

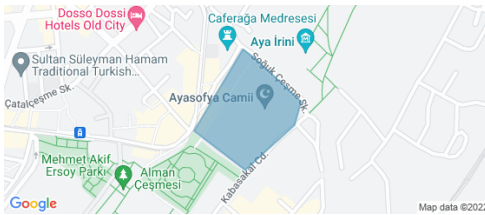
Cathedral of Hagia Sophia

also known as “Cathedral of Saint Sophia”, “Cathedral of Holy Wisdom”

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Entry tags: Orthodoxy, Monument, Religious Place, Christian Traditions, Greek Orthodox, Orthodox/Eastern Christian, City, Istanbul, Constantinople, Church, Religious Group

The church dedicated to the Holy Wisdom, or the Divine Wisdom (Hagia Sophia in Greek) was built by emperor Justinian I in the 6th century (532-537 CE), under the direction of the architects Anthemios of Tralles and Isidore of Miletos. It was inaugurated on 27 December 537. The first church on the site was a basilica built in the 4th century by emperor Constantius II, inaugurated in 360. This building known also as the Great Church was burned down in 404 by the supporters of John Chrysostom, then Patriarch of Constantinople. The domed basilica built by emperor Theodosios II was completed in 415 and was destroyed in 532, again by fire, during the revolt of Nika. The domed basilica of Saint Sophia combines a longitudinal and centralised planning. The nearly square nave which measures 78 x 72 m (excluding the two narthexes) is covered by a huge dome of 31 m in diameter and two semidomes. The three aisles with galleries above are separated by two rows of columns made of finest marble. Likely, the lower parts of the walls are covered with marble slabs and opus sectile decoration, still well preserved. The building still standing is essentially the 6th-century construction apart from the dome which collapsed partially in 558 by an earthquake. It was rebuilt by Isidore the Younger and was dedicated on 24 December 562. The dome collapsed partially two more times and was rebuilt higher than the original one, while the whole construction was reinforced externally. In 1317 were added the huge exterior buttresses. The church underwent again restoration, following the collapse of the east arch in 1346, which brought down the east semidome and a part of the dome. The church and its surrounding structures compose a complex that includes: to the west a colonnaded atrium with a fountain; to the north a baptistery; and, at the northeast corner a sacristy. The cathedral was the liturgical centre of Constantinople and as such, its south side was flanked to the patriarchal palace built between 565 and 577. A passage at its south-east corner was connecting Hagia Sophia to the Great imperial palace. The 6th-century mosaic decoration of the church was largely non-figural as attested by the surviving fragments, such as those in the side aisles or the narthex's vaulting. After the end of the Iconoclastic Controversy (8th-9th centuries) the church was redecorated. Part of the program is still preserved. In the apse an enthroned Virgin with Child; two archangels in the arch of the bema; Prophets and Fathers of the Church in the tympana (north and south walls) beneath the dome. In the gallery vaults it is known to have existed narrative scenes (Isaiah's vision, Baptism of Christ, Pentecost). In the 10th century was added in the lunette of the southwest vestibule a depiction of Virgin enthroned with Christ, between Justinian I and Constantine holding respectively a model of the church and of the city of Constantinople. In the lunette above the “imperial door” (the central door between the inner narthex and the nave) was added around 900 a mosaic of Christ enthroned with an unnamed prostrate emperor. In the 11th and 12th centuries were added in the south gallery preserved for imperial use, mosaics depicting emperors and empresses. In the first, installed between 1028-1034, were depicted empress Zoe and her first husband, Romanos III, who was replaced between 1042-1055 by her third husband, Constantine IX Monomachos. Around 1118-1134 was added a mosaic depicting the Virgin with Child standing between emperor John II and empress Irini. In the late 13th century was installed in the south gallery the mosaic depicting the Deisis (Christ flanked by Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist). In 1204 Hagia Sophia was looted by the Crusaders and the Venetians on the Fourth Crusade. After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 the church was converted into a mosque, with the addition of minarets, a great chandelier, a mihrab and a minbar. In 1935 the monument was secularised and turned into a museum, while in 2020 it was converted back into a mosque.



Date Range: 360 CE - 1453 CE

Region: Istanbul/Constantinople

Region tags: Turkey, Istanbul, Constantinople

Saint Sophia/Hagia Sophia cathedral

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

General Variables

Sources and Excavations

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: DARK, K., & KOSTENEC, J. (2019). Hagia Sophia in Context: An Archaeological Re-examination of the Cathedral of Byzantine Constantinople. Oxford.
- Source 2: WHITTEMORE, T. (1933-1952). The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul. Preliminary Reports. Vols. 1-4. Oxford.
- Source 3: MAINSTONE, R. J. (1988). Hagia Sophia: Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian's Great Church. London.

Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/medieval-world/byzantine1/x4b0eb531:middle-byzantine/a/a-work-in-progress-middle-byzantine-mosaics-hagia-sophia>
- Source 1 Description: The mosaics of Saint Sophia cathedral
- Source 2 URL: <http://www.3dmekanlar.com/en/hagia-sophia.html>
- Source 2 Description: 3D Virtual tour of Saint Sophia cathedral

Has this place been the focus of excavation (pre-modern, illicit, or scientific):

Answer 'Yes' for each period or type of excavation.

— Yes

↳ Type of excavation:
— Scientific

↳ Years of excavation:
— Year range: 2004-2018



Name of excavation

– Official or descriptive name: The Hagia Sophia project

Topographical Context

Is the place associated with a feature in the landscape

– Body of water (as distinct from source)

Does the place involve human-made features besides structure:

Other features might be ground clearing, terracing, other modifications of the local environment.

– Yes



Type of feature

– Water feature

– Plantings

Is the place situated in an urban or significantly urbanized area:

– Yes



Is there a distinct boundary between the place and the urban fabric:

– No



Is the place located significantly within the urban fabric:

Is the place centrally located, or at the crossroads of significant pathways?

– Yes

Is the place situated in a rural setting:

– No

Is the place situated far removed from non-religious places of habitation:

– No

Structures Present

Are there structures or features present:

Instructions: Answer once for each structure/feature or group that can be differentiated.

– Yes

- ↳ A single structure
 - Yes
 - ↳ The structure has a definite shape
 - Square
- ↳ One single feature
 - Other [specify]: none
- ↳ A group of structures:
 - Yes
 - ↳ Are they part of a single design/construction stage:
 - No
- ↳ A group of features:
 - Yes
 - ↳ Are they part of a single design/construction stage:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Is it part of a larger place/sanctuary:
 - No
- ↳ What is the function of the structure/feature or group:
 - Answer "Yes" once for each distinct function
 - Worship
 - ↳ Worship:
 - Communal
- ↳ Is the structure/feature finished:
 - Yes
 - ↳ Was the structure/feature intended to last beyond a generation:
 - Yes

↳ Was the structure/feature modified through time:
– Yes

↳ Was the structure/feature destroyed:
– No

↳ Has the structure/feature been reconstructed:
– No

Reasons for Creation/Construction/Consecration

Is the place used for the worship of/communication with non-human supernatural beings:
– Yes

↳ Dedicated to a supernatural being:
– Yes [specify]: The Holy Wisdom

↳ Dedicated to more than one supernatural being:
– No

Is the place used for the worship of a semi-divine human being:
– No

Is the place used for the worship of non-divine ancestors:
– No

Was the place commissioned/built by an official political entity:
A political entity is a local power structure that leverages a workforce.
– Yes

↳ Specify
– King or emperor
Notes: It was built by emperor Justinian I.

Were the Structures built by specific groups of people:
– Yes

- ↳ Groups:
 - Specialized labourers/craftspeople

Was the place thought to have originated as the result of divine intervention:

- No

Was the place created to mark or commemorate the birthplace of a supernatural or human being:

- No

Was the place created as the result of an event:

- No

Was the creation of the place sponsored by an external financial/material donation:

- Yes

- ↳ Is this sponsor of the same religious group/tradition as the main usage of the place:
 - Yes

Was the establishment of the place motivated by:

- Expression of devotion with no expectation of favor in return

Was the place built specifically for housing scriptures/sacred texts:

- No

Design and Material Remains

Overall Structure

Is the place made up of multiple built structures:

- Yes

- ↳ Are any of the structures attached to or associated with a landscape feature:
 - No

- ↳ Are any of the structures attached to other structures:
 - Yes

Notes: The church and its surrounding structures compose a complex that includes: to the west a colonnaded atrium with a fountain; to the north a baptistery; and, at the northeast corner a sacristy. The south side of the cathedral was flanked to the patriarchal palace. A passage at its south-east corner was connecting Hagia Sophia to the Great imperial palace.

- ↳ Is there a hierarchy among the structures:
 - Yes

Is monumental architecture present:

Monumental architecture is defined here as a built structure that surpasses average human proportions and in general is larger and more complex than is necessary to fulfill the structure's utilitarian function(s). Examples of monumental architecture include Mesopotamian Ziggurats, Egyptian Pyramids, Greek and Roman temples, Mesoamerican Pyramids, North American and Aegean burial mounds, etc.

– No

Is the structure/feature made out of natural materials:

Answer [Yes] for each material type

– Yes

- ↳ Earth
 - Yes

- ↳ Is this material sourced locally:
 - Yes

- ↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:
 - No

- ↳ Sand
 - Yes

- ↳ Is this material sourced locally:
 - Yes

- ↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:
 - No

- ↳ Clay

– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– Yes

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

– No

↳ Plaster

– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– I don't know

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

– I don't know

↳ Wood

– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– I don't know

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

– No

↳ Grass

– No

↳ Stone

– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– I don't know

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

– No



Other

– Other [specify]: Marble, gold, silver, glass

Is the structure/feature made out of human-made materials

– No

Decoration

Is decoration present:

– Yes



Is decoration part of the building (permanent):

– Yes



On the outside:

– No



On the inside:

– Yes



Is decoration attached to the building, i.e. movable reliefs or tapestries

– Yes



Is the decoration figural:

A figural representation is defined here as one that contains the depiction of discernible human, anthropomorphic, animal, or zoomorphic forms. In general, it differentiates between animate and inanimate beings, as well as between narrative compositions and still life, landscapes, abstraction, etc. Answer [Yes] for each type of figure depicted

– Yes



Are there gods depicted:

– Yes

Notes: Christ



Are there other supernatural beings depicted:

– Yes

Notes: Angels

↳ Are there humans depicted:

– Yes

Notes: Emperors, empresses, Virgin Mary and saints

↳ Are there animals depicted:

– No

↳ Are there animal-human hybrids depicted:

– No

↳ Is the decoration non-figural:

– Yes

↳ Is it geometric/abstract

– Yes

↳ Floral motifs

– No

↳ Is it writing/caligraphy

– No

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: The programme of the monument combines non-figural and figural decoration

↳ Is the decoration hidden or restricted from view:

– No

↳ Are there statues present:

– No

↳ Are there reliefs present:

A relief as opposed to sculpture carved on the round is a work of sculpture in which the figures

project from a background support, generally a flat surface. Reliefs can be carved out of stone, clay, or a similar material.

– No

↳ Are there paintings present:

– Yes

↳ Are they panel paintings [movable]:

– No

↳ Are they wall paintings:

– Yes

↳ Type

– 'True' fresco

↳ Paintings representing the gods worshipped at the place:

– Yes

↳ Paintings representing mythological narratives:

– No

↳ Paintings representing human/historical narratives:

– No

↳ Other [Specify]

– Other [specify]: The paintings were found during the excavations which finished in 2018 and represent enthroned Christ and figures of saints-bishops.

↳ Are there mosaics present:

– Yes

↳ Mosaics representing the god(s) worshipped at the place:

– Yes

↳ Mosaics representing mythological narratives:

– No

↳ Mosaics representing human/historical narratives:

– Yes

↳ Abstract mosaics:

– Yes

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: Mosaics representing Byzantine emperors and empresses

↳ Are there inscriptions as part of the decoration:

– Yes

↳ Are the inscriptions ornamental:

– No

↳ Are the inscriptions informative/declarative
[e.g. historical narratives, calendars, donor lists etc...]

– Yes

↳ Are the inscription a formal dedication:

– No

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: The inscriptions are specifying who are the individuals depicted

↳ Other type of decoration:

– No

Iconography

Are there distinct features in the places iconography:

– Yes

↳ Eyes (stylized or not)

– Yes

↳

- ↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic)
 - No
- ↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic)
 - No
- ↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic)
 - Yes
 - Notes: Christ and angels
- ↳ Supernatural beings (abstract)
 - No
- ↳ Portrayals of afterlife
 - No
- ↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols)
 - Yes
 - Notes: Crosses, book
- ↳ Humans
 - Yes
- ↳ Supernatural narratives
 - Yes
 - Notes: Isaiah's vision
- ↳ Human narratives
 - Yes
 - Notes: Baptism of Christ, Pentecost
- ↳ Other [Specify]
 - Other [specify]: The two of the three known to have existed narrative scenes depict scenes from the life of Christ (Pentecost and Baptism)

Beliefs and Practices

Funerary Associations

Is this place a tomb/burial:

– No

Is this a place for the worship of the dead:

– No

Is this a place for treatment of the corpse:

– No

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

Co-sacrifices are animal/human sacrifices prompted by the death of the primary occupant of the tomb/burial.

– No

Are grave goods present:

– No

Are formal burials present:

– No

Supernatural Beings

Is a supreme high god is present:

– No

Does the supreme high god communicate with the living at this place:

– Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life:
– Yes

↳ In dreams:
– No

↳ In trance possession:

– No

↳ Through divination practices:

– No

↳ Only through religious specialists:

– No

↳ Only through monarch:

– No

↳ Other

–Other [specify]: Through prayer and during the services taking place at the church

Are previously human spirits present:

– No

Do human spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Are nonhuman supernatural beings present:

– No

Do nonhuman spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Are mixed human-divine beings present:

– No

Do mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Notes: Saints

Is the supernatural being/high god present in the form of a cult statue(s):

– No

Supernatural Interactions

Is supernatural monitoring present:

– No

Do visitors communicate with the gods or supernatural beings:

– Yes

↳ Do visitors communicate with gods:

– Yes

↳ Do visitors communicate with other supernatural beings:

– Yes

Ritual and Performance

Sacrifices, Offerings, and Maintenance

Are sacrifices performed at this place:

– No

Are there self-sacrifices present:

– No

Are material offerings present:

– Yes

↳ Are material offerings mandatory:

– No

↳ Are material offerings composed of valuable objects:

– Yes

↳ Are material offerings composed of daily-life objects:

– Yes

↳ Are material offerings interred at this place (in caches):

– No



Other

– Other [specify]: Until 1453 when the monument was still Christian faithful were offering precious gifts but also aliments such as bread, wine, oil, wheat etc. for the liturgical needs of the church

Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory:

– No

Is maintenance of the place performed:

– Yes



Is it required:

– Yes



Is there cleansing (for the maintenance):

– No



Are there periodic repairs/reconstructions:

– Yes



Is the maintenance performed by permanent staff:

– Yes

Notes: The monument until 1453 was maintained by the Byzantine emperors. After it became mosque it was maintained by the Sultans. In the modern era is maintained by specialists such as architects, archaeologists, civil engineers, conservators etc.



Other

– Other [specify]: Restoration and conservation practices are constantly applied to the church

Pilgrimage and Festivals

Are pilgrimages present:

– Yes



How strict is pilgrimage:

– optional (rare)

Notes: Saint Sophia was considered for all Christians a pilgrimage site

↳ Are pilgrimages the main reason for construction/establishment of the place:
— No

↳ Are pilgrimages to this place associated with significant life events:
— No

↳ Does pilgrimage to this place involve following established routes (roads):
— No

Is this place a venue for feasting:

— Yes

↳ Is feasting connected to the worship/sacrifices performed at this place:
— Yes

Notes: The services taking place in Hagia Sophia were largely connected to the feasts of the Christian Orthodox liturgical cycle

↳ Is feasting sponsored by the same entity that built/maintains the place:
— No

↳ Does feasting occur in a specific location within the place:
— No

Are festivals present:

— No

Notes: Muslim religious festivals only

Divination and Healing

Is divination present:

— No

Is healing present/practiced at this place:

— No

Do rituals occur at this place:

Rituals are visibly enacted behaviors by one or more people for the purposes of religious observance.

— Yes

↳ Do large-scale rituals take place:

— Yes

↳ Do small-scale rituals take place:

— Yes

↳ On average how many participants are present in large-scale rituals:

— specify: Impossible to specify

↳ How often do these rituals take place:

— specify: Impossible to specify

↳ Are there orthodoxy checks:

— I don't know

↳ Are there orthopraxy checks:

— I don't know

↳ Are there synchronic practices:

— No

↳ Are there intoxicants used during the ritual:

— No

Institutions and Scriptures

Religious Specialists

Are religious specialists present/in charge of this place:

Religious specialists are individuals whose primary duties within a population group are not concerned with subsistence or craft production but the maintenance of the religious landscape and culture of the group.

— Yes

Notes: Saint Sophia was directly connected to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople, in

charge of the church.

↳ Present full time
– Yes

↳ Present part time
– No

↳ Are the religious specialists of specific sex/gender:
– Yes
Notes: Male

↳ Are the religious specialists of specific ethnicity:
– No

↳ Are the religious specialists of specific class/cast:
– No

↳ Are religious specialists dedicated to the place for life:
– No

↳ Are the religious specialists stratified in a hierarchical system:
– Yes

↳ Is access within the space segregated by this hierarchy:
– Yes

Notes: There were spaces reserved to the clergy only. The south gallery was accessed only by the imperial family.

Does this place incorporate a living space for religious specialists:

– No

Notes: It was attached though to the Patriarchal palace.

Is this place used for the training of religious specialists:

– No

Are there formal institutions for the maintenance of the place:

Institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders

— Yes

Notes: The Patriarchate of Constantinople. The patrons were the Byzantine emperors

Bureaucracy

Is there a formal bureaucracy present at this place:

A bureaucracy consists of a hierarchical system of accounting and rule maintenance primarily concerned with material wealth.

— Yes



Is a bureaucracy present permanently:

— Yes



Is a bureaucracy present on a temporary or seasonal basis:

— No

Does this place control economic resources (land, goods, tools):

— Yes

Notes: Saint Sophia cathedral was receiving donations by the byzantine emperors, by Byzantine nobles and by pilgrims



Is this control the primary supporting income of this place:

— Yes



Does this place lease out land:

— I don't know



Does this place lease out tools:

— I don't know

Public Works

Does this place serve as a location for services to the community:

— No

Writing/Scriptures

Is non-religious writing stored at this place:

Economic documents, records etc.

— No

Are there scriptures associated with this place:

— No

Notes: Scriptures are not associated to this place. However, many hagiographic accounts, pilgrimage accounts etc. mention Saint Sophia

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