

CONTEMPORARY SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ARCHITECTURE: ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS SINCE 1990

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This paper focuses on the architectural competitions for Orthodox Christian churches in Serbia since 1990, both on the analysis of the designs submitted and the competition requirements. The first competition for an Orthodox church in Serbia after World War II was announced for Priština in 1991. After that, competitions for the temple in Čukarica, Novi Beograd, Niš, Aleksinac and Kruševac were conducted. Thanks to the fact that architectural competitions allow a greater degree of creative freedom to the architects than regular practice, various solutions were offered, from replicas of models from architectural history and tradition to fully non-traditional proposals. Depending on the relationship to tradition, architectural design approaches can be classified into three main groups: radically modernizing, conservatively traditionalist, and compromising. Of the six competitions conducted, four churches were built, which are among the most architecturally successful newer churches in Serbia. This points to the importance of the implementation of the architectural competition in this field of architecture. The diversity of the award-winning projects shows that there is awareness of the possibility for the further development of church architecture, favouring a moderate approach.

Key words: Christian Orthodox church architecture, architectural competitions, tradition, Serbia.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Orthodox Christian church architecture in Serbia is in a crisis, marked by the profound misbalance between the number of churches built since 1990 and their architectural quality, which is similar to the situation throughout Orthodox Christianity today (Manić *et al.*, 2015b). Of the hundreds of churches designed and built during this period of time in Serbia, only a few of them have achieved a positive reception among the professional audience². This state of affairs is the consequence of several factors, of which two stand out. The first one is the marginalization of this architectural programme during socialist Yugoslavia, on account of the ideological hostility of state socialism toward religion, which was present to a greater extent in the Soviet Union, Romania and Bulgaria – predominantly Orthodox Christian countries – during their socialist

period. The second factor is the widespread skepticism in general towards the possibility and the appropriateness of using modern, non-historicist architectural language in Christian sacral architecture³. This attitude is present not only in Eastern, but also in Western Christianity as well, even though there is a strong tradition of modern religious Western Christian architecture – both Roman Catholic and Protestant, including some masterpieces of the most important twentieth century authors, and some of the pioneers of modern architecture – Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright.

This paper focuses on the analysis of designs submitted in the architectural competitions for Orthodox churches since 1990 in Serbia. This subject was selected due to the fact that such designs are all based on the same competition requirements, and yet the architects are allowed to deploy a certain level of creative freedom, so it is possible to encounter a large number of different approaches,

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² see: Jovanović M., 1987 and 2007; Mitrović, 2009; Kadijević 2009, 2010, 2013b, 2015; Kadijević and Pantović, 2011 and 2014; Jovanović Z., 2011; Folić, 2013; Milenković, 2013; Manić, 2009; Manić *et al.*, 2013.

³ see: Ioan, 2001; Tuleshkov, 2002; Barbas and Tsagallas, 2003; Milovidov, 2012; Fernandez Cobian, 2007; Schloeder, 2014; Manić *et al.*, 2015a and 2015b.

concepts and unique styles compared to the contemporary architectural practice in this field. Only the open public competitions were analyzed. The year 1990 was chosen as a starting point for our research because it marks the start of the transition from socialism, which had started to collapse in the previous year in the whole of Europe. Furthermore, those competitions were the first ones to take place after the period between two world wars.

This research serves as a contribution to the study of sacral architecture from the aspect of architectural and urban design. The objective is to acquire an understanding of different approaches and viewpoints on the possibilities of further developing Serbian Orthodox church architecture. Another important goal is the systematization, critical assessment and classification of the designs submitted to architectural competitions for Orthodox church buildings over the last two and a half decades. The purpose of the research was to provide a better understanding of contemporary Serbian Orthodox Christian church architecture and to investigate the development tendencies and potentials, on one hand, and assess the readiness of the professionals and the Church circles to accept some of the models offered, on the other.

THE COMPETITION DESIGNS AS CONTRIBUTIONS TO CREATIVENESS - ANALYSIS AND CATEGORIZATION

Competition for the Orthodox temple in Priština

The first architectural competition for designing an Orthodox temple in the post-war period in Serbia was called in 1991 for the temple in Priština. Of a total of sixteen concept designs submitted, seven were taken into consideration (Milenković A, 1996: 109); no first prize was granted, and the winners of two second prizes ex aequo were the architect Spasoje Krunić (Figure 1) and the team of architects: Svetolik Tanasijević, Darko Delale and Stevan Mičić⁴ (Figure 2).

Both designs represent attempts to modify the traditional model using contemporary architectural engineering, which was achieved by the stylization of the construction elements and a slightly simplified facing. The construction works were commenced based on Krunić's project, which was more refined and pure architecturally than the other award-winning design, which exhibited the strong

⁴ At the exhibition *Tradition vs. Contemporary Serbian Church Architecture*, a slightly different list of authors was published: Delale, Mičić and Radmilo Erić.

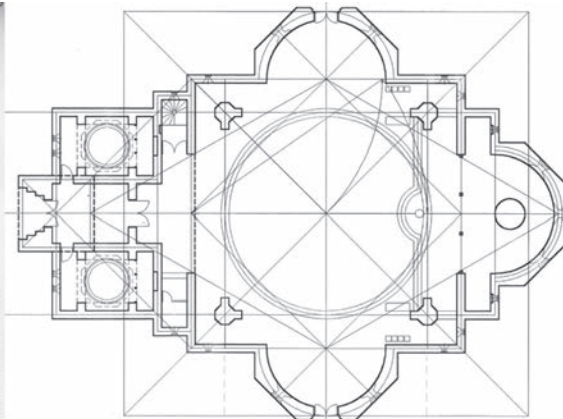


Figure 1. The church in Priština, second prize – Spasoje Krunić
(Source: IAUS archives)

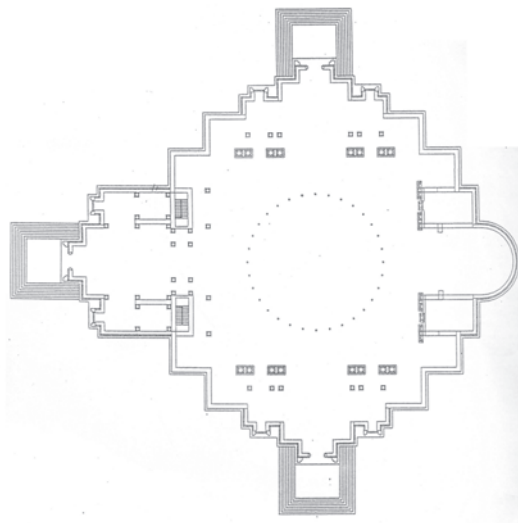
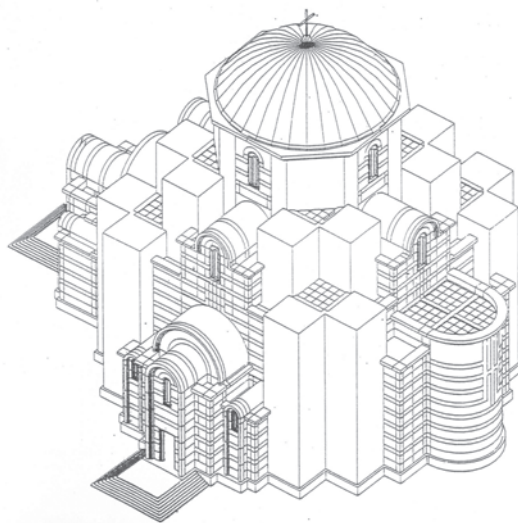


Figure 2. The church in Priština, second prize – Delale, Mičić et al.
(Source: IAUS archives)

effects of postmodernism. The main construction works were completed, however, after the Serbian Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija was placed under UN interim administration in 1999, the construction site was abandoned, and the temple was defiled and became under threat of being demolished by ethnic Albanians.

Exhibition and science conference Tradition and Contemporary Serbian Church Architecture

At the exhibition and science conference entitled *Tradition and Contemporary Serbian Church Architecture* organized by the Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia (IAUS) and the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade in 1994, several authors were invited to give their opinions about the contemporary Orthodox temple in Čukaricki Vis in Belgrade. This initiative could be understood as a specific call to an architectural competition for designing an imaginary church. The organization of the science conference and exhibition was an attempt to provide an answer to what a contemporary Serbian Orthodox temple should look like in the early phases of the church building expansion during the 1990s. This significant contribution made by various authors who, in terms of their theory and design solutions, tried to take stock of the challenges of contemporary sacral architecture, has remained an isolated event without a strong impact on the construction practice.

The exhibition and the proceedings (Stojkov and Manević, 1995) showcased the proposals of Aleksandar Đokić, Igor Marić, Mihailo Mitrović and Predrag and Vesna Cagić. Architects Cagić offered a tailored solution with the central plan base in the shape of a free Latin cross with a dome, and one-part altar interconnected with the nave into a single space with a separate bell-tower. The styled and modern form was achieved by facing free from architectural decoration, as well as by polarizing window-free walls and glass surfaces. The solution submitted by Igor Marić was based on the past as a decisive criterion, relying on a traditional composition scheme – the cross-in square base with a dome and pyramidal cascading of forms. The author offered a postmodern solution not using the exact medieval architectural style elements, but transforming them into modern shapes and materials, including an external narthex of steel and glass.

Competition for the Orthodox temple in Čukarica, Belgrade

In Belgrade, the first competition was called in 1995 for the architectural and urban concept solution for an Orthodox temple and its accompanying facilities in Čukarica. The competition was called in January that year by Stankom Corporation and the Archbishopric of Belgrade and Karlovci in cooperation with the Association of Belgrade Architects (DAB). The call was general, public and non-anonymous. One of the jury members, prof. Branislav Milenković, criticized the non-anonymity provision in his text published following the competition (see Milenković B., 1996b). The main objective was to obtain a quality solution for a temple and its accompanying facilities, while other elements of the competition were survey based. The competitors were requested to provide urbanist solutions for a simple composition of the whole complex, while respecting the

condition of functional separation of each group in order to enable construction in phases.

The competition's urbanist requirements defined that the temple should be visually and functionally dominant, which corresponded with its position on a hill and guaranteed that the temple would be a part of the cityscape. It was also defined that the temple should be oriented west-east with a possible deviation of up to 30°, featuring a fenced churchyard and a walking path at least 5m wide for the purpose of processions, with the optional design of a drinking fountain. An architectural requirement worth mentioning was placing the altar in the apse and ensuring the altar's visibility from any corner of the nave. The competition program defined that "towards the east side ... the interior of the temple ends ... (with the apse)" (underlined by authors). As for the recommended form, it was suggested "not to copy the existing local churches, but to draw inspiration from their form in order to ensure harmony with the Orthodox temple lines and yet add the air of freshness, liveliness and beauty; so that gradually a new style acceptable to the Orthodox religion is achieved", as said by the then Patriarch Pavle in an interview first published in the *Official Gazette of the Serbian Orthodox Church*, No. 3 from 1986, which he gave while still holding the seat of the Episcopo of Raška-Prizren Eparchy. It was also defined that a dome building design should be submitted. The invitation contained a precise functional scheme (Figure 3) with the defined design program of the building. The developed spatial program included: a presbytery with the altar, a proscomidium (prothesis), a diakonikon, and a south and north pastophorion; a soleas with the side choirs (kliros); a nave with seats alongside the walls and two side entrances; a narthex, with two adjacent chapels (the north one for placing candles and the south one for the confessional and baptistery, with a note that the baptistery may stand separate as well); a church shop; and a connection to the choir gallery. The requirements included a three-part interior organization (altar – nave – narthex), with a bell-tower – integrated, or as a separate object. Following the participants' questions, it was clarified that designing a dome was required, with an explanation that the majority of Church circles are in favour of such a solution for the temple, and that the soleas is not the place for believers.

The proposed scheme is not completely traditional, mainly since it requires pastophoria (parabemata), in addition to the prothesis and a diakonikon, which form an elaborate presbytery. Pastophoria, are mentioned in an Old Testament description of the Temple of Jerusalem (1 Chronicles, 28:12; Ezekiel, 40:17), and were present in early Christian architecture (Constitutions, II:LXVII) as the auxiliary side rooms, having different functions and occupying different positions in different eras and places (see Varalis, 2006; Marinis, 2014). They sometimes served just as the prothesis and diakonikon or skevofilakion, so that the terms became intermixed. After the iconoclastic crisis, the function, meaning of the terms, and the position of the prothesis and diakonikon were finally settled and they became part of the sanctuary, which was the arrangement accepted and used in medieval Serbia. Since then, additional, separate pastophoria were not found until recently. In this scheme they serve as auxiliary spaces to the prothesis and diakonikon in which

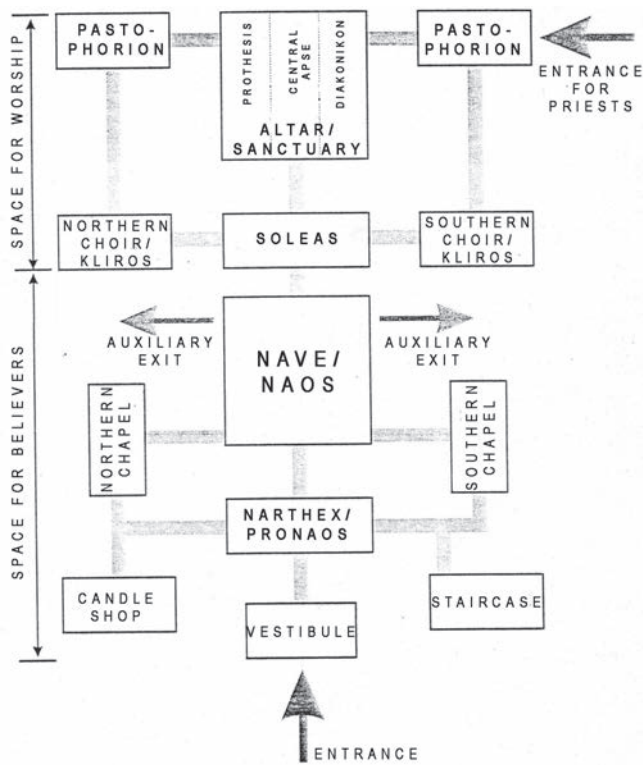


Figure 3. Functional scheme of the church
(Source: DAB archives; translated by authors)

liturgical objects, books and vestments are stored and the preparation for the liturgy is done. This type of presbytery arrangement, which combines early Christian and late medieval Byzantine architectural characteristics can be found in some newer Orthodox churches built in the world, e.g. in North America. This influence, which most probably came through the Serbian diaspora, is visible in the functional scheme proposed in the invitation to this competition, and it could have significant effect on the architectural composition of the eastern section of Orthodox churches.

The competition jury was chaired by the Bishop of Bačka, Irinej (Bulović), with the majority of members being architects. Thirty one designs were submitted for the competition, and three prizes awarded, along with four equally valuable acquisitions and one prize outside the competition requirements. The competition results and proceedings were published in a special edition of the

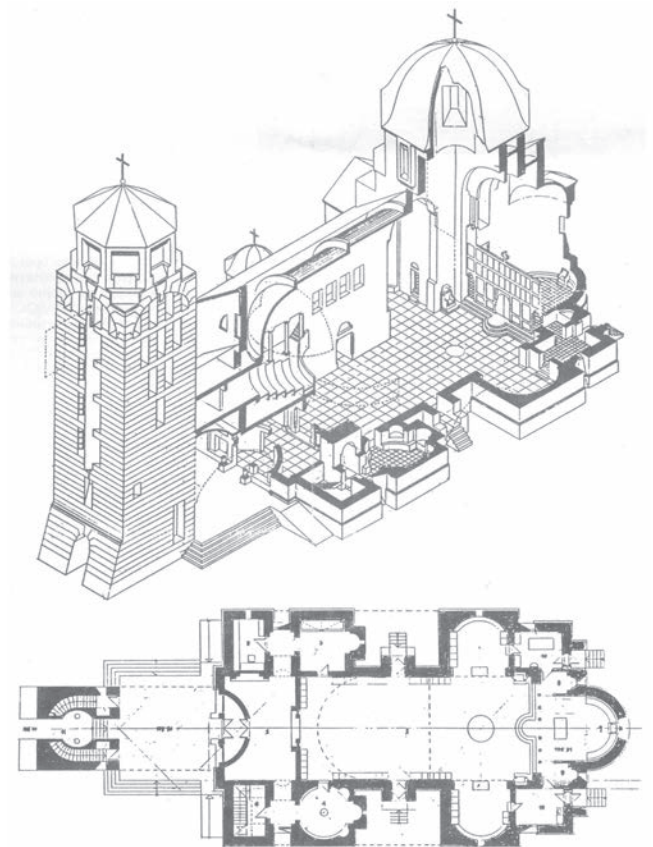


Figure 4. Temple in Čukarica, first prize – Miladin Lukić
(Source: Forum, June 1995)

magazine *Forum* of the Union of Architects of Serbia dated June 1995.

Of the eight acquired concept solutions that were awarded prizes, six featured traditional style, and the first prize was granted to the project by Miladin Lukić, based on which the temple was built (Kadijević, 2009 and 2010; Kadijević and Pantović, 2011 and 2014). It was directly inspired by the Raška architectural school style, which is a rare case in contemporary Serbian church architecture (Figure 4).

The acquired design submitted by a team of authors led by Miodrag Ralević takes the dome from the traditional approach and, using it as the main feature, builds a recognizable form in a new manner by multiplying this element. The architect Blagota Pešić was the only one who proposed a completely non-traditional solution (Figure 5) while ensuring that the

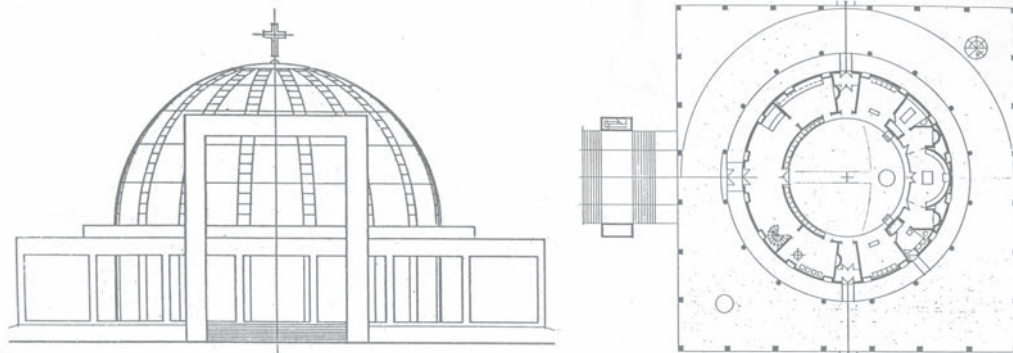


Figure 5. Temple in Čukarica, third prize – Blagota Pešić
(Source: Forum, June 1995)

functional requirements were fulfilled by a unique rotunda. This design, which was awarded with the third prize by the jury, featured the dome only as a universal symbol and not a reminiscence of historical forms.

Competition for the Orthodox temple in New Belgrade

The second and, so far, the last open public architectural competition in Belgrade for an architectural and urbanist concept solution for an Orthodox temple and its accompanying facilities was called in 1997, again by the Archbishopric of Belgrade and Karlovci, in cooperation with the Association of Belgrade Architects and the Association of Belgrade Urbanists. The temple in question was for Block 32 in New Belgrade. This time, the competition was general, public and anonymous. The jury, composed mainly of architects, was chaired by the then Patriarch Pavle. As with the 1995 competition, the main objective was to obtain a concept solution for a temple which would become a new element in the city's identity. Solutions for the accompanying facilities were requested in the form of a survey. The solution was also required to ensure the composition unity and functional separation for the purpose of possible construction in phases. The relevance of the future temple was even higher because until then there was not a single Orthodox church in the New Belgrade area.

The first request was that the temple should be designed "relying on the tradition, central plan, no pillars beneath the dome". The requested orientation was east, with the path around the temple at least 4m wide. As per the urbanist and technical requirements from the competition documents (following the participants' questions, it was clarified that they were only a starting point), the axis deviation allowed from the east was up to 30°. The design requirement was a three-part temple consisting of a presbytery – altar area (with pastophoria), a nave and a narthex (with a room for selling and lighting candles, and a confessional and baptistery, as well as a connection to the choir gallery; the complex was planned to include one more baptistery), with a bell-tower inside the building or outside. In addition to the competition documentation, at the competitors' disposal were also selected books: *Orthodox Liturgics* (Mirković, 1965) and *Tradition and Contemporary Serbian Church Architecture* (Stojkov and Manević, 1995). Following the

participants' questions, it was clarified that there were no conditions regarding the roof type and dome construction provided that interior painting of the temple was enabled and the central plan of the temple ensured. It was also determined that it would be a parish church. Subsequent clarifications also amended the provision in terms of revoking the urbanist and technical requirements related to the "Serbian-Byzantine style" of the temple, with the base shaped as a cross-in-square or a free cross. The note that the staircase to the choir gallery may be in the entrance area as well as in the narthex created a dilemma about the spatial composition of the west part of the temple, as this suggested that the narthex is not the entrance part. The jury also underlined that the required iconostasis position should be of such height to enable unity of space and visibility of the wall paintings at the altar.

Fifty authors and teams took part in the competition (three designs were not considered due to their late submission), one prize was granted along with the four acquired designs and three special prizes. The results of the competition and the illustrations of the award-winning designs were published in the regular 40th issue of the magazine *Forum* and in a 6/7 issue of *UrBS* – the bulletin of the Serbian Town Planners Association and Association of Belgrade Urbanists. In view of the specific context of the New Belgrade modern architecture, this competition was an opportunity to fully examine the development possibilities of an Orthodox temple.

The first-ranked design of Nebojša Popović (Figure 6) served as the base for the later built temple (for a detailed account see Kadrijević, 2010 and 2013a; Kadrijević and Pantović, 2011 and 2014). It was designed in the spirit of Hansen's interpretation of tradition, with a post-modern approach to the facing which, as per the author's idea, should represent an "exhibition" of traditional motives within the construction elements highlighted on the surface. This author followed the proposed functional scheme, except that he designed the prothesis and the diakonikon inside the north and south pastophoria respectively, and not inside the central altar space – the sanctuary.

The acquired design of Snežana Ignjatović and Goran Ivanović was marked by a similar approach, as their

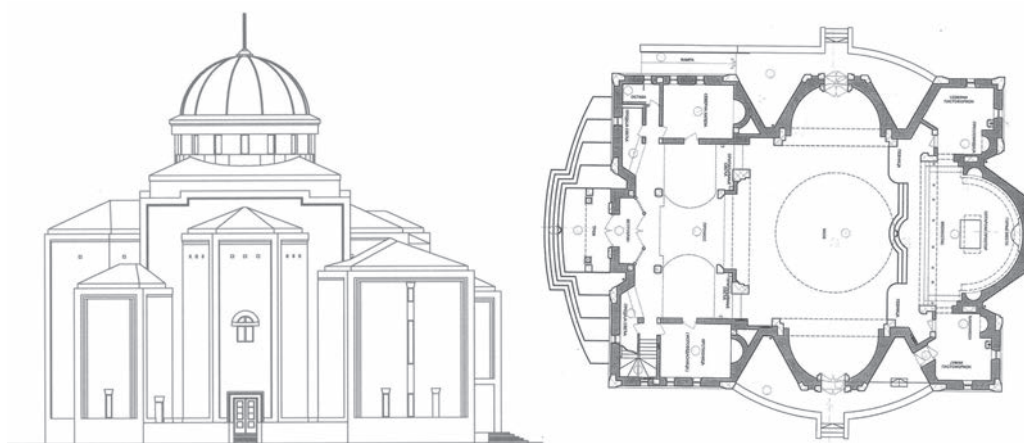


Figure 6. Temple in New Belgrade, first prize project and the church – Nebojša Popović
(Source: *Forum*, 40; Folić, 2013)

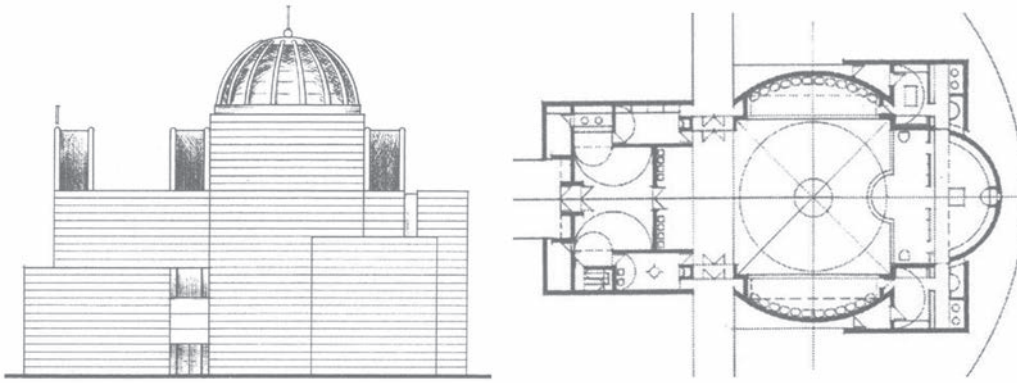


Figure 7. Temple in New Belgrade, acquisition – Blagota Pešić
(Source: Forum 40)

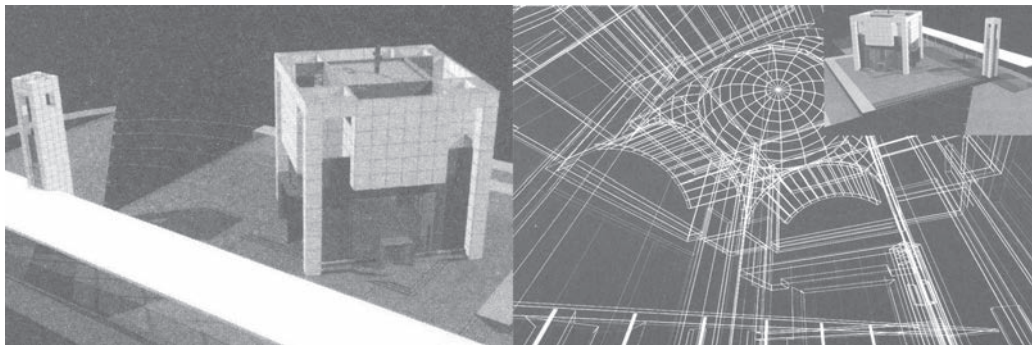


Figure 8. Temple in New Belgrade, special prize – Brajković, Šarović and Brajković
(Source: Forum 40)

post-modern adaptation did not rely directly on Serbian tradition. The solution for the dome of this rotunda is in some aspects similar to the project of Blagota Pešić for the temple in Čukarica. The concept solution of Ljubica Bošnjak and her team (Tatjana Jablanov and Nebojša Muidža), on the other hand, stands out due to the complete absence of contemporary architectural elements (except in the construction) and its resemblance to historical models, with the use of the traditionally shaped dome with a wavy cornice as one of the trademarks of her design works. Other designs represent attempts to more or less modernize traditional forms in different ways, which is particularly visible in the works of Blagota Pešić, whose design was granted acquisition (Figure 7), and the team of authors, Ljilja Brajković, Jelena Šarović and Miodrag Brajković, who were awarded with one of the special prizes (Figure 8). Pešić used cascading and a dome to design a church which is linked to tradition despite the modern facing and flat roofs. The design closest to the spirit of New Belgrade architecture is the one submitted by Brajković and Šarović as they started by combining the plan based on cross-in square and a free cross, and continued to shape the outer part of the temple into cubic forms and at the same time on the inside they designed arches and a dome. This design with its dual approach, traditionalist spatial concept and contemporary form, provided in the opinion of the jury “a significant contribution to exploring new forms in the church architecture development”.

Competition for the Orthodox temple in Niš

In 1998, the local government of the City of Niš called a competition for the architectural concept solutions for an Orthodox temple at the UN Square in Niš, with the objective

to select only one solution. The competition was not anonymous and was based on invitations to participate, with an unusually short deadline (30 days). The selection jury was appointed by the Secretariat for Urbanism and Utility Services and the Niš Diocese following the competition announcement, not before, as is the usual practice. The jury of seven members was chaired by the then Bishop of Niš, today's Patriarch Irinej, and comprised three architects. The design mandate defined only the dimensions of the future construction and the condition that the temple be designed in the spirit of Serbian church construction tradition, with no additional clarification.

Of the ten invited authors and teams, seven took part in the competition; however, all submitted designs were acquired, and out of the two short-listed ones, the first prize was awarded to the design by the architect Mandić (Figure 9). The project design was prepared, and the temple built based on this concept solution. It was designed as a single-spaced church with a dome and two bell towers on the west side. The altar consists of three parts, and from the north and south parts there are vestibules at the entrance to the nave. The temple's spatial organization relies on the tradition of the Raška construction style, particularly the Church of St. Nicholas near Kuršumljija. The building exterior was styled, without copying elements of medieval churches.

Competition for the Orthodox temple in Aleksinac

The competition called in 2003 in Aleksinac was unusual as its mandate included the project and the spatial solution for Brđanka City Park, accompanied by the concept solution for the parish church. This twofold focus had its impact

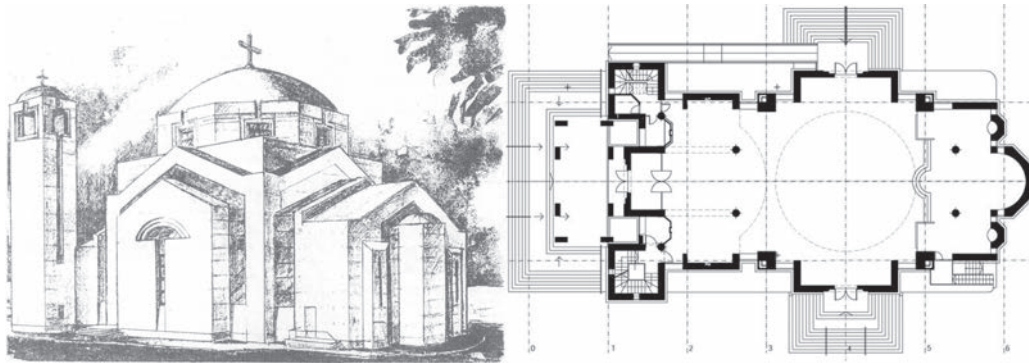


Figure 9. The Church of St. Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena in Niš – Mandić
(Source: DAN archives)

on the authors who were not equally dedicated to solving both issues, which led to a controversial decision to build the church based on the second-ranked design (*Arhitekt*, 12, 2003: 3–11). Also, the jury at this competition did not include a single highly ranked official from the Serbian Orthodox Church. The competition was called by the Fund for Construction Land and Utility Services of the Aleksinac municipality and the Council for Launching the Temple Construction, in cooperation with the Niš Association of Architects (DAN). Even though the stated objective of the competition referred to investigating optimal possibilities for the location with the concept solution of the church, the assessment criteria did not particularly refer to the temple architecture, apart from the general note regarding harmony with the existing architecture and the relevant utilization, pointing to the conclusion that the accent was more on the solution for the park area than the temple itself.

Three awards were granted along with two acquisitions. All nine submitted designs were shown in the catalogue. In addition, the competition results were reviewed in the 11th and 12th issue of the magazine *Arhitekt* of the Niš Association of Architects. The author of the first-ranked design Dragan Živković introduced a novelty in his project which was assessed by the jury as an experiment; he based the entire temple on a dome, and the supporting construction relied on four high towers, so he offered a solution which relied on tradition only symbolically (Figure 10).

Subsequently, the design submitted by a team of authors including Perić, Stanković-Belimiranović and Golubović was selected as the base for the construction works, as it represented a traditional composition of a temple styled by contemporary architectural expression (Figure 11).

Competition for the Orthodox temple in Kruševac

The Serbian Orthodox Church Diocese of Niš in cooperation with the Directorate for Urbanism and Construction of Kruševac, the Kruševac Association of Architects and Union of Architects of Serbia, called a competition in 2005 for the architectural concept solution for a temple and its accompanying facilities on the Bagdala hill in Kruševac. This competition was anonymous. Its objective was to acquire a concept solution for the temple which would be a new element of the city's identity and to conduct a survey regarding the resolution of the accompanying facilities. The majority of the program was identical to the one defined for the New Belgrade temple, also including relying on tradition and the central plan solution, without pillars beneath the dome. Other mandate elements were not so detailed. In addition to the obligatory east-west orientation and the surrounding path with a minimum width of 4m, participants were also requested to design a prothesis and a diakonikon inside the temple next to the altar, as well as a confessional, gallery, shop and candle lighting area. The competition requirements placed the baptismary inside the church. A

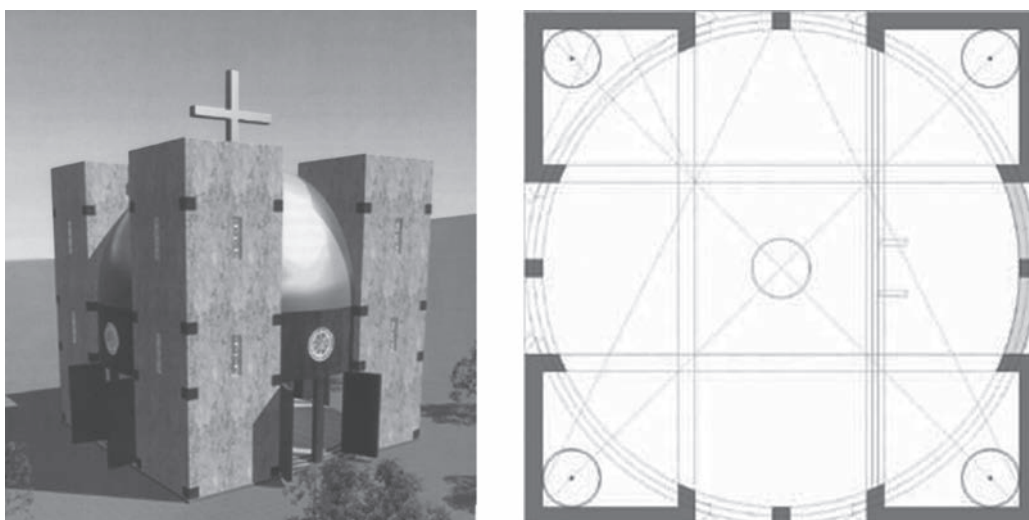


Figure 10. Church in Aleksinac, first prize – Dragan Živković
(Source: *Arhitekt*, 12)

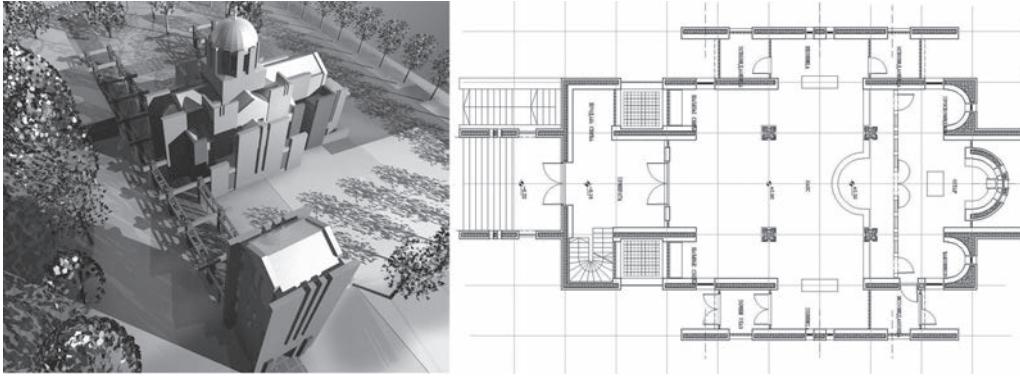


Figure 11. Church in Aleksinac, second prize – Perić, Stanković-Belimilanović and Golubović
(Source: Arhitekt, 12)

crypt was optional in the competition call. Having a bell tower separate from the building was the preferred solution rather than one being inside. The selection was made by a jury comprised mainly of architects/professionals and chaired by the then Bishop of Niš, today's Patriarch Irinej.

There were nineteen designs submitted to the competition, one was excluded due to the breach of anonymity provision, and one award was granted, along with three equally valuable acquisitions; all designs submitted for the competition were published in the catalogue. The jury at this competition awarded designs which, to a certain extent, represented the three different approaches to the challenging task of designing an Orthodox temple in the

modern age. The first-ranked design by Tatjana Purić Zafiroski and Irena Ilić is similar to traditional churches composition-wise, while the modernization was achieved by the modification of elements and the colouring (Figure 12). The design submitted by Dragan Bobić, similar to the work of Ljubica Bošnjak submitted to the New Belgrade Temple competition, was completely composed of traditional style elements, whereas Božidar Manić on the other hand used contemporary architectural language, remaining in line with the spatial program (Figure 13), as did the Rogan architects, who designed a completely non-traditional church with a monumental dome as the main element.

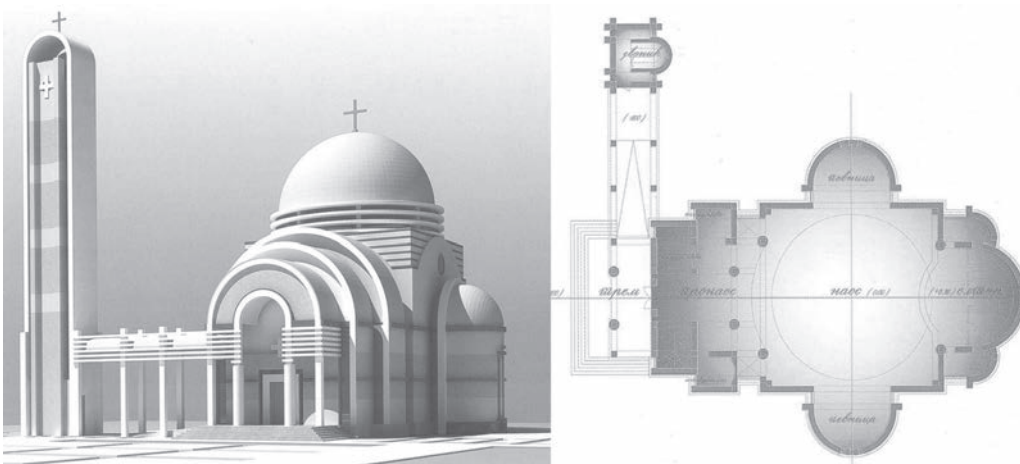


Figure 12. The Church on Bagdala hill, award – Purić Zafiroski and Ilić
(Source: Competition catalogue)

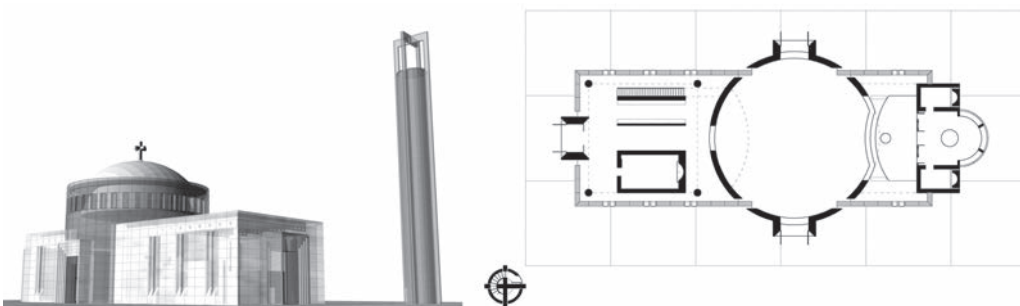


Figure 13. The on Bagdala hill, acquisition – Božidar Manić, consultant Igor Marić
(Source: Competition catalogue)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on the above, it may be concluded that the authors who took part in the competitions were guided by the clearly defined spatial requirements and the functional scheme of the temple. In addition, the competition callers set a dome as a key requirement in terms of form, while other elements of the architectural expression were to be chosen by the authors. The jury decisions regarding the first prize show the tendency to preserve the connections with traditional forms, also enabling their modernization, which might be contributed to by the fact that the jury compositions included mainly architects. The exception is the Aleksinac competition, although even in that case the jury gave a conditional priority to the second-ranked solution. "The jury assessed the design as optimally acceptable both from the standpoint of users – believers and professional circles: it sends a comprehensible and familiar message and makes a step forward in view of the architectural concepts within the specified subject" (Rašković and Medar, 2003: 4). Furthermore, the distribution of other awards, acquisitions and special prizes points to the existing awareness about the complexity of the issue, for various approaches were promoted, from copying and imitation, to modifying and transferring, to completely modern architectural expression, thus confirming numerous different possibilities for the future development of Serbian Orthodox church architecture.

Any attempt to classify designs from the competitions presented here has been dismissed based on the issue of the classification criterion. If tradition is set as a criterion, it is almost impossible to objectively measure the extent to which a design relies on tradition. It is particularly difficult to discuss similarities in terms of typology, as in the case of traditional forms, typology is to a great extent based on structural solutions which have become obsolete today. However, it is possible to make a general distinction among the three different designer approaches, which cannot be so easily separated in practice. The first would be the one completely based on traditional spatial solutions, forms and decorative elements. The main representatives of this style include architects Bošnjak, Jablanov and Muidža with the New Belgrade temple design and Bobić with the Kruševac temple design. On the completely opposite end of the spectrum, there are solutions with only a basic connection to the traditional models, with the dome designed as more of a symbol (as the dome was one of the competition requirements, it can be assumed that different solutions would have probably been provided in other circumstances). These include the designs of Blagota Pešić for the Čukarica church, the Brajković, Šarović and Brajković team for the New Belgrade church, Živković for the Aleksinac church and the Rogan architects for the Kruševac church. A potential fourth category comprising completely new models with no foundation in or similarity to the traditional approaches exists only in theory as there are no designs matching the description. All other concept solutions submitted for the competitions stand in-between the previously specified categories, some being closer to the traditional approach (e.g. Purić Zafiroski & Ilić for the Kruševac temple), others being closer to the modern style (e.g. Blagota Pešić for the

New Belgrade temple, the Perić, Stanković-Belimilanić and Golubović team for the Aleksinac church and Manić for the Kruševac church). The first approach based on fundamental changes could be called radically modernizing, the second approach based on preserving and imitating existing solutions could be called conservatively traditionalist, and the third one based on moderate modernization – the compromising one. Further positioning of designs within the middle category may be determined by looking at individual parts and comparing how similar the architectural solutions are to their historical models, paying attention also to the proportion and symbolism. Such a detailed analysis could include the following elements: spatial organization and functional scheme; the composition; the architectonics; the facing, decoration, materialization, colour; the treatment of the apertures, etc.

Of all the above discussed works, there are few designs which deserve a prominent place based on their value and their specifics. These are both of the designs of Blagota Pešić, and the designs submitted by the team Brajković, Šarović and Brajković, as well as by Dragan Živković and the team Perić, Stanković-Belimilanić and Golubović. It is also worth mentioning that in an attempt to create new models, Živković went farthest from the traditional temple, keeping the symbol of the dome as the only link with tradition. On the other hand, Pešić's design of the new Čukarica church employs the dome as a symbolic, as well as a functional solution, which scheme-wise (a three-part altar, side klironi and vestibules, developed narthex composition) corresponds to those used from the Middle Byzantine period. Brajković and Šarović deploy radical modernization of the external forms while preserving the common spatial concept in the search for innovative solutions, while Pešić's design of the New Belgrade church less radically modernizes the sacral architectural solutions. The team of authors Perić, Stanković-Belimilanić and Golubović remained closest to the medieval (today's "classic") models of an Orthodox church, showing that the moderate adaptation of forms can produce successful and contemporary solutions.

The standpoints expressed by the Church authorities⁵ confirm that there is potential for developing new forms and models of the Orthodox temple, aiming at overcoming the current sacral architecture crisis. The issues debated in the early 20th century, following the competition for the Oplenac church and the St. Sava temple still remain unresolved, however nowadays there are no public debates on these subjects. Another issue that has been recognized in this and other areas of architectural activities is the lack of architectural critics' reviews. The conference Tradition and Contemporary Serbian Church Architecture organized by the Institute for Architecture and Urbanism of Serbia in cooperation with the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade back in 1994 has remained an important attempt to reverse the trend. This was further enhanced by the accompanying exhibition, as well as several articles published (see

⁵ In the previously mentioned interview for the Official Gazette of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the then Episcopo and later Patriarch of Serbia, Pavle says "It (The Orthodox Church, authors) does not consider that the existing and achieved aesthetics should be simply copied ... I believe, therefore, that we should go forward and find new artistic expressions."

Milenković J., 1995; Milenković B., 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d and 1997) and a series of interviews at the Faculty of Architecture held following the first post-war competition for a concept solution for a temple in Belgrade. These activities from the mid-1990s did not bring concrete results, so the issues remain open.

The theoretical research of the architecture of the Orthodox churches is limited due to the lack of studies on contemporary sacral architecture. Therefore, collecting even basic information presents itself as an important requirement for future activities in this area⁶. Further development of sacral architecture also requires a critical dialogue. As guidance for the development of future models, local competition practice can be used, along with student design projects and the contemporary experience of other Orthodox countries.

The practice of calling competitions for conceptual architectural solutions has proven to be important in church architecture, as well as in architecture in general, in the process of analyzing contemporary construction styles and ideas, and redefining the notions of modern and traditional. However, as Orthodox churches are rarely the subject of architectural competitions, their effect on the current construction practice is almost negligible.

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⁶ The Schematism of the Serbian Orthodox Church is offering only basic data which are not the same for all dioceses, and most often refers only to the list of temples per diocese, without additional details (see Horizostom, 2006).

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