

UKRAINIAN CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

Ukrainian immigrants to Canada built their churches according to the centuries-old traditions of their homeland. These customs were primarily drawn from the architecture of the Eastern Christian church in Ukraine. In Manitoba, this heritage produced variations on two basic European styles of Ukrainian church building: the Byzantine, introduced into Ukraine in the tenth and eleventh centuries; and the Ukrainian Baroque, as it had developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As with most architectural styles, the Ukrainian Baroque was considerably varied and modified as it became widely used. The folk or vernacular variations, especially those examples in wood, were of considerable influence on Ukrainian churches built in Canada.

Byzantine Influences

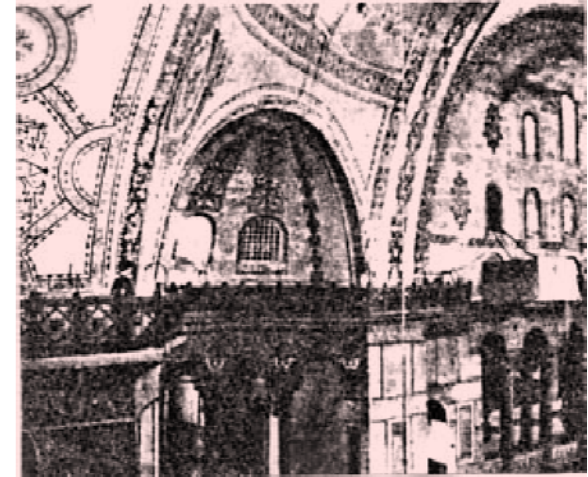
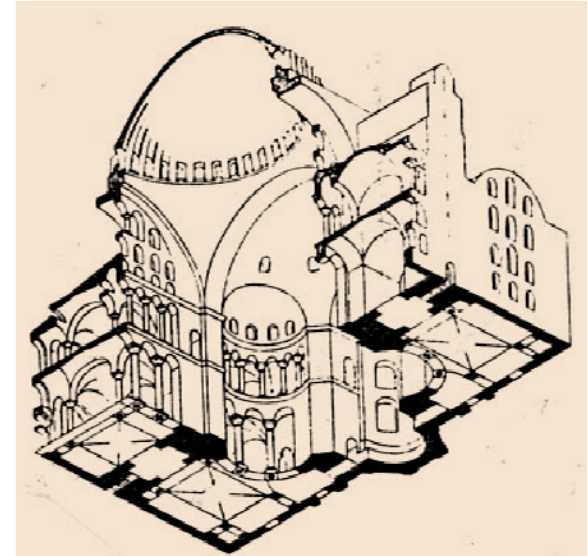
The preliminary source for the architectural style of Ukrainian churches is that of Byzantine architecture. The Church of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (523-37 A.D.) was built in an innovative design, and greatly influenced its Ukrainian descendents (Figures 5 and 6). The Hagia Sophia combined a large dome over a cross plan to produce a dramatic yet quiet sense of mystery. St. Sophia in Kiev (1037-mid 1040s), in emulating the Hagia Sophia, became the model for eastern church design in Ukraine (Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 5.

Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, (532-537 A.D.). Analytical half-section. (W. MacDonald, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Figure 55)

Figure 6.

Hagia Sophia. Interior view of north and northwest superstructure. (W. MacDonald)



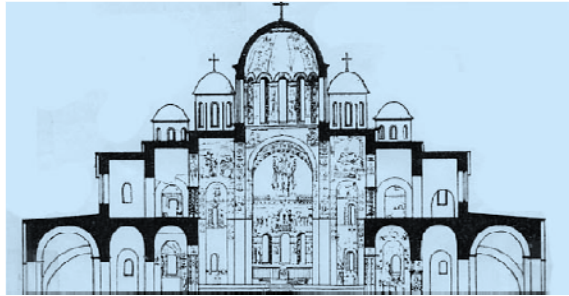


Figure 7.

St. Sophia, Kiev, (1037-mid 1040s). Cross-section based on archaeological investigations. (O. Powstenko, *The Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev*, p. 32)



Figure 8.

St. Sophia. Interior view showing the restored nave area. (O. Powstenko, *The Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev*, p. 97)

Churches built in the larger urban centres of Ukraine were great stone structures whose plans were based principally on the Greek cross. These churches emphasized the vertical, having hemispherical domes set on drums, resulting in a large enclosed volume of space. The floor plan expressed the liturgical requirements of the Eastern Rite as practiced in the Byzantine Empire. One of the basic conditions of the Rite was the division of the congregation from the altar area by the altar screen, commonly known as the iconostas (also spelled iconostasis), often a highly ornate screen shrouding the ceremonial mysteries from the laity. The physical separation also underlined the role of the priesthood as intermediaries between God and the people. The iconostas took a variety of forms and could be either a solid wall or an intricately carved wooden frame. Usually the iconostas was pierced by three doorways which could be closed by carved gates representing the Holy Trinity. The central, principal opening was referred to as the Royal Door; the flanking doors as the Deacon's Doors. Traditionally the Byzantine Emperor, and later the Russian Tsar, were the only lay persons allowed to approach the altar.

Ukrainian Baroque

Baroque architecture in western Europe spanned the period roughly between 1600 and 1760, although these dates should not be seen as precise limits to the development of the style. Already existing architectural elements, primarily those of Classical antiquity which had been reinterpreted in Renaissance buildings, were developed further in the succeeding Baroque period throughout Europe. Architecture became a bold, flamboyant and colourful expression of the art of the Catholic countries of the Counter Reformation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The sixteenth century Church of the Holy Trinity, in the Drohobych region displayed elements of the transition to the Baroque style (Figure 9). The Chapel of the Three Sisters (Figure 10) built in 1578 also had many of the sculptural and classicising elements which typified Baroque structures.

It was during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in a period of struggle for national independence, that there arose a resurgence of Ukrainian art. The first examples of Ukrainian or Kozak Baroque emerged as early as the first half of the seventeenth century; but not until the second half did it flourish. Its development was the result of a greater contact with mainstream western European art, primarily in areas under Polish domination. The original St. Sophia in Kiev was restored and enlarged during this period, the result being a complete break with the Byzantine style in the design of subsequent structures (Figures 11 and 12).

In these extravagant Baroque churches were many of the elements that were to make their way into the more subdued Ukrainian-Canadian ecclesiastical buildings. While the Ukrainian Baroque in general had a great effect on the church buildings constructed in Manitoba, another, more regional aspect of the style made a significant contribution – the use of wood construction.

Figure 9.

Church of the Holy Trinity, Nyzharkovychi in the Drohobych region (sixteenth century). (I. Asieiev et al., *An Outline of the History of Architecture in the Ukrainian S.S.R.*, p. 91)

Figure 10.

Chapel of the Three Saints (1578). (I. Asieiev et al., *An Outline of the History of Architecture in the Ukrainian S.S.R.*, p. 93)

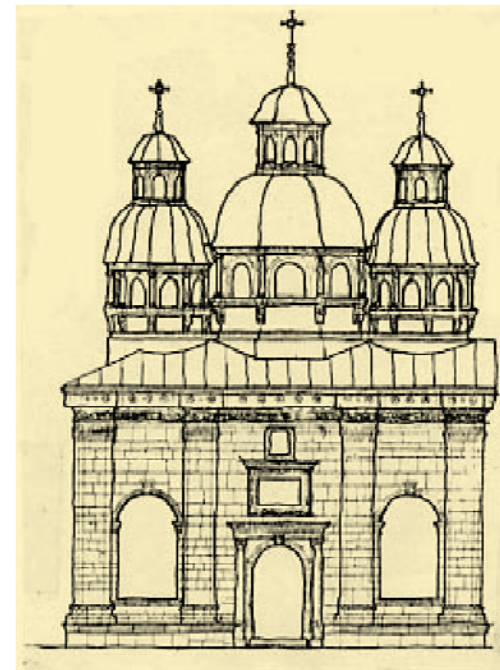
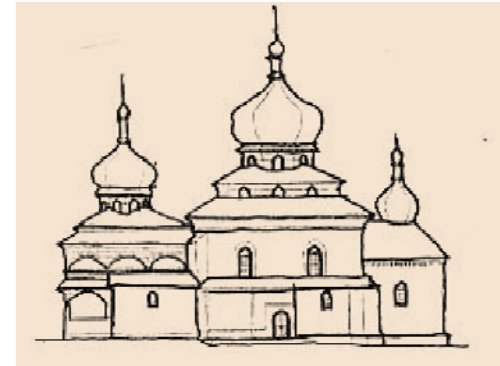




Figure 11.

St. Sophia, Kiev. The central five apses of the original eleventh century structure form the nucleus of the enormous seventeenth century structure. The present exterior is almost entirely the result of additions in the Ukrainian Baroque style (D. Buxton, *Russian Medieval Architecture*, Figure 57)



Figure 12.

St. Sophia. This longitudinal section through the nave reveals the eleventh century core, in black, surmounted by the later Ukrainian Baroque additions. (H. Lohvyn, *Across Ukraine: Early Artistic Monuments*, p. 53)

The basic designs of Ukrainian wooden church architecture had developed during the tenth and eleventh centuries. There were several basic types of plans that characterized subsequent wooden churches (Figure 13). The simplest were the one and two frame plans. In this context, a frame is analogous to a space or a room of either modest or grand proportions. These straightforward two-dimensional compositions attained complexity externally as each frame found its own distinct three-dimensional identity, with towers, domes and cupolas, known in Ukraine as banyas. The development of more sophisticated churches essentially meant the addition of frames. The most common plan was the three frame church, with the central frame somewhat larger than the adjacent two. An addition of two frames to the foregoing three produced a five frame plan, also fairly common. Four smaller frames added to the inside corners of the cross plan produced a nine frame church. A seven-frame plan was formed when two towers were added to the front of a five-frame church.

The stylistic range of wood churches in rural Ukraine is exemplified by several notable structures: the church of the Holy Trinity in Chernivtsi (1774) with its steep pitched roof (Figure 14); St. George's at Drohobych (Figure 15); and the three-frame churches in Krechiv and Chortkiv, with their elaborately shingled domes (Figures 16 and 17). All are of log construction and display features such as the large dome, banyas, tall crosses and bell towers – which typically sit detached – that distinguish these as churches from Ukraine. And, most importantly, these are the buildings which clearly form the precedents for many Ukrainian churches in Manitoba. The Chernivtsi Church was quite obviously, for example, the same type of church as St. Elias Ukrainian Orthodox Church at Sirko, discussed below.

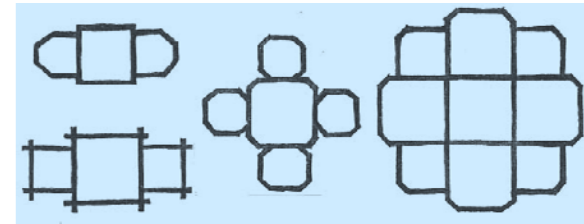


Figure 13.

Examples of three, five and nine frame plans. (Redrawn From V. Sichynsky, *Ukraine: A concise Encyclopedia*, p. 532)

Figure 14.

Church of the Holy Trinity in the suburb of Klokuchka in Chernivtsi (1774). (H. Lohvyn, *Across Ukraine: Early Artistic Monuments*, p. 332)



Figure 15.

St. George's Church in Drohobych (seventeenth century). (H. Lohvyn, *Across Ukraine: Early Artistic Monuments*, p. 354)

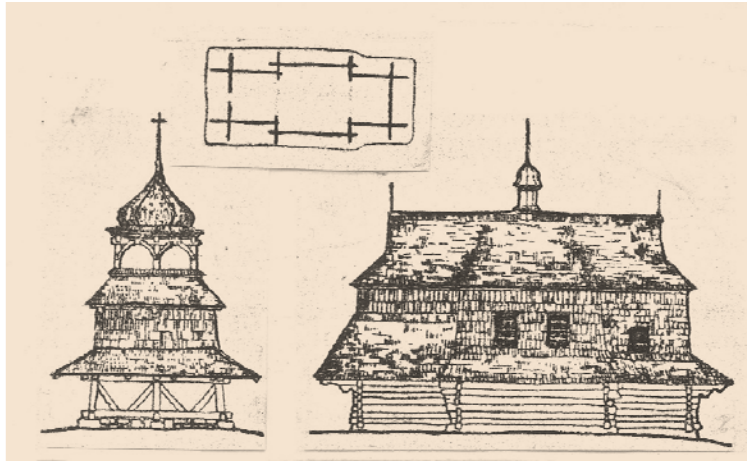


Figure 16.

Church and belfry in Krechiv in the Lviv region (1658-1724). (I. Asieiev et al., *An Outline of the History of Architecture in the Ukraine S.S.R.*, p. 215)

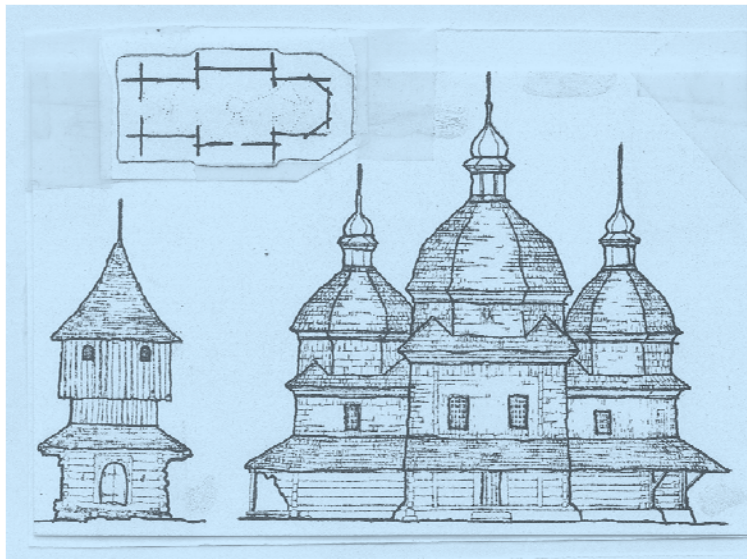


Figure 17.

Church of the Dormition with its attendant belfry, Chortkiv (seventeenth century). (I. Asieiev et al., *An Outline of the History of Architecture in the Ukraine S.S.R.*, p. 222)

As with the stone churches, an important feature in Ukrainian wooden churches was the iconostas. Traditionally, decorations had been in mosaic and fresco on stone and brick walls. With the use of wood construction, the alternative was to produce icons and paintings that could be incorporated onto the iconostas. The result was the development of the icon as a major feature in wooden churches. Artists principally employed the techniques of painting encaustically (burning into a coloured clay surface with wax) and with tempera on carefully constructed wooden panels. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries different mediums came into use, such as oil on canvas (Figure 18).



Figure 18.

This icon, in Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic Church at Horod, Manitoba, is an oil painting.