaia real'nost (forthcoming).

[32] These "heavenly" birds were removed to Moscow in 1667 after Nikon was removed from the monastery: LEONID (KAVELIN): Istoricheskoe opisanie stavropigial'nogo Voskresenskogo, Novyi Ierusalim, imenuemogo monastyria. Moscow 1876, p. 766.

[33] "I beat my forehead to the Great Sovereign that the Sovereign graciously order me to live in the hermitage at Voskresenskii monastery." (Nikon's conversation with the boyar Aleksei Trubetskoi in July 1658): GIBBENET, N.: Istoricheskoe issledovanie dela Patriarcha Nikona,1. St. Petersburg 1882, p. 182.

persecution in the wilderness where true holiness hides from its enemies (Rev 12: 1–17).[34] Thus, in 1661 Nikon wrote to the tsar:

> Seeing the holy Church persecuted, having listened to the words of God [...]: so, I have retreated, fleeing, and settled in the wilderness looking for God who saves me.[35]

In this context, the conceptual idea for the *Otkhodnaia Pustyn'* acquires a special religious and political meaning not only as a deliberately chosen and symbolically significant residence of the patriarch who has fallen out of favor, but also as an epicenter of Russian holiness. It seems probable that Patriarch Nikon conceptualized his Hermitage (*Pustyn'*) as a new symbolic center of Holy Rus', which at the same time had to resemble paradise on earth in keeping with the Prophet Isaiah's words: "he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord." (Is, 51: 3)

The dedication of the *Pustyn'* to the Feast of Theophany and its location adjacent to the Istra River site may be interpreted as an iconic image and hierotopos of the New Testament site of Christ's Baptism on the River Jordan and constitutes another facet of the same conceptual idea. Since Nikon's day, the most important Great Water Blessing rite was held on that very site on the Feast of the Theophany. During his conflict with the tsar, Nikon saw himself as a new John the Baptist persecuted by an unrighteous ruler. The dedication of the *Pustyn'* to the Theophany of the Lord, likely, was meant to refer not only to the Baptism of Christ but also to His retreat from the hatred of the Jews "beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized" (John 10: 40).[36] Patriarch Nikon elaborated on the theme to justify his own "abiding in the wilderness:"

> Jesus went away from hatred into the wilderness, about the kingdom of Heaven he taught and those seeking healing healed [...] And they sought to seize Him but He escaped from their

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[34] ZELENSKAIA, Galina: Novyi Ierusalim. Obrazy dol'nego i gornego. Moscow 2008, pp. 118-119.

[35] [Видя святую Церковь гониму, послушав словесе Божия [...]: се удалихся, бегая, и водворихся в пустыни, чаях Бога спасающаго мя.] GIBBENET, N.: Istoricheskoe issledovanie dela Patriarcha Nikona, 2, St. Petersburg 1884, p. 505; SEVAST'IANOVA, Épistoliarnoe nasledie patriarkha Nikona, pp. 399-404.

[36] ZELENSKAIA, Novyi Ierusalim pod Moskvoi, pp. 745-773.

grasp. And went again to Jordan, to a place where John first
baptized and stayed there.[37]

This perspective helps explain why the patriarch presented an icon
he had painted of John the Baptist's severed head on a platter to the tsar
on the occasion of Tsarevich Ivan Alekseevich's birth.[38] Nikon's
conceptualization of the Hermitage (*Pustyn'*) interwove ideas and images
which blended universal Christian theological meanings with current
religious and political ones inseparable as they were, in his mind, from his
own life.

The focal point of the *Otkhodnaia Pustyn'* was a unique structure,
which had no precedents in ancient Russian architecture. The oldest
monastery records referred to it as "a stone pillar with four apartments."[39]
There is an exceptionally high probability that the structure's architectural
and symbolic design were developed by Nikon himself, making the
"pillar" one of the most important underestimated sources of Russian
cultural history. The design evolved gradually. Initially a two-story
residential building was built with an abutting Church of the Theophany,
consecrated, according to an inscription on the site dedication cross, on 22
June 1658.[40] A year later, the patriarch departed for a long trip to the North,
visiting his Valdai-Iverskii and Kii Monasteries. Upon his return in 1661–
1662, Nikon undertook a major rebuilding of the *skit*, transforming it into
a four-story pillar. The first floor housed various utility rooms; rooms for
clerics were located on the second floor; a church of the Theophany and
the patriarch's quarters occupied the third floor. The open rooftop fourth
floor housed an octagonal rotunda Church of St. Peter and Paul, the
patriarch's small private prayer cell, a small belfry, and a roof ambulatory
surrounded by a stone balustrade. A long long narrow staircase

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[37] [Пришед от злобы Иисус на место пусто, о царствии Божии учил и требующия
исцеления целил … . И исках убо яти Его, изыде от рук их. И иде паки на …
Иордан, на место, идеже бе Иоанн, прежде крести, и пребысть ту] "Vozrazhenie,"
p. 107.
[38] MARKINA, N.D.: Ikona-moshchevik "Glava Ioanna Predtechi" 1666 g. In:
Khristianskie relikvii v Moskovskom Kremle. Ed. by. A.M. LIDOV. Moscow 2000,
pp. 292-293.
[39] GORIACHEVA, Otkhodnaia Pustyn' Patriarkha Nikona, pp. 23-24.
[40] For details of the construction see: GORIACHEVA, Otkhodnaia Pustyn' Patriarkha
Nikona, pp. 23-36.

Image 4.3
Front view of the Hermitage or *Otkhodnaia Pustyn'*. Its construction resembles
a "stone pillar with four apartments" (Goriacheva). The first floor served
utility purposes, the second provided for a couple of rooms for clerics. The
Church of Theophany (*Bogoiavlenie*) and Patriarch Nikon's quarters were on
the third. The open rooftop fourth floor housed the octagonal rotunda Church
of St. Peter and Paul, the patriarch's small private prayer cell, a small belfry,
and a roof ambulatory surrounded by a stone balustrade.

connected all the floors and led to Nikon's cell on the roof. In his cell, the
patriarch, who was very tall, could not stand up, but only sit alone, praying
and reading. It is likely that the cell was conceptualized as an anchorage
where one engaged in ascetic endeavors, especially important during
fasting periods. Likewise, only one person could be present and serve in
the rotunda of the St. Peter and Paul Church, while the Theophany Church
one floor below could fit a small group of people. Thus, the fourth floor
was envisioned as the highest in the hierarchy of holiness and was intended
for Nikon's personal use.

Another feature of the space recently discovered during the
restoration work also attests to its special status. The Hermitage's whole
roof was paved with Russian white-stone tombstones dating to the
fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, which were broken in pieces and laid face
down (a total of 148 fragments of various sizes).[41] The tombstones were
brought from an unknown cemetery and used as a special sacred material.
Clearly, the reason for this was not the lack of ordinary white stone but
Nikon's specific instructions. One likely explanation is that the
tombstones transferred to the roof served to create a space of exceptional
holiness, located as it were between heaven and earth. On the other hand,
in seen in the context of the Byzantine tradition, they also served as
reminders of the transitory and vain nature of earthly life relative to the
Kingdom of Heaven. Interestingly, tombstone fragments were used in
other places of the New Jerusalem complex. For instance, they covered the
steps leading to *synthronon* (*soprestolie*, a seat for bishops) in the altar of
the Resurrection Monastery's main cathedral and the vaulted ceiling of the
Kouvouklion, the reproduction of the Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher in
Jerusalem.[42] In other words, the tombstone material appeared in spaces of
exceptional holiness. The tombstones were perceived as relics of a special

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[41]The plates were discovered by G.M. Alfërova during restoration works in 1975, see:
GORIACHEVA, Otkhodnaia Pustyn' Patriarkha Nikona, pp. 30-31; GORIACHEVA,
M.Iu.: Nadgrobie v arkhitekture. Gul'bishche skita patriarkha Nikona v
Novoierusalimskom monastyre. In: Russkoe srednevekovoe nadgrobie XIII–XVII
veka. Materialy k svodu. Vyp. 1. Moscow 2006, pp. 180-186.
[42] The Chapel (Greek: *kouvouklion*) of the Holy Sepulcher is the two-room Aedicule
in the center of the rotunda of the Basilica or Church of the Holy Sepulcher and
encloses the tomb of the Savior –eds.

kind that the patriarch saw fit to use as construction material to delineate sacred space. In a sense, one could interpret the whole Hermitage as a reliquary where a hermit lives in a holy land made of sacred materials. One can trace this hierotopic practice back to Campo Santo in Pisa. In the twelfth century crusaders brought back from Jerusalem shiploads of holy soil collected around Golgotha and the Holy Sepulcher. The soil was spread on a site next to the Pisa city cathedral
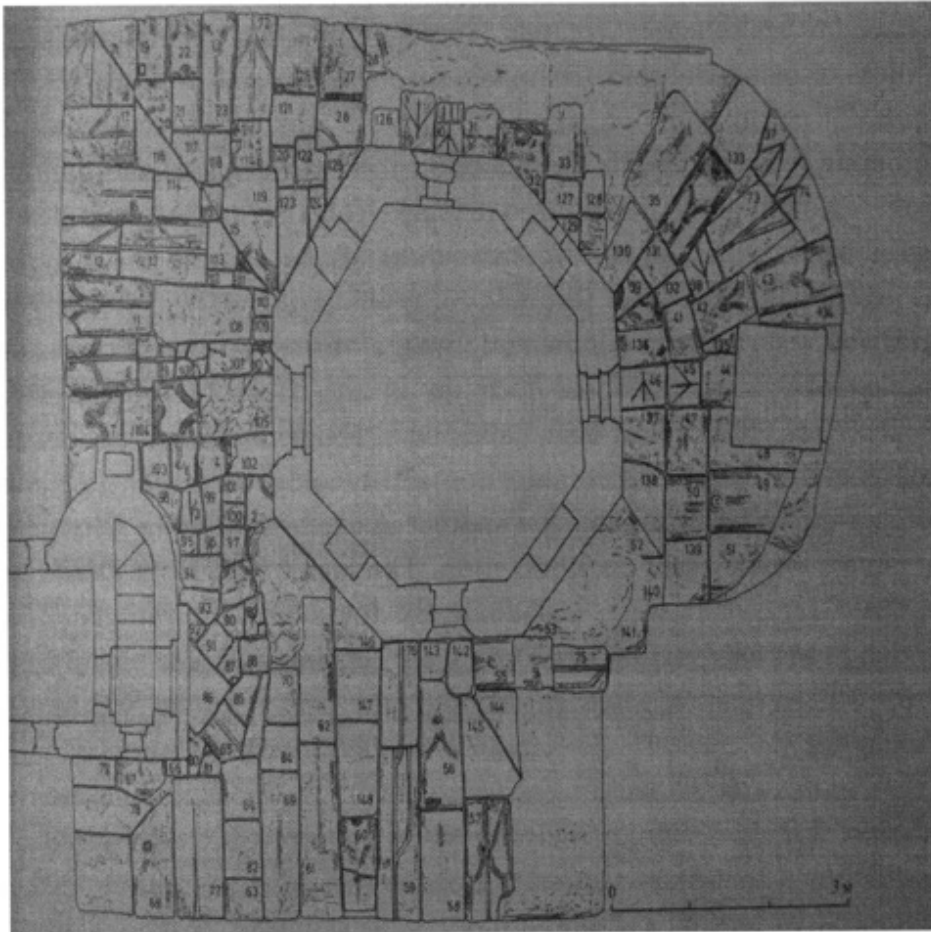
Image 4.4
Sketch of the 148 tombstone fragments that were used for the construction of the Hermitage's roof. Their provenance is hitherto unknown. They served to create a space of exceptional holiness transcending the boundary between earth and heaven, between earthly and eternal life.

to create *campo santo* (a "holy field"), which in the thirteenth-fourteenth century, was enclosed by a cloister where tombs were placed. Thus, the Pisa city elite could obtain the privilege to be buried in "the Holy Land."

By using fragments of old tombstones, Nikon was also creating a "Holy Land," which became an integral part of the architectural and spatial icon of Heavenly Jerusalem embodied by his *Pustyn'*.

From this perspective, it might be possible to explain the peculiar shapes of the two churches located on the Hermitage's third and fourth floors, an architectural feature completely overlooked in the scholarship. The Church of Theophany has an elongated plan resembling a small basilica without a cupola. The rooftop Church of the Preeminent Apostles is shaped as an octagonal rotunda. There are no other examples of either basilicas or octagonal rotundas in late medieval Russian architecture. The choice of such uncommon architectural types was hardly accidental. By combining a basilica with a rotunda on the two levels of the building, Nikon created an association with the Holy Sepulcher complex in Jerusalem with its signature combination of the enormous Martyrium Basilica and Resurrection Rotunda built above the site of the Savior's burial and resurrection. A schematic image of the two-part architectural complex served as a stable formula in the Byzantine iconography interpreted as the simplest visual allusion to Heavenly Jerusalem.[43] Thus, through a highly unusual combination and typology of his two personal churches the patriarch created yet another image of the Divine City where he wanted to dwell while still on earth. The idea of the Holy Desert and Heavenly Jerusalem were, paradoxically for a modern rational mind, blended in his imagination inspired by the Byzantine iconic vision of the world which was reflected in iconography and spiritual writings of Nikon's era.

In this context we can easily reconsider the most obvious element in the patriarch's design, namely the pillar concept which unequivocally embodied in a four-story vertically elongated building. Sitting in his cell-anchorhold, or serving a solitary liturgy in the rotunda surrounded only by ceramic tile cherubim, or taking a walk on the roof and stepping on tombstones, Patriarch Nikon could easily imagine that he dwelt between heaven and earth, following the example of ancient stylites who practiced this highest form of asceticism. Let's not forget that before his ordination,

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[43] LIDOV, A.M.: Nebesnyi Ierusalim. In: Ikony: mir sviatykh obrazov v Vizantii i na Rusi. Ed. by: IDEM. Moscow 2013, pp. 95-168.

Nikon's name was Nikita and thus, his patron saint was the Russian stylite Saint Nikita of Pereslavl'.

Conclusion

We believe the Hermitage in New Jerusalem to be the most significant spatial icon of its historic period and to represent a universal religious and political conceptual idea. This specific Hermitage was meant to become a true spiritual center of Holy Rus', away from Moscow with its vain intrigues and other sins. We know with certainty that Nikon was the author of this totally original architectural-spatial and artistic concept. By combining the visual with conceptual as well as the material and concrete with the imaginary, the patriarch created an iconic image superior to all of the seventeenth–century Russian flat surface icons. In this respect Nikon emerges as an artistic genius who developed and transformed the great traditions of the Byzantine and ancient Russian hierotopy, the unique art of sacred space creation.

The images for this article are provided by the author.

Translated by Natalia Yakimenko