Italians and the New Byzantium: Lombard and Venetian Architects in Muscovy, 1472-1539

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ITALIANS AND THE NEW BYZANTIUM: LOMBARD AND VENETIAN ARCHITECTS IN
MUSCOVY, 1472-1539

by

ELLEN A. HURST

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2014
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Italians and the New Byzantium: Lombard and Venetian Architects in Muscovy, 1472-1539

by

Ellen A. Hurst

Advisor: Professor James M. Saslow

This dissertation explores how early modern Russian identity was shaped by the built environment and, likewise, how the built environment was a result of an emerging Russian identity. I focus on the years 1472 to 1539 because they were crucial to the formation of this early modern Russian identity. Muscovite princes, seeking to rebuild Moscow's cityscape in a grander style, imported a large community of architects, engineers, stonemasons, and statesmen from Lombardy, the Veneto, and Rome. At least six architects, and an unknown number of masons, from Italy worked in Muscovy during these years, and their presence indelibly changed the face of Russian architecture and culture. The Muscovite princes sought to recreate the cityscape of Moscow as a symbol of the power gained when Ivan III freed his people from Mongol control and began consolidating Russian lands into an emerging, unified state. Furthermore, with the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, Muscovy declared itself capital of Orthodox Christendom, casting its authority across the Russian lands.

Accordingly on the ascent, Muscovy actively sought to define its emerging sense of national identity in a new architectural language; it deliberately looked to the traditions of
Medieval and Renaissance Italy to assist in this process. The resulting hybrid architecture was a combination of the revered architectural traditions of medieval Kiev and Novgorod with the Western Renaissance, all overlaid with a fervent Byzantine theological persuasion. Thus, Muscovy’s use of foreign architects is emphatically not indicative of a deference to a “superior” West or of a desire to become or appear Western, as some older scholarship implies. Instead, it reveals the ingenuity of a culture on the verge of statehood, one that seems to have understood that artistic forms could be transferred and “repurposed.”
Acknowledgements

I am indebted to a number of people without whose help I could not have completed this dissertation. My advisor, Professor James Saslow, gave me wonderful encouragement and practical advice throughout the writing process. His willingness to read numerous drafts, providing feedback on both micro- and macro-level issues, was invaluable from the earliest stages of research through the last refinements of my final draft. I am also grateful to my committee members, Professors Jennifer Ball, Warren Woodfin, and Asen Kirin, who provided generous and thoughtful feedback and guidance.

My husband, Kevin O’Rourke, supported me in every way imaginable as I completed this project; I could not have completed it without his good humor and support. Finally, I am grateful to my parents, who invested me with a love of art and history, and who introduced me to Russian culture. Most importantly, I thank them for teaching me to ask “Why?”
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INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Methodology

In June of 1472 Zoë Palaiologina, exiled Byzantine princess, left her adopted Rome for the great unknown of Moscow, thereby commencing a long-lasting and complicated union of Byzantine, Renaissance, and Russian culture. Five months later she and her retinue arrived in Moscow, where she married Tsar Ivan III, also known as Ivan the Great, in a lavish Orthodox ceremony, readopted Orthodox Christianity, and took the name Sophia. Ettore lo Gatto describes the marriage of Ivan III and Sophia Palaiologina as a union “between the Eastern and still half-barbaric spirit of Muscovite Russia and the spirit of the Italian Renaissance.”¹ With their marriage the first chapter of Russia’s long, ambiguous relationship with the West begins. Ivan’s and Sophia’s marriage laid the cornerstone of a new Russian Empire that sought to revive and supersede other empires and states that had come and gone before. Taking shape in the shadows of the recently vanquished Byzantine Empire, Muscovy took the helm as new capital of the Orthodox Christian world. Its self-conscious revival, however, was not just a revival of Byzantium or of that most esteemed of empires, Rome; it sought to recreate the Byzantine Empire while also surpassing it by incorporating the ideals and ideologies of other great empires.

and forming a sort of visionary super-empire. In this way, Russia conquered its own struggles with cultural identity.

The question of Russian identity, however, remains a contentious issue in many academic disciplines. Scholars working in fields as diverse as economics and religion have grappled with the question of outside “influence” on Russia, but perhaps nowhere has this issue been more problematic than in the study of Russia’s art and architecture. Indeed, scholarship that attempts to broaden the study of the early modern period has made only slow progress in moving away from nationalist models, and Russia is particularly complicated because of its geographic and cultural location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Byzantium. Moreover, with very few exceptions, scholars have continued to work within the scholarly categories established by art historians in the earlier twentieth century, who closely adhered to nationalistic and stylistic categories. The boundaries of the large categorized areas, defined as “Medieval” and “Renaissance” or “Italy” and “Russia” become blurred when scholars look beyond traditional geographic and cultural borders, and this blurring has the delightful side-effect of expanding approaches to art-historical study. Nonetheless, an investigation of early modern art in Muscovy is hindered by two significant problems: both the prevailing methodologies and terminology, established for the study of western European art, are inadequate for this study. A realistic and balanced assessment of art in early modern Russia begs for the removal of many established preconceptions as well as the creation of a new art-historical language. Fortunately, scholars

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have been breaking new ground in early modern history for several decades and their scholarship will provide a framework upon which to build my own scholarship.³

Even within the fields of Russian art and history, the existing scholarship is fragmented and does not comprehensively address the roles of hybridization and agency. Distinct camps of scholarship, each limited in their own different ways, have contributed to greater understanding, while also fueling the fire. Older art-historical scholarship tended to emphasize one-way “influence” (Italy on Russia), neglecting to consider fully the calculated choices made in Muscovy. Equally prevalent is the contradictory interpretation of Russia as a xenophobic culture, one that was impervious to outside influence or even to the forces of change at all.⁴ Although the two approaches are in opposition to one another they are ideologically related, for both view cultural interaction as a process of influence and reception, rather than one of nuanced interaction. A more accurate approach falls somewhere between the two approaches, acknowledging that Italian forms were not simply exported to Russia, nor was Russia closed off from the rest of the early modern world.

A larger problem that has persisted into contemporary scholarship is the divide in the study of Russia between art history and social history. Art history tends to exclude Muscovy, giving more attention to art of the twentieth century, or lumps Muscovite art in with medieval Russian art; social historians tend to exclude art and architecture, instead focusing on the history

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and politics of Russian culture. Simply put, scholars of Russian history are seldom concerned with the art-historical significance of Russia’s Western links, while Western art historians tend to consider Russia (if at all) from a skewed Western perspective. Thus, to remedy the problem of the divide, this project is by necessity interdisciplinary, relying equally on social-historical and art-historical scholarship.

A wealth of published primary documents, both Italian and Russian, play a central role in putting the pieces together. I also make use of secondary material on Muscovite history. George Vernadsky’s seminal *Russia at the Dawn of the Modern Age*, provides historical analysis of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Muscovy, while also considering the interaction between Russia and Italy at this time. A more recent text, Roger Crummey’s *The Formation of Muscovy*, pays attention to the rebuilding of the Kremlin and recognizes it as a crucial event during which Russian cultural identity took shape. Similarly, Russian historian Nicholas V. Riasanovsky provides a detailed discussion of Russian history in his *A History of Russia*; in his *Russian Identities: A Historical Survey*, he delves into the complex question of how Russian identity was shaped throughout history. Nancy Shields Kollmann also provides a closer look at the crucial period of Muscovite history in her essay “Muscovite Russia, 1450-1598.” Likewise, historians

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5 The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles was published in the nineteenth century and allows for a glimpse of the events and official views of the grand princes and patriarchs of Muscovy. *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei (PSRL)*, 38 vols. (St. Petersburg-Moscow: Nauka, 1846-1989). In addition, several primary sources from Italian archives, including letters and contracts documenting relations between Italian architects and their Russian patrons, have been published.


Janet Martin and Charles J. Halperin provide detailed historical analyses of medieval Russia; Halperin’s work gives special consideration to medieval Russia’s complex relationship with the Mongols.\textsuperscript{10} Although these texts are invaluable for their wealth of historical information, none delves into art-historical analysis, and there is seldom any sense of how early modern Russia fits into a larger art-historical movement.

A select number of art-historical texts dovetail, in parts, with my own research, and others provide overviews of the art of Russia from its medieval past to the present day. The most useful of these are William Craft Brumfield’s \textit{A History of Russian Architecture} and Dmitry Shvidkovsky’s \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}.\textsuperscript{11} Brumfield catalogs architectural traditions from medieval Kiev to modern-day Russia, considering both “European” and “Asian” Russia; his research is extensive and provides useful background and historical context. Shvidkovsky is one of Russia’s premier architectural historians, and like Brumfield he provides an extensive survey of Russian architecture, though he examines the parallels between Russian and Western European architecture as they developed over the centuries. Unlike Brumfield, he is primarily interested in “European” Russia, and indeed he approaches Russian art as a distant branch of the art of the European West. His chapter “The Moscow Renaissance” addresses, in condensed form, some of the major themes of this dissertation. It is important to note that while parts of these books do rather carefully examine Muscovite architecture and its relationship to the West, they do not delve deep enough into the early modern period to make a significant contribution to that particular moment in art history.


Earlier generations of art historians also dealt with Muscovite architecture as part of a sweeping survey of Russian art. Ettore Lo Gatto’s *Gli artisti italiani in Russia*, originally published in 1934, is one of the only sources that provides a detailed account of the Italians who worked in Russia.\(^{12}\) It is particularly useful because it specifically examines the interaction of Italy and Russia from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Lo Gatto’s book has a useful list of Italian primary sources and provides an invaluable contextualization of the northern Italian architectural centers that served as training-grounds for the Italian architects who would end up working in Moscow. Of course it is most interested in what the presence of Italian architects in Russia says about Italy and Italian architecture, and therefore is limited in its usefulness for this project. Another source, one of the first overviews of Russian art in modern Western scholarship, is George Heard Hamilton’s *The Art and Architecture of Russia*.\(^{13}\) First published in 1954, it is an invaluable reference, but Hamilton remains unable to abandon the connected yet contradictory ideas of Russia as both influenced by the West and completely isolated from it. In the preface to the first edition he says that he has “not sought to emphasize either the likeness or unlikeness of Russian art to similar or contemporary expressions in Western Europe,” but he then continues to say that he has “tried to explain Russian art in the terms used for the study of European art.”\(^{14}\) Certainly Russia’s “likeness or unlikeness” to other cultures is a problematic and often contentious issue, and it seems noble to seek to remove such potential biases. However, Hamilton’s further statement that he will consider “influences from outside Russia” while using “the terms used for the study of European art” seems to contradict his goals and obscure his objectives from the outset. In many ways it seems impossible to discuss Russian art using the

\(^{12}\) Lo Gatto, *Gli artisti italiani in Russia*.

\(^{13}\) Hamilton, *Art and Architecture of Russia*.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 9.
terminology established for European art history without drawing comparisons to European art of the same period. Instead, considering Russia in relationship to other cultures, while simultaneously aiming to consider Russia as an independent entity, is a more realistic—and probably a more useful—goal. In the best-case scenario, Russia’s relationships with other cultures would be carefully considered and Eurocentric and Renaissance-centric viewpoints would be set aside. But the aforementioned contradictions within Hamilton’s foreword illustrate the difficulty of studying Russian art more than they do any shortcoming in Hamilton’s scholarship. It is clear that, when Hamilton wrote his book, he did not have the tools needed to discuss the art of a culture so removed from the canon of Western art. Over the last several decades, however, many scholars (notably Claire Farago and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann) have built up a vocabulary and methodological framework that leave today’s scholar much better provisioned than Hamilton was in the 1950s.

Indeed, study of the architecture of Muscovy requires a whole new linguistic arsenal combined with a very careful application of established art-historical vocabulary. Even words like Muscovy and Muscovite pose problems, since historians and Slavicists use them to denote a later phase of “medieval” Russian society in Moscow and the surrounding areas. This term loses some of its potency in the context of a study that seeks to set fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Moscow apart from medieval Russia. In the absence of an acceptable alternative, I will use the terms “Muscovy” and “Muscovite” to refer to the capital of early modern Russia in Moscow. Much of the terminology used in the study of Byzantine architecture can also be used in the study of Muscovite architecture, although there are a number of Russian-specific architectural terms that will be explained throughout the following chapters. (Most useful are the terms kokoshnik, lopatki, zakomary, nalichniki, and shatior.) Whenever it makes sense, I will use the
Russian-specific terminology, and avoid Western-specific terminology. But architectural terms like these are less cumbersome, since they signify something concrete. More difficult is the terminology for abstract ideas that have not been presented before. Therefore, I have had to create new names for movements and/or periods that I identify in Russian art. Rather than readapting or incorrectly using terminology from other fields of art history, I use terms like “Muscovite Composite Style” to explain new concepts.

An overview of the existing scholarship reveals, then, that what is needed is research that draws Russia into the international discourse of the early modern period by synthesizing disparate fields to produce a complete picture of the art and architecture of Muscovy. This dissertation seeks to fill in the gaps in the literature, synthesizing the contributions of historians, Russian and Slavic Studies scholars, and art historians, by using the wealth of primary source material that has not been looked at in this way before, while also contributing to the limited art-historical vocabulary established for Russian art. As mentioned, an important goal for this project is to cast aside outdated assumptions and classifications in order to understand the role of architecture created in Moscow in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Importantly, this investigation seeks to correct the error of past scholars by removing Moscow from isolation and considering instead the role of other places and times in the development of early modern Muscovite culture. Of special interest, of course, are the two cultures that had a particularly involved relationship with Moscow during this period: Byzantium and Italy. At the same time, this project asserts Russia's cultural independence, even while it draws Russia into the international discourse of early modern art. I suggest that Russia’s independence arose not in spite of but because of its keen awareness of the many cultures with which it came into contact. As if in anticipation of post-modern globalization, early modern Muscovy defined itself in
relation to the many disparate cultures that penetrated its borders, and it assimilated elements of these cultures into its unique artistic language.

In addition to expanding our understanding of the interconnectedness of the early modern world, this study will shed light on the study of Renaissance and Byzantine art. In breaking down the artificial barriers between Russia and the West, I aim to show the breadth of the so-called Renaissance and to examine the afterlife of Byzantine art. One of the goals of this project is to illustrate the inadequacy of the term “Renaissance” to define a historical period whose interests and stylistic tendencies were so widely divergent that they certainly could not be encapsulated by such a neat and tidy term that, by definition, excludes any culture not explicitly interested in reviving Greco-Roman traditions.

In fact, even in a localized study of Italy, the epicenter of Renaissance Europe, the term Renaissance is inadequate, since only certain geographical areas and segments of the population in Italy were truly interested in a revival of classical ideals and traditions. Contrary to the narrative set forth by art historians in the nineteenth century, the “Renaissance” was not a uniformly widespread movement in the West, or even in Italy, during the early modern period. Instead, certain elite segments of society sought out classicizing art and architecture, while the rest of society continued the traditions of the medieval past. In Italy this took the form of updates to International Gothic, Byzantine, and Italian Romanesque. In other parts of the West, similar local traditions continued to have a vibrant existence, independent of classical revival. The classicizing style of the Renaissance only worked its way into the mainstream after it had achieved widespread popularity among the Italian elite over several decades; even then it was mixed with a strong local tradition derived from the medieval past. Likewise, other parts of the
world were not subject to blanket stylistic characterizations, with dominant trends instead slowly bleeding into an eclectic stylistic field.\textsuperscript{15}

Moscow was one such place defined by eclectic tastes. At the end of the fifteenth century, for example, European Russia was a Byzantino-Russian amalgam with distinct elements inherited from neighboring traditions. The cultural forces that had helped define Russia from its earliest days were many, including Scandinavian, Mongol, and Byzantine traditions. By the thirteenth century, however, the main cities of Russia had been shaped by Byzantine culture to a large extent; with the Russian conversion to Orthodox Christianity in the tenth century came an influx of Byzantine culture. Kievan Rus’ (along with its neighboring principalities) became something of a Byzantine colony as religious leaders, artists and philosophers came to Kiev, bringing with them their alphabet, religious practices, artistic traditions, and, importantly, their craftsmen.\textsuperscript{16}

Architecture was one of the primary expressions of the new Christian identity of the Rus’ and many churches were built over the next several centuries. What emerged as the standard Russian church was quite similar to the Middle Byzantine cross-in-square church, a typology


brought to Kiev by the many Byzantine architects who worked there.\(^\text{17}\) By the fifteenth century, however, this style had merged with local building traditions, resulting in a church type that was more removed from its Byzantine roots, showing a Russianization of the Middle Byzantine church.\(^\text{18}\) In the thirteenth century, Kievan Rus’ was sacked by the Mongols, casting Russia into a period of cultural and economic decline. During this time, Russia was cut off from Byzantium, allowing the Byzantino-Russian church style to evolve an even more independent character.\(^\text{19}\) The Mongol Empire was the suzerain of Kiev and most of the Rus’ lands, with two important exceptions: the northern provinces of Novgorod and Pskov, because of their geographical remoteness, remained mostly free from Mongol suzerainty and were able to carry Russian society forward. Indeed, the development of a more Russianized church is largely indebted to the ability of Novgorod and Pskov to carry on in a relatively independent way.\(^\text{20}\)

By the time Moscow started to emerge as the new Russian capital in the fourteenth century, the architectural traditions that had been established in Kiev, Novgorod, Pskov, Vladimir, and Suzdal had spread into neighboring areas, making up something of an early Russian regional style. It was in Moscow, beginning with the leadership of Ivan III, that these traditions were able to fully emerge in an imposing capital city.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{17}\) It should be noted that the “typical” cross-in-square church consisted of a naos divided into nine bays by four large columns that supported a dome bay. In the Byzantine world, columns were almost always spolia, borrowed from surviving classical buildings. In Kievan Rus’, where there were no such surviving buildings, architects were forced to build their own supports, and thus what in Byzantium would have been a dome bay resting on columns was in Rus’ a dome bay resting on piers. Robert Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2008), 146.


\(^{19}\) Further complicating the Rus’ relationship with Byzantium was the fact that the Byzantine Empire was itself fractured and weakened after the sack of Constantinople at the hands of European crusaders in 1204.

Ivan III came to power in 1462, at a time when the Rus’ lands were still fragmented with many independent cities and regions in competition with one another, but by the end of his reign, Russian statehood had begun to emerge. Ivan’s role in unifying Russia is in fact so significant that one scholar has called him “the creator of Russia.” Ivan’s role in the history of art and architecture is just as significant; he became a patron of architecture in the 1470s, just as Moscow was on the brink of greatness. The historian and the art historian alike cannot help but wonder at the relationship between Moscow’s political rise and its artistic rise. At the very least Moscow’s political and artistic lives had a symbiotic relationship. Ivan was not a superhuman leader, however; he happened to rule at a time when events were such that Moscow was in an advantageous position. First, Ivan began to free his people from centuries of Mongol control while also consolidating independent Russian territories into a unified Muscovite Russia. Second, due to the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, Moscow became the last bastion of Orthodox Christendom. For the first time since the prosperous days of Kievan Rus’, the Russian people had a political and cultural capital. Thus, by the last third of the fifteenth century, Moscow was in a newly advantageous position, claiming authority both as the political

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22 Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 70.


24 1453 only marks Russia’s definitive independence from the Church. In truth, the process was rather gradual. The split truly began with the Council of Ferrara-Florence and the Russian opposition to joining with the western Church. See Mikhail Cherniavsky “The Reception of the Council of Florence in Moscow,” *Church History* vol. 24 no. 4 (December 1955): 347-59 and John Meyendorff “Was there an Encounter between East and West at Florence?” in *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996).

heart of the Russian world and as rightful heir of Orthodox Christianity. Its architecture needed to look the part, and for that, Ivan and his successors turned to Italy.

The direct connection between Russia and Italy began in earnest in 1472, with Ivan’s marriage to Sophia Palaiologina. Because she was the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI, Sophia was the perfect woman to provide Ivan with another son.26 Their son would have Russian legitimacy and Byzantine imperial heritage. Although Sophia was Byzantine by birth, she was orphaned at a young age and spent most of her youth in Italy as a ward of the Catholic Church, under the care of Cardinal Bessarion.27 As a result she had one foot in the Byzantine world from which Muscovy hoped to draw its authority and the other in Italy, whose city-states’ power and cultural prowess would have been undeniably appealing to a shrewd leader like Ivan. Ivan and Sophia’s union served the interests of the Catholic Church as well. With their marriage, so Sophia’s guardians hoped, the Russians would be brought into the fold of the Catholic Church, marking yet another victory for Catholicism. Alas, Ivan’s marriage to Sophia did not bring about the unification of the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Her presence in Moscow nonetheless unquestionably changed the culture of Muscovy. Many scholars go so far as to credit her with bringing Italian architects to Moscow, and some go so far as to say that Sophia “commissioned” many of the Kremlin buildings.28 After Sophia’s arrival and well into the sixteenth century, Muscovite princes imported a large community of architects, engineers, stonemasons, and statesmen from Lombardy, the Veneto, and possibly Rome. At least ten Italian architects, and an unknown number of masons, worked in Muscovy during these years, and their

26 Ivan’s first wife, recently deceased, had provided him with only one son, which was not sufficient to ensure the future of the Muscovite throne.


28 Ibid., 27.
presence indelibly changed the face of Russian architecture and culture. The degree of Sophia’s involvement in commissioning these architects is unclear, but it cannot be denied that after her arrival there was a hint of the Italian Renaissance in Moscow.  

Sophia’s induction into Muscovite society also carried tremendous ideological weight. Her links to Italy and to Byzantium fit perfectly with an emerging church doctrine that saw Moscow as the “Third Rome.” The origins of the idea are traceable in written texts from the late fifteenth century. First, in an allegorical religious tale, the “Tale of the White Cowl,” a cowl, symbolic of Orthodoxy, is moved from Rome to Constantinople and finally from Constantinople to Novgorod. In his introduction to the new Orthodox calendar in 1492, Metropolitan Zosima spelled out the idea even more explicitly and cited Moscow as the new capital, referring to it as “the new Constantinople.” In the early sixteenth century a monk from Pskov, Filofei, took the idea one step further, saying “two Romes have fallen, the Third stands and there shall be no Fourth.” It is no wonder that this doctrine was promulgated after the collapse of Byzantium, for it advanced the cause of the Orthodox Church in Russia as it sought to exert its autocephaly.

In spite of the primary source material that explicitly mentions the idea of Third Rome (or New Constantinople), it has been a contentious issue in more recent scholarship. Many scholars believe that this religious ideology only captures one segment of the full view of

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30 Although Sophia had spent most of her time in Rome under the influence of the Catholic Church, her dynastic ties to the Palaiologan Empire would have carried significant weight.


32 Quoted in ibid., 261.

Russian culture and history and that it ignores the many other cultural forces. Thus, they seem to suggest that emphasizing the Third Rome idea leads scholarship in the wrong direction. Similarly, and more convincingly, they point out that this doctrine neglects the very vibrant subcultures that were a part of Russian culture, even if they were not a part of the “official” side of history.  

Certainly the Third Rome idea should not be the only informing factor for an investigation of Muscovite Russia; however, any study involving the official viewpoint of the church, its leaders, and the Grand Princes cannot ignore this doctrine. For the purposes of this investigation, for example, which studies buildings created for the church and for official leaders of the church and the state, it would be foolish to ignore such religious dogma. However, I do not believe that the Third Rome idea permeated Russian life in any real conscious way. Muscovites thought of themselves as Muscovites, not Byzantines or Romans. At the same time, they were aware of Constantinople’s demise (and Rome’s earlier demise) and did see themselves as the only surviving capital of the “true” faith. While the Third Rome idea may not have mattered much to the typical Muscovite citizen in the late-fifteenth century, in the official world of Grand Princes and metropolitans it did. 

Dissertation Structure

The structure of this dissertation is chronological, tracing the story of Russian architecture created or inspired by Italians, from Ivan III through Ivan IV. I will not attempt to ascribe the whole of Russian culture to one outside source, but will address the question of

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34 Kollman, “Muscovite Russia, 1450-1598,” 50–51.

35 The differences between elite and popular culture with regards to Muscovite ideology parallels the differences between elite and popular culture in Renaissance Italy, in which, as discussed above, the interest in Classicism was, initially, an elite taste.
Russian identity as it relates to the outside world. The analysis of Russian culture provided in the following chapters considers not only Italian interaction with Russia, but also Russia’s long history of interaction with both Byzantines and Mongols. The long and complex role of the Orthodox Church in Russian history is also given careful consideration.

Chapter One, “Lombard Architects under Ivan III,” examines Ivan III’s (and possibly Sophia’s) patronage of Lombard architects and seeks to explicate his nationalistic goals in utilizing foreign masters. A crucial question is to what extent Sophia may have been responsible for the influx of architects from Italy. I will analyze the Cathedral of the Dormition; the fortifications, gates, and towers of the Kremlin; and the Faceted Palace (monuments created by Aristotile Fioravanti, Pietro Antonio Solari, Marco Friazin, Onton Friazin, and Alevisio Carcano). Italian buildings in Moscow during this phase consistently have one foot in each world: either they apply Italian engineering principles to aesthetically Byzantino-Russian churches or they apply Italian Renaissance decoration to structures that are essentially Byzantino-Russian in conception. I conclude that certain buildings, namely churches, called for a greater level of conservatism than did secular buildings. Churches, then, were more directly linked to Byzantino-Russian tradition, whereas secular buildings could more freely utilize a foreign aesthetic.

Chapter Two, “Venetian (and Lombard) Architects under in Moscow, 1505-1539,” examines the continued patronage of Italian architects under Ivan III’s son, a generation after the first influx of foreigners in the 1470s. The architects in this period were drawn from the Veneto, as well as possibly from Rome, although many of the Lombards who came to work for Ivan III were still working in Moscow during Vasily’s reign. While foreign architects under Vasily III continued to build in a Russian idiom, the decorative elements of the Renaissance became ever
more noticeable, especially in two buildings: Alevisio Lamberti da Montagnana’s Cathedral of
the Archangel Michael and Pietro Annibale’s Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe. Under
Vasily’s patronage two divergent trends developed: Italian influence was more explicitly on
display in Muscovite architecture, and Muscovite architecture began to stand out and declare
itself with increasing clarity.

Chapter Three, “After the Italians: Muscovite Composite Style,” examines the end of
Italian-Muscovite interaction, and the emergence of a distinctive Russian architecture. The most
famous Russian building from this period, St. Basil’s Cathedral (1555), bears striking
resemblance to architectural sketches from Renaissance treatises. Most notable is Antonio
Filarete’s influential fifteenth-century Trattato d’architettura, since he was a personal
acquaintance of Aristotile Fioravanti, but some of the architectural drawings by Leonardo da
Vinci, Francesco di Giorgio Martini, and Sebastiano Serlio also have a striking resemblance to
this Muscovite building, suggesting the lasting imprint of Western culture in Moscow. In the
decades after 1539, when the last Italian left Muscovy, Russian architecture developed into
something new and uniquely Russian. It had not cast off all traces of foreign “influence,” but had
so thoroughly assimilated them that it took on a new role and character—a style that I call
“Muscovite Composite.” The Muscovite Composite Style was, I argue, in large part indebted to
the Italian building projects in Moscow between 1472 and 1539. While Italian architects brought
expertise in both engineering and design, Russian patrons applied that expertise to Muscovite
commissions. After a generation of sustained experimentation, Italian architecture had been
incorporated into a distinctively new Russian architecture. In its new buildings, Muscovy
proclaimed an identity that was neither Byzantine nor Italian, neither Kievan nor Mongol; it was
nothing but fully Muscovite, an expression of the unique culture of early modern Moscow. Thus,
the turn of the seventeenth century was a crucial period of rebirth and experimentation in Muscovy. Contrary to the assertions of most scholars, the presence of Lombard and Venetian architects in Moscow made more than a momentary impression on the history of Russian architecture.

The innovations of foreign architects enabled Russia simultaneously to distance itself from its troubled past and to proudly declare its unique position in the world. Muscovite rulers used architecture as a means of cultural branding. It could be argued that a renaissance took place in early modern Moscow, because an older, revered style was consciously revived. I would go further and suggest that the very active interest in architecture and rebuilding during this period is enough to suggest a kind of renaissance, for architecture was used to proclaim a renewed cultural authority. It was not a question of what the Russians revived so much as a question of that they sought to use architecture to emerge from a murky state of artistic ambiguity in the first place. Moreover, Russia’s rulers and architects situated their own culture within an awareness of the broader context of architecture in the early modern world. The resulting hybrid architecture was a combination of the revered architectural traditions of medieval Kiev and Novgorod with the western Renaissance, all overlaid with a fervent Byzantine theological persuasion. Thus, Muscovy’s use of foreign architects is emphatically not indicative of deference to a “superior” West or of a desire to become or appear Western. Instead, it reveals the ingenuity of a culture on the verge of statehood, one that seems to have understood that artistic forms could be transferred and “repurposed.”

The terms “rebirth” and “renaissance” are quite applicable to the architecture of Muscovy. First, Muscovy led the way for Russia out of a period of decline precipitated by the sack of Kiev in the thirteenth century. Moscow was a culturally fertile center that sought to
recapture all that had been lost during the years of Mongol suzerainty. Second, Muscovite
architecture deliberately looked to its own “ancient” past as a source for inspiration as it sought
to redefine and reassert its own cultural prowess. Drawing on traditions established in medieval
Kiev, Novgorod, and Vladimir, Moscow asserted a renewed cultural authority. Third, Moscow
revived traditions that had been dominant in late-medieval Italy but were dying out in their home
country. Finally, Muscovy was the site of an ultimate rebirth of Byzantine architecture, which in
a sense, had died out in 1453, having been supplanted by the dominant styles of the Ottoman
Empire. Muscovites revived and reinterpreted Byzantine architecture in a distinctly Muscovite
idiom.

This dissertation reveals the intercultural nature of both Italy and Russia as early as the
fifteenth century and, further, it adds to the literature that suggests the greater interconnectedness
of different cultures and remote geographical regions across the globe in the early modern period
and before. Finally, I argue for another external force that may have had some influence on
Western culture. It has already been established that Western culture was receptive to “exotic”
and innovative imagery borrowed from remote cultures and lands, but there has been little
discussion of the West’s awareness and receptiveness to Central and Eastern Europe.36 On the
whole, it appears that Renaissance culture was not interested in imitating the forms of Eastern
Europe, but it seems plausible that by the seventeenth century, the West was receptive to a new,
contemporary style, which had taken root in Eastern Europe. In any case, the relationship
between Italy and Muscovy had enduring effects on the early modern world.

36 The scholarship about foreign influences on Western art is thorough, from examinations of the interaction of
northern European and Italian culture to the influence of Islamic art on the West, to the more recent scholarship that
addresses the influence of regions such as Asia, Africa, and the New World on the West. Although less common, the
research on central and eastern European connections to Western Europe is not entirely absent. Among the studies
that delve into the topic are Jan Bialostocki, The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe: Hungary, Bohemia,
Poland (Ithaca: University of Cornell Press, 1976); Kaufmann, Court, Cloister, and City; idem, Toward a
Geography of Art; and Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West.
CHAPTER ONE

LOMBARD ARCHITECTS WORKING FOR IVAN III

Grand Prince Ivan III of Muscovy, Ivan “the Great,” as he would come to be known, reigned from 1462 until his death in 1505. His rule coincides with the first phase of Muscovite contact with Italy. Ivan’s reign is crucial to the history of Russian architecture, because he was an active architectural patron, rebuilding old, dilapidated structures within the Kremlin and commissioning new buildings. Although his patronage did not solely utilize the talents of Italians (called friazi, a generic term meaning “Franks,” but used to refer to non-Russian speakers), many of the projects built under his reign made use of foreign-born architects whose styles and traditions subtly filtered into Muscovite architecture.

Through his intense interest in rebuilding Moscow, Ivan helped to bring his culture into a period of cultural and political “rebirth” after centuries of economic and cultural stagnation. The very deliberate rebranding of the city by means of architectural projects speaks to a historical self-awareness and to the knowledge, within the Moscow intelligentsia, of Moscow’s new role on the world stage. During the roughly thirty years that mark Ivan’s patronage of Italian architects, Italians adapted some of their own traditions to the Russian-style buildings they were commissioned to build there. In many cases they did more than adapt Italian style to local needs, instead transplanting specific features of Italian building tradition directly from Lombardy to Moscow. Buildings like Aristotile Fioravanti’s Cathedral of the Dormition (Fig. 1.1) reflect the hybrid style of early Italo-Byzantino-Russian church architecture, while later secular projects,
like the fortifications of the Kremlin (Fig. 1.2), reveal the more overt importation of outside styles.

**Ivan III and the Rise of Moscow**

Russia’s architectural identity under the rule of Ivan III is inextricably linked to its own complicated past. With his patronage of Italian architects, Ivan III was not programmatically seeking to import a distinctly modern or foreign style into his capital; it was not until Peter the Great (1672-1725) and his construction of his new capital at Saint Petersburg in the marshes of the Gulf of Finland that Russia’s rulers would so blatantly seek to cast themselves as European. Ivan’s goals were quite different, as shaped by the very different historical conditions in which he ruled. Having lived under Mongol oppression for over two hundred years (1223-1480), early modern Moscow was in an entirely different situation from Peter’s St. Petersburg. Rather than seeking to recreate and modernize Russian culture, Ivan’s Moscow still sought to define an autonomous local identity. There is no evidence to suggest that when Ivan recruited northern Italian architects to build cathedrals and palaces for him in Moscow he envisioned a Kremlin filled with churches in the style of Brunelleschi and palaces in the style of Alberti. Further, there is no evidence that Ivan even had a defined, unified building program in mind.

In fact, Ivan’s interest in Italian architects arose out of practical necessity, rather than an idealized, philosophical vision of his new capital. By the time he was crowned Grand Prince of Muscovy, Ivan’s city had become old and run-down. Moscow’s history goes back at least to the twelfth century, before the onslaught of the Mongol khans. By the fourteenth century, permanent stone construction began to replace the wooden structures that had stood before, which could so easily be destroyed by fire and attacking enemies. The central cathedral of Moscow, the
Cathedral of the Dormition, was begun in 1326, and the wooden fortification walls were replaced with limestone in 1367.\(^1\) By Ivan’s reign, when Moscow had gained greater independence, the power of the Golden Horde had been considerably weakened due to infighting between its khanates.\(^2\) Moscow had also risen as a prominent capital of Russian political life as it had become more certain of its central role in Orthodox Christianity. Thus, the symbolic importance of the Cathedral of the Dormition was extremely great and Ivan wanted to rebuild it. Ivan’s—and Moscow’s—involvement in architecture would escalate from this one, simple rebuilding project. Moscow would become a major center of architectural expansion and experimentation in the coming decades.

Although Ivan’s initial concern was the rebuilding of his coronation church, his role as a patron expanded over the next thirty years of his life. Before his death in 1505, Ivan had become a very active architectural patron. He was responsible for the arrival of a large number of Italian architects and craftsmen in Moscow and commissioned at least four major building projects. Further, he engaged his new fleet of Italian engineers, architects, and craftsmen on projects involving the city’s infrastructure and his military campaigns. While the buildings commissioned by Ivan betray no visible ideology that links Muscovy to Western Europe, it would be a fallacy to claim that his buildings did not reflect the ambitions of the grand prince as he secured his growing principality.


\(^2\) Charles J. Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke: The Image of the Mongols in Medieval Russia*, corrected ed. (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2009), 171. Moscow’s rise to power also involved a significant amount of political maneuvering and manipulation. The Muscovites aligned themselves with the Mongols, enforcing their laws and collecting their tribute; thus, they were favored by the Mongols. Ultimately, this earned Muscovy the financial and political might required to become independent of Mongol rule. See Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 199-235; Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 44-60.
Generally, his buildings look the way one would expect them to look: his churches resembled traditional Byzantino-Russian churches, his fortresses have the strength and impenetrability one would expect of defensive architecture, and his palaces look palatial. But the mere act of rebuilding Moscow with permanent and costly materials—rather than the wood so frequently employed in earlier Muscovite architecture—was a show of economic, political, and religious authority. Moreover, as will be discussed below, Moscow borrowed from the earlier architectural traditions of Vladimir, Russia’s earlier seat of religious and political power, declaring Moscow as the new capital of Russia in no uncertain terms.3

The buildings erected during Ivan’s reign also refer to earlier Muscovite buildings as well as northern Italian architecture. During his reign many new architectural styles appeared in Muscovy, but a cohesive new style was not created. Thus, northern Italian fortress buildings coexisted with medieval Vladimirian buildings, Byzantino-Russian churches, and Italianate palaces. Ivan’s reign oversaw the introduction and revival of a variety of architectural forms that began to mingle with contemporary Muscovite architecture, eventually resulting in a hybrid architectural style.

Ivan’s primary concern was hiring good-quality architects to build beautiful and sturdy, but essentially traditional, buildings for his capital, and although he seemed to admire Italian architecture—or at least those men who knew its secrets—his artistic vision was unrelated to Italian architectural tradition. Nonetheless, when different cultures come together there is almost always a subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) merging of artistic forms and cultural values. After

3 Moscow’s Dormition copies the Dormition in Vladimir and in so doing participates in the common trend of copying in the medieval world. While not an exact replica of the Dormition in Vladimir, the Moscow Dormition alludes to certain features of the older building and thereby pays homage to it. Similar instances of copying were common throughout the medieval world and had already occurred many times in earlier Russian history. The eleventh-century churches of Saint Sophia in Kiev and Novgorod, for example, both were symbolic copies of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Neither of these Russian churches resembles the Byzantine Hagia Sophia in any meaningful way; however, both the dedication of these churches to “Holy Wisdom” and their domed silhouettes pay homage to and appropriate the authority of the Byzantine prototype.
all, the Italians who came to Moscow could no more easily divorce the application of their work in the context of Moscow from the local styles in which they had been trained than they could unlearn their native language. They brought with them to Moscow an architectural practice grounded in Quattrocento Italy, a character that subtly reveals itself even when applied to the most traditionally Russian-looking buildings. Thus, Ivan’s patronage sparked an architectural revolution in Moscow that would later catch fire with the patronage of his son Vasily at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Over the coming decades, hitherto unknown architectural forms gradually seeped into the architecture of Moscow, leaving a lasting mark on its architecture as well as, perhaps, its collective psyche.

The Catholic Church, Italy, and Sophia Palaiologina

It was about a decade after coming to power that Ivan III first sent emissaries to Italy in search of an Italian architect to help him rebuild the Kremlin’s coronation church. But his interest in Italy was not arbitrary, nor was it altogether unexpected. In fact, Moscow had been connected to Italy for some time by the tumultuous entanglements of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The leaders of the Catholic Church in Rome and the Orthodox leaders from Muscovy and Constantinople had met at the Council of Florence in 1439. The Catholic Church was hopeful that it might bring the Orthodox Church into the Catholic fold. For their part, the Orthodox leaders from Constantinople needed the Catholic Church, as they were ever fearful of the encroaching Turks. The outcome of the Council of Florence would have dramatic
consequences that would shape the later history of the Orthodox Church and Moscow. The implications of the Council of Florence will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Beyond the importance of the outcome of the Council of Florence, the simple existence of the Council is important for what it tells us about Muscovite contact with the West in the early part of the fifteenth century. Russians had travelled to Italy, where they met Italians and Byzantines, establishing a triangular relationship between Russia, the Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Church early on. Perhaps because of this earlier contact, there were already Italians and Greeks living in Moscow by the time Ivan became Grand Prince in 1462. In the 1460s a Venetian by the name of Giambattista della Volpe was working as Ivan’s “master of coinage.” And only six years after Ivan took power, in 1468, della Volpe was acting as ambassador for Ivan, sending two separate envoys to Italy to locate Italian technicians for the ruler. Although it is unclear exactly why these envoys were sent to Italy, it is interesting that they were sent by della Volpe, rather than Ivan himself, suggesting the possibility that the later influx of Italians may have been a result of Volpe’s own personal connections in Italy.

Whatever the case, della Volpe’s embassies seem to have cemented the early relationship between Italy and Russia, begun in 1439. Pope Paul II received della Volpe’s envoys at the Vatican, but rather than suggesting technicians who might go to Moscow, the pope was more interested in arranging a marriage for an orphaned young woman who had been placed under his

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The young woman in question was Zoë Palaiologina, a Byzantine princess by birth, who was probably born around 1449. Her father was Thomas of Morea, brother of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI, making her the emperor’s niece. She was still very young when Constantinople fell to the Turks and her family’s empire was shattered. Shortly after the fall of Constantinople, Zoë, along with her parents and two older brothers, fled to the safety of Corfu and finally to Italy. In 1462, both of her parents died, leaving Zoë and her brothers in the care of Pope Paul II, who turned them over to Cardinal Bessarion, whose own past connection to the Byzantine Empire must have seemed ample qualification to raise three Byzantine orphans. Under the guardianship of Cardinal Bessarion, Zoë received an excellent education and became proficient in many languages, including Greek, Latin, and Italian. She was also privy to the inner circles of Rome’s elite society. Zoë learned from the culture around her in Rome, where she would have been witness to some of the most current developments in art and architecture. Although she was part of the Byzantine dynasty, the fact that she spent her formative years immersed in the culture of the Italian Renaissance makes her a culturally hybrid figure: part Orthodox Byzantine and part Roman Catholic.

By the time of the visit of della Volpe’s envoys to Rome, Zoë had been a papal ward for at least six years, and Cardinal Bessarion was no doubt eager to free himself of the burden of her care. Moreover, the pope recognized the potential leverage he could gain for the Catholic Church by using Zoë as a pawn. Her curious position as part Byzantine Orthodox princess and part Catholic pupil made her a particularly useful tool for the Catholic Church. The pope’s argument

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8 Miller, “Sophia (Zoe) Paleologos,” 172. Scholars list conflicting years for her birth. Miller lists her dates as "1449?-1503."

in favor of a marriage between Zoë and Ivan III was rather convincing: Her Byzantine Orthodox heritage combined with her imperial birth would make her appealing to the grand prince of Muscovy. Yet her position within the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church made her something of a “safe bet” for the Church to use as an agent working on behalf of the Catholic Church. So, when the Russian envoys returned to Moscow from Italy in 1469, they bore a letter from Bessarion offering Zoë’s hand in marriage to the Grand Prince of Muscovy. Part of the letter reads: “If you wish to take her in marriage . . . I will arrange it in your kingdom. She has already been proposed to by the king of France and the duke of Milan—but she does not wish to join the Latin faith.”

It is somewhat puzzling that, in his 1469 letter to Ivan III, Cardinal Bessarion said that Zoë “does not wish to join the Latin faith,” given the fact that she had already converted to Catholicism when she was taken in by the Church as well as the fact that Bessarion and the other church leaders clearly hoped that she would not only follow “the Latin faith,” but promote it in her adoptive homeland. Surely this passage, combined with his assurance that many other Western leaders were interested in marrying Zoë, was a deceptive piece of salesmanship. Quite in contradiction to the words in his letter, Bessarion and the Church saw the marriage as a potentially very lucrative union that might serve two purposes at once, unifying the Orthodox Russians with the Roman Catholic Church and allying the Russians with them against the threat of the Ottoman Turks.

The marriage was also appealing to the Muscovites, but for entirely different reasons. After the death of his first wife, Ivan III had only one son, who did not provide enough security

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11 Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes, from the Close of the Middle Ages* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1898), 118.
for the future of the Muscovite dynasty. He needed to remarry so that a wife could give him more children and more securely assure the future of his succession. Ivan and the Muscovites could also benefit from the status and authority Zoë would bring with her from Italy and, more importantly, Byzantium. Marriage to a Byzantine princess would add legitimacy to Moscow as the new center of Orthodoxy. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the Muscovites viewed themselves as the new Orthodox Christian capital. The transplantation of Byzantine royalty to Moscow would only support the validity of this fledgling idea. Thus when Ivan received Bessarion’s letter he was suitably impressed. Giambattista della Volpe returned to Rome in June of 1472, where he stood in for Ivan at a betrothal ceremony at the Vatican. Five months later, on November 12, 1472, Zoë and Ivan were married in an Orthodox ceremony at the Kremlin. She reaffirmed her devotion to Orthodox Christianity and was re-baptized as Sophia.

The symbolism of Sophia’s move to Moscow was not the only benefit Muscovy gained with Ivan’s second marriage. A large number of Italian and Byzantine expatriates came to Moscow with Sophia, decisively opening up the floodgates to the influx of Western culture that would last through the 1530s. The records do not indicate each and every one of the foreigners who came to Moscow with Sophia, but there are a handful of important figures whom we can confidently include in the list of expatriates. Antonio Bonumbre, bishop of Ajaccio and Pope Sixtus IV’s legate, served as Sophia’s official escort; it is not clear whether he remained in Moscow or returned to Rome after escorting her to Moscow. There were also several Byzantines who traveled with her: Dmitri Ralev (Demetrios Rhalli), who was a relation of Sophia’s, along with his sons; the Greek Iuri Trakhaniot; and Cardinal Bessarion. Scholars also generally refer

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12 Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 18.

to an unspecified “large number of Venetian and Florentine craftsmen” who accompanied Sophia, although little is known about who exactly these craftsmen were.\textsuperscript{15} Sophia also brought Byzantine and Italian objects with her to Moscow, including Latin and Greek books as well as icons and other works of art. This influx of people and objects marked a new phase in Muscovite culture, even before Ivan officially invited Italian masters to rebuild his capital.\textsuperscript{16}

It seems almost inevitable that after Sophia’s arrival, Moscow would undergo a physical, architectural transformation. Sophia’s union with Ivan provided Moscow with the symbolic authority necessary to claim itself as a new Byzantine capital, but it still lacked any physical manifestation of that symbolism. Although Ivan was interested in rebuilding the Cathedral of the Dormition, at the start of his reign his energies were directed towards pressing political affairs, namely gathering neighboring principalities into the fold of Muscovy and removing the long-held power of the Mongols over Muscovy. Ivan did not fully achieve these goals until after Sophia had arrived in Moscow, officially ending the Mongol hold over Muscovite lands by 1480.\textsuperscript{17} The unification of Muscovite lands along with the prestige brought with his marriage to Sophia led to “an entirely new sense of patriotism” in the region that coincides with Ivan’s patronage of Italian architects.\textsuperscript{18} As one scholar says, “The foundations of a national Russian culture were being laid at the Kremlin.”\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{14} Vernadsky, Russia at the Dawn, 20; Brumfield, History of Russian Architecture, 95.

\textsuperscript{15} Billington, Icon and the Axe, 85.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 84.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 32.

\textsuperscript{18} Tamara Talbot Rice, A Concise History of Russian Art (New York: Praeger, 1963), 115.

\textsuperscript{19} N. N. Voronin, Palaces and Churches of the Kremlin (London: Progress, 1966), 11.
The extent to which Sophia is directly responsible for Ivan’s impetus to rebuild the Kremlin and to import Italian architects for this purpose remains a mystery. One can imagine that the rather modest appearance of the city might have been disappointing to the sophisticated sensibilities of a Byzantine-Italian transplant who had lived in both Constantinople and Rome. Her upbringing would have made her accustomed to a certain aesthetic standard, and discovering that the buildings of Moscow were modest and in disrepair might have been disconcerting to her.\(^{20}\) Although there is no reason to believe that Sophia would have had the authority or resources to commission buildings herself, it seems likely that her presence might have spurred the overall remodeling of the Kremlin. At the very least, it seems plausible that the motivations and aspirations of Ivan and Sophia worked together to bring about the new architectural commissions in the Kremlin.

The other question regarding Sophia is to what extent her presence was responsible for the use of Italian architects. But, once again, the evidence is murky and the circumstances allow for multiple possible explanations. On the one hand, Sophia was a product of Italy and had many connections there. On the other hand, Ivan had married Sophia only after he had already sent emissaries to Italy to procure technicians for him. While most scholars cite Ivan as the patron of the first Italian-constructed buildings within the Kremlin, Sophia’s role in these projects, to greater or lesser degrees, is also widely agreed upon. Russian historian Natalia Pushkareva even describes the Italian architects as “commissioned by Sophia.”\(^{21}\) It does not require too much of a stretch of the imagination to believe that Ivan’s connections to and interest in Italy were both enhanced by the presence of Sophia and her entourage. Most suggestively, it was not until after


\(^{21}\) Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, 27. While Pushkareva’s statement does not seem beyond the realm of possibility, the lack of evidence to back this statement up leaves the idea intriguing at best.
Sophia and her retinue had arrived in Moscow that Ivan sent his first diplomatic mission to Italy to locate builders for his churches. Moreover, there seems to be a connection between the artists who travelled to Moscow and the people whom Sophia and her guardians had known in Italy.\(^\text{22}\)

Furthermore, Sophia’s relationship to Cardinal Bessarion would have given her—and by connection, Ivan—access to the leading figures of the Italian Renaissance. Bessarion was himself a patron of several important artists and architects in Italy. Most notably, Bessarion had commissioned work from the very architect who would be the first Italian recruited to Moscow, Aristotele Fioravanti of Bologna. Fioravanti worked for Bessarion to raise a heavy bell into a high bell tower in Bologna.\(^\text{23}\) Bessarion must have been pleased, because he commissioned more work from Fioravanti in the coming years: He moved the bell tower of Bologna’s Santa Maria Maggiore in 1455 and also rebuilt the cardinal’s personal apartments.\(^\text{24}\)

Bearing Bessarion’s connection to Fioravanti in mind, Sophia’s presence in Moscow becomes all the more significant. Although there is no documentation that indicates Sophia’s direct involvement in recruiting Italian architects, the fact that Fioravanti was the first Italian invited to Moscow should be considered more than coincidental. Sophia’s personal connection to Bessarion, who had paid handsomely for the services of Fioravanti on more than one occasion, can almost certainly be considered the reason for Fioravanti’s ultimate tenure in Moscow.\(^\text{25}\) Thus, Sophia not only brought the abstract power of religious and imperial symbolism with her

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\(^\text{24}\) Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 81.

\(^\text{25}\) Shvidkovsky notes that Bessarion “paid the liberal sum of 50 gold ducats” to Fioravanti for moving the bell tower of Santa Maria Maggiore in 1455. Ibid.
to the Muscovite court, she brought with her the tangible power of her connections. Without her, the course of Russian history and architecture would have been radically different.

**Russian Architectural Heritage**

Although Moscow was ascending as a powerful new capital during the early years of Ivan III’s reign, the architecture being built in Moscow was not altogether new. In fact, the Muscovites were descendants of the diverse architectural past of medieval Rus’ that continued to inform Moscow’s development in the late fifteenth century. Beginning in the tenth century Kiev had been a major political, religious, and artistic capital, one that provided a cultural cohesion to Russia’s diverse territories. With the Kievan conversion to Christianity and the marriage of Prince Vladimir to the Byzantine Emperor Basil II’s sister, Anna, at the end of the tenth century, Kiev became quite Byzantinized. Russian metropolitans were appointed in Constantinople; Byzantine artists, philosophers, and priests moved to Kiev; and Byzantine-style churches were built in Kiev. There can be no denying that Christian Kiev was shaped rather directly by Byzantium. By the twelfth century, the city of Vladimir, more than six hundred

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26 As discussed above, the dilapidated wooden constructions of earlier medieval Moscow were gradually replaced with stone architecture in the fourteenth century. Many of the stone constructions, such as the walls around the Kremlin, were in disrepair by the reign of Ivan III at the end of the fifteenth century. Other constructions, such as the Church of the Savior in the Andronikov Monastery (Fig. 2.36), were enduring examples of an older, celebrated Muscovite architecture.

27 John Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 113–15. At the same time, Kievan Rus’ had a distinct local culture of its own that persisted even after the arrival of Byzantine craftsmen. Moreover, Byzantium was far from the only culture with which Kievan Rus’ came into contact. The idea that Kiev was merely an offshoot of Byzantium is rather contentious, and scholars have long debated the extent to which Kievan culture was dependent (or not) upon Byzantium. For a recent text that argues that Kiev was connected to western Europe even more than to Byzantium see Christian Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus’ in the Medieval World, 988-1145* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
miles to the northeast of Kiev, was competing for primacy. Ultimately, Vladimir won. By 1300, the seat of the Russian metropolitan was moved from Kiev to Vladimir, securing the continued importance of Vladimir in Orthodox Russia.

Before the ascent of Moscow, these two cities had provided the Russian lands with a sense of centralized cultural, political, and religious authority. This period in Russia has been called a “Golden Age” because of the burgeoning of intellectual pursuits and the vitality of the economy. And it was largely from the architectural foundations laid in these two cities that a Russian architectural tradition evolved. Artists, including builders, travelled from Byzantium to Kiev in the tenth century, introducing Byzantine stone construction to the formerly pagan Slavs. There, the cross-in-square plan favored by Middle Byzantine architects made its Russian debut, most notably in the famed Saint Sophia and the Desyatinnaya churches (Figs. 1.3 and 1.4). This style, with its rectangular plan of three aisles, three apses, and six piers, along with a proportionally larger square beneath the main dome that served as central space for worship, was widely adopted in early Christian Russia. But this standard was also combined with evolving indigenous styles that made their way into the Byzantino-Russian architecture. Later

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28 Martin, Medieval Russia, 980-1584, 99–100.

29 Brumfield, History of Russian Architecture, 83.

30 It is slightly problematic to speak of a “Russian” architectural style in medieval Russia, which consisted of different regions, each with its own distinctive architectural traditions. Nonetheless, in general terms, Kiev and Vladimir were among the two most significant architectural centers of medieval Russia and did play an important role in shaping architecture throughout the many regions of medieval and early modern Russia.

31 Richard Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, 4th ed., The Pelican History of Art (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 295-96. Although the Church of Saint Sophia has changed dramatically since its eleventh century construction (in the way of both destruction and expansion), its original core reveals a domed cross-in-square plan.

32 Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 25. It would be an oversimplification to say that the Rus’ adopted the middle Byzantine church type without any adjustments. For one thing, as discussed in the introduction, the large columns used in middle Byzantine churches that were typically taken from ancient Greco-Roman buildings were lacking in Rus’ and therefore the cross-in-square church on columns became a cross-in-square church on piers in Rus’. As discussed above, there were also many other forces involved in shaping the appearance of Kievan churches. See Brumfield, History of Russian Architecture, 10-11.
architectural projects in eleventh- and twelfth-century Novgorod and Pskov, best exemplified in the Saint Sophia in Novgorod (Fig. 1.5), suggest a developing local taste for greater verticality and centrality.\textsuperscript{33} In addition, the architecture of twelfth-century Novgorod was less and less ornamented on the exterior, revealing a developing austerity in the local taste that is vaguely reminiscent of the Cistercian Romanesque.\textsuperscript{34}

Vladimir, to the northeast, was settled by the Slavs in the tenth century, but reached its zenith in the twelfth century. It was in the twelfth century, during the reign of Prince Andrei Bogoliubskii, that Vladimir eclipsed Kiev and Novgorod as the most powerful political center in Russia.\textsuperscript{35} Here another indigenous style emerged, and given the fact that Muscovite culture was an offshoot of Vladimirian culture, these indigenous developments can be considered antecedents of Moscow’s later architectural revolution. As would happen later in Moscow, architecture in twelfth-century Vladimir exhibited an interesting hybrid quality. The plan and structure of Vladimir’s churches followed the Middle Byzantine tradition laid down in Kiev; however, there was a distinctly Western Romanesque decorative style in Vladimirian churches of this period.\textsuperscript{36} The vague “western” quality can be more securely ascribed to a Scandinavian and Western European presence in Vladimir. The new Vladimirian style of architecture is exemplified by the Church of Saints Boris and Gleb in Kideksha dating to 1152 (Fig. 1.6) and the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl’ dating to 1165 (Fig. 1.7).\textsuperscript{37} Significantly, these


\textsuperscript{34} Shvidkovsky, \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}, 25.

\textsuperscript{35} Brumfield, \textit{History of Russian Architecture}, 44.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 43–46.

\textsuperscript{37} The Church of Saints Boris and Gleb was extensively rebuilt in the seventeenth century; however, the original limestone used in the eleventh century survives in the lower section of the walls. Brumfield, \textit{History of Russian Architecture}, 44.
buildings stray from earlier Byzantino-Russian churches in their use of smooth, white limestone instead of brick. In the Church of Saints Boris and Gleb, the monumental stone is itself the decorative focus, with only subtle decorative arcading standing against this solid, smooth form. The Church of the Intercession on the Nerl’, also made of limestone, retains the cross-in-square plan seen in the Church of Saints Boris and Gleb, but the decorative elements are much more predominant. The decorative features seem clearly linked to Western Romanesque tradition, although the origins of these Western features remain in dispute.\(^{38}\) 

Suffice it to say that Russia’s long history and wide geographical expanse made for a diverse architectural heritage. But it is important to note that Russian builders and patrons did not simply adopt the Byzantine prototype unchanged. Different regions contributed new, distinctive elements into the Russian architectural tradition, establishing a diverse foundation upon which later Russian architecture would build.

Rebirth

One must not forget that although Ivan III was an architectural patron, he was first and foremost a head of state, and his reign coincided with a crucial moment in Muscovite history. He is celebrated for “gathering” distinct Russian lands (i.e. annexing neighboring territories by force), and making Moscow the capital of an emerging Muscovite state; this was not a simple process and Ivan was, in fact, only the latest of a series of rulers to work towards these ends. His predecessors had actually done much of the work for him. Kiev had fallen to the Mongol invaders in the twelfth century, at which time Russia lost the cultural, religious, and political

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\(^{38}\) It had long been suggested that German Romanesque builders had been involved in the decoration of this church, but more recently, Shvidkovsky has provided a rather convincing argument that Lombard Romanesque builders may have been involved as well. See Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 30–36.
capital that had previously unified its people. Essentially, with the twelfth-century invasion of Kiev and other Russian territories, the Russians came under the thumb of the Mongol khans. Russian cities, while continuing to exist, lost their political independence and were subsequently required to pay tribute to their Mongol overlords who in turn gave them the right to rule. Russia’s diminished political power meant that the local artistic traditions that had blossomed in cities like Kiev and Vladimir were diminished as well. The loss of artistic traditions over the centuries, from the time of the Mongol subjugation, was especially acute in the world of architecture. As the Russian historians Beliaev and Chernetsov point out, architecture was particularly diminished during this period. There were no churches built during the period of Mongol domination with the same grandeur as those built in Keivan Rus’. This is likely the result of societal fracturing and instability rather than a true loss of skill. After all, given the upheavals in the Russian territories, there would certainly have been fewer patrons with the inclination or money to build churches, an expensive and time-consuming project. In any case, Russia had to a large extent lost the cultural cohesion required in order for its architectural traditions to flourish throughout the Russian territories on the scale that it had when Kievan Rus’ prospered. While there may not have been a true “decline,” there was most definitely a period of decreased architectural production.

39 It is important to note that the idea that Russian culture was hindered by its years of Mongol subjugation is somewhat contentious. Many scholars, quite rightly, point out that although the Russians had to answer to the Mongol khans, they did also engage in a meaningful cultural relationship with their overlords, and that many Russian rulers themselves benefitted from the subjugation of their people to the Mongol khans. Consider, for example, Prince Ivan I of Moscow, who assisted the Mongols in their attack on nearby Tver in 1327, for his own personal and political gain. Brumfield, History of Russian Architecture, 83–4. For more on Russia during the time of Mongol subjugation see Charles J. Halperin, The Tatar Yoke and Charles Halperin and Institutul de Arheologie din Iasi, Russia and the Mongols: Slavs and the Steppe in Medieval and Early Modern Russia (Bucharest: Editura Academiae Romane, 2007).

It was during this period that the city of Moscow slowly began to emerge as an exceptional center of political and cultural power. Its rise, beginning at the start of the twelfth century, took place for a number of reasons. The main reasons for its rise were its special treatment by the Mongol khans, its advantageous location along the Moscow River, and its growing concentration of wealth.\textsuperscript{41} Although Moscow’s rise to power was gradual, Ivan III does deserve much of the credit for securing its position, because of what he was able to accomplish in terms of expanding Muscovite territory by consolidating disparate principalities into the emerging Muscovite principality. Indeed, his role is so significant that one scholar has even called him “the creator of Russia.”\textsuperscript{42} Among the most important additions to Muscovy were the Novgorodian territories, annexed in the 1480s, which added to both Muscovy’s population as well as its natural resources.\textsuperscript{43} Furthermore, it was under Ivan’s leadership that the Russian people were definitively freed from centuries of Mongol control. By 1480, after the “Stand on the Ugra River,” in which Ivan III was able to keep the Mongol armies at bay, Muscovite subjugation was officially over. After 1480, Moscow was longer paid tribute to the khans and it was never again subject to attack by the Mongols.\textsuperscript{44} The end of Mongol subjugation in 1480 did not come about suddenly, but Ivan’s victory at the Ugra River marked the long-awaited conclusion to over two hundred years of a political wrangling. Moreover, it was under Ivan’s rule that the Russian people, for the first time since the prosperous days of Kievan Rus’, had a unified cultural authority.\textsuperscript{45}


\textsuperscript{42} Shvidkovsky, \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}, 70.

\textsuperscript{43} Martin, \textit{Medieval Russia, 980-1584}, 270–73.

\textsuperscript{44} Halperin, \textit{The Tatar Yoke}, 171–75.
Ivan’s role as a patron of architecture, then, was very well timed. For not only was his city poised for greatness as the capital of an autonomous, unified Russia, but it was also on the verge of declaring its central importance in a larger global context. After the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 Muscovy was the last bastion of Orthodox Christendom, the last center of “true” Christendom in the eyes of adherents of Orthodoxy. As the notion of Moscow as capital of Orthodox Christianity combined with the nearly simultaneous rise of Moscow to a central position within Russian culture during the latter half of the fifteenth century, there was a new sense of Moscow as leading the way at a critical historical moment. Ivan III and Moscow could claim authority as the center of the Russian world and as rightful heir of Constantinople, which had lost its status as leader of Orthodox Christianity. It was now up to Ivan and the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church to establish Moscow as the new Orthodox Christian capital: a new Byzantium.

First Mission to Italy: Simeon Tolbuzin

As early as the fourteenth century, there had been a stone church, the Cathedral of the Dormition, within the Moscow Kremlin. The cathedral was erected during the first days of Moscow’s rise and seems to have been an attempt to argue for Moscow’s primacy in the ongoing struggle for the see of the metropolitan. By the fifteenth century and Ivan’s rule, the church was in poor condition and in need of repair. In 1471 repairs were being overseen by Metropolitan Philip. He had enlisted local builders to reconstruct this most important church of Moscow, and sent them to Vladimir to take precise measurements of that city’s Cathedral of the Dormition (Fig. 1.8) on which the new building was to be based. The only significant way that the Moscow

Dormition strays from its Vladimirian prototype is in its size; the Moscow cathedral was planned to be larger than the Dormition in Vladimir, a none-too-subtle symbolic decision. Construction was slowed in the spring of 1473, when Metropolitan Philip died at which time oversight of the project was passed on to his successor, Metropolitan Gerontii. Then in early 1474, disaster struck: Just as the church was nearing completion and the domes were being placed atop the drums, the church collapsed.\footnote{Brumfield, \textit{A History of Russian Architecture}, 94–95.}

In the wake of this architectural disaster, Ivan III took over responsibility for the project. He consulted builders from neighboring Pskov who told him that the collapse was the result of poor building materials. Although the Russian chronicles do not go so far as to report that Ivan had lost faith in Russian architecture, it does not require a great leap of faith to come to the conclusion that this may have happened, especially given that Ivan did indeed look elsewhere for architects to work for him. After coming so close to seeing this most important church reach completion, Ivan found himself back where he had started; he needed to hire architects and engineers to rebuild a fundamentally unsound building. And since he had already sent ambassadors to Italy, which had resulted in a successful marriage, why not send a mission back to Italy to search for “masters”?\footnote{Polnoe sobranie russikh letopisei (PSRL), vol. 6 (St. Petersburg-Moscow: Nauka, 1846-1989), 199-200.}

Ivan did just that. He sent ambassadors to Venice in 1475 in search of architects and engineers. The Second Sophia Chronicle mentions this journey in the section corresponding to the year 1475, and although the details of the trip are recounted in extensive detail, there is no specific mention of why Ivan looked beyond the borders of his homeland for architects and engineers, nor is there any indication of why they went to Venice, specifically. That said, it is possible to draw some conclusions about what may have motivated Ivan in his decision-making
process. First, as has already been established, Ivan wanted to find good, capable architects and engineers to build his capital. But, again, why Italy? Given his already well-established relationship with Italy, it seems a logical place for him to have looked, especially since Italy was in the midst of its own burgeoning artistic revolution. The second conclusion revolves around the fact that Moscow viewed itself as the true heir of Byzantium (an idea that is often, though controversially linked to the “Third Rome” idea).  

To rebuild his Neo-Byzantine capital at Moscow, Ivan certainly would have been looking for either Byzantine architects or architects well-versed in Byzantine style. The challenge to this goal, however, was that Byzantium had ceased to exist some two decades previously, and therefore Ivan could not dispatch his ambassadors to Constantinople. One logical place to find Byzantine artists was Italy, where multitudes of Orthodox Byzantines had emigrated after the 1453 sack of Constantinople. More specifically, Venice was the epicenter of Italo-Byzantine culture in the fifteenth century. Perhaps he already knew this or perhaps he learned this from his wife after their marriage. The combination of factors, both practical and ideological, makes it seem more than coincidental that Ivan’s ambassadors went to Venice at this crucial moment.

Certain other ideological concerns may have driven Ivan III and Metropolitan Gerontii to look to Venice for masters as well. Although the “Third Rome” idea would not be officially formulated until the last decade of the fifteenth century, the idea, indeed the inevitability of the

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48 It is important to recall that many contemporary scholars refute the notion that Moscow fashioned itself as a “Third Rome.” Most scholars agree that the “Moscow, the Third Rome” text was a minor theme encountered in only a few ecclesiastical texts,” as Nancy Shields Kollman has said. Nancy Shields Kollman, “Muscovite Russia, 1450-1598,” in Russia: A History, ed. Gregory L. Freeze (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 51.

notion that Russia was the logical heir of Byzantium was very well established by the 1470s.\textsuperscript{50} Moreover, and regardless of any desire (or lack thereof) on the part of the Russians to style themselves as a “Third Rome,” the inheritance of Byzantium would have been paramount as they contemplated their new position in the Orthodox church. Formulated or not, the unavoidable fact was that the capital of Orthodox Christianity no longer existed, whereas Orthodox Christianity most certainly did continue to exist. The Russian church had already declared its religious independence from the Orthodox seat in Constantinople before the 1453 Turkish conquest, as a result of the Council of Florence.\textsuperscript{51} But rather than viewing its position within the Church Orthodoxy as an offshoot of the Eastern Christian religion, the Russian Orthodox Church viewed its governance of Orthodoxy as a continuation of the original Byzantine Orthodox Church. Thus, the Russians were inextricably linked to Byzantium. The Russian Orthodox Church was to be a return to earlier Byzantine Orthodox integrity. As Dmitry Shvidkovsky has pointed out in his interpretation of a text written by Metropolitan Iona, the first metropolitan of the independent Russian church, Iona stressed that the Russian church was established by God in the form of Greek Orthodoxy. Iona wrote, “Our Holy Church of God, the great church of the Russian faith, contains the Holy law and Godly principles of the Holy Apostles and the rulings of the holy fathers—the great Orthodoxy of the early Greek piety laid down by God.”\textsuperscript{52}

Thus, in their very justification for autocephaly, the Russian religious leaders stressed Russian Orthodoxy’s relationship to Greece (i.e. Byzantium). There is no reason to believe that there had been a move away from this ideology by the time of Ivan III’s rule and the beginning of the project of rebuilding the Kremlin. On the contrary, Ivan and the Church fathers were very

\textsuperscript{50} Meyendorff, \textit{Rome, Constantinople, Moscow}, 125.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 113.

\textsuperscript{52} Shvidkovsky, \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}, 83.
much aware of their roots in an ancient Byzantine tradition. How better to establish—publicly—your capital’s connection to Byzantium than to construct Byzantine structures? So, when we return to the question of Ivan’s motivation for sending ambassadors to Venice, we are once again left with a sense of inevitability. Constantinople was no longer Byzantine; Ivan knew that had he sent his emissaries to that city, they would have found many glorious Byzantine buildings that had been taken over by Ottoman Turks, with no trace of the many Byzantine architects who had created them. To find architects schooled in Byzantine tradition and technique, Ivan had to look West, to Italy and the epicenter of remaining Byzantine culture in Venice. Venice had had an active relationship with the Byzantine Empire in the centuries before the fall of Constantinople. Its most famed building, after all, the Basilica of San Marco, is an eleventh-century Italo-Byzantine construction. In addition Venice was filled with Byzantine art looted from Constantinople after the Fourth Crusade of 1204; the bronze horses decorating the Basilica of San Marco are perhaps the most prominent example of the Venetian theft of Byzantine art.\(^5\) More importantly, Venice became an epicenter of Byzantine culture after the sack of Constantinople in 1453. The many Byzantines who moved to Venice brought Byzantine icons and other precious objects with them. They were even given permission to practice their faith in a chapel of a Catholic church and they established a Greek confraternity at the end of the fifteenth century.\(^5\) The Byzantine presence was an intrinsic part of fifteenth-century Venice.

This is how, in 1475, Ivan’s ambassador Semyon Tolbuzin made his way to Venice with orders to find a “master builder of churches.”\(^5\) In Venice, Tolbuzin met the Bolognese architect

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\(^5\) Georgopoulou, “Venice and the Byzantine Sphere,” 494.

Aristotele Fioravanti. It is unclear how the two men were introduced or why the Bolognese
Fioravanti would have been in Venice in 1475; he had been working in his native Bologna in the
1460s, worked briefly in Hungary during that same decade, and in 1473 had been in Rome. One
can assume that he was in Venice for work, but there is no evidence to indicate what specific
project may have brought him there.

Furthermore, the chronicles do not provide any concrete insight into why Tolbuzin
offered Fioravanti the job in Moscow—what it was that made him stand out from other architects
working in the city. The chronicles do suggest that Tolbuzin may have been swayed when he
visited Fioravanti at his lodgings where he saw fabulously sculpted serving trays and pitchers.
But the coup-de-grace seems to have been that Tolbuzin believed that Fioravanti built the
Basilica of San Marco and the walls of the Arsenale (Figs. 1.9 and 1.10). To be precise, the
chronicle says that they “are his works.”56 It is not clear whether this misinformation is the result
of carelessness on the part of the chroniclers, who meant to imply that these monuments were in
the manner of Fioravanti’s works, or if it was truly believed that Fioravanti built San Marco and
the Venetian Arsenale. It seems more likely that Fioravanti would have indicated the Cathedral
of San Marco as a fine example of his own culture’s knowledge of Byzantine-style church-
building traditions. In any case, Tolbuzin seems to have taken this attribution as proof that
Italians were well versed in the Orthodox building style that prevailed in Russia; such an
impressive Byzantine structure suggested to the Russians that Italians could do more than work
in an all’antica style.57 Whether Tolbuzin believed Fioravanti was the creator of these specific
structures or simply believed that Fioravanti was capable of such work, it seems that the


57 Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 82.
attribution of these works to Fioravanti was sufficient to persuade him that he had located the “master builder of churches” he had been sent to find.

It is noteworthy that the chronicle saw fit to mention these two buildings as evidence of Fioravanti’s qualifications for the position, for two of Ivan’s primary needs at the end of the fifteenth century were the reconstruction of the main cathedral in Moscow, which was to be very much in the Byzantine tradition, and the building of defensive city walls. Could Ivan have known about the Cathedral of San Marco and the Venetian shipyard walls before Tolbuzin’s trip, and could that knowledge have inspired his mission to Venice?

One cannot help but wonder if Tolbuzin knew more than is indicated in the chronicles about Fioravanti’s professional background, because Fioravanti was an ideal match for Ivan’s requirements. When he met Tolbuzin, Fioravanti was sixty years old, and had an impressive resume with engineering and architectural experience throughout Italy. Although he was an accomplished architect, his fame was primarily derived from his skill as a mason and engineer: he was famous for devising systems to move monoliths as well as for redesigning and strengthening old or unstable structures. He was celebrated for his ability to straighten crooked and unstable walls; for devising systems to move large and heavy architectural objects such as columns, obelisks, and bells; and for constructing canals, bridges, and other hydraulic works. These experiences unequivocally proclaimed Fioravanti’s technical skill with regard to architecture, and automatically qualified him for Ivan III’s task, which was to rebuild his dilapidated Cathedral of the Dormition, which had collapsed precisely on account of the subpar engineering skills of the local architects. Engineering prowess was crucial.

Beyond his impressive record as an engineer, Fioravanti could also call himself an architect in the broader artistic sense of the word. Indeed, he was from a family of architects. His

58 Ibid., 80.
grandfather, father, and uncle were all professional builders and he received his training from them.\textsuperscript{59} Documents in Italian archives reveal that he was already working in Bologna at a rather young age; he installed a heavy bell in the towers of the Palazzo del Podestà in 1436, when he would have been only around sixteen to eighteen years old. Later, in 1453, Fioravanti replaced this bell with a larger bell at the behest of Cardinal Bessarion, who was then living in Bologna.\textsuperscript{60} This small piece of information might provide a clue as to why Fioravanti was selected as Ivan’s new “master builder of churches,” since it has already been established that Bessarion was intimately involved in coordinating the marriage between Ivan and Sophia. The replacement of the bell in the Palazzo del Podestà was a complicated process, requiring the construction of winches and cables and a mechanism that would allow the heavy bell to be rolled up to the top of the tower.\textsuperscript{61} Bessarion certainly would have remembered Fioravanti’s work on this difficult project and it seems likely that he may have played a hand in the eventual meeting of Fioravanti and Tolbuzin in 1475. The likelihood of this possibility is strengthened when one considers that Fioravanti later worked for Bessarion on other architectural projects after replacing the bell in 1453. Bessarion even commissioned Fioravanti to remodel his private apartments. As Dmitry Shvidkovsky observes, it was with Cardinal Bessarion that “the great engineer from Bologna encountered Orthodox thinking in the person of one of its foremost representatives in Quattrocento Italy. . . . Above all, Fioravanti was linked via Vissarion [Bessarion] to ‘the last Byzantines’ in Italy.”\textsuperscript{62} Just as with Ivan’s decision to send Tolbuzin to Venice, Tolbuzin’s

\setcounter{footnote}{59}
\footnote{Ibid.}

\setcounter{footnote}{60}
\footnote{Beltrami, \textit{Vita di Aristotele da Bologna}, 19.}

\setcounter{footnote}{61}
\footnote{Ibid.}

\setcounter{footnote}{62}
\footnote{Shvidkovsky, \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}, 81.}
discovery of Fioravanti seems too perfectly in line with the interests of the Muscovite leaders to be coincidental.  

Fioravanti had already begun to prove his skill as an engineer well before replacing the bell for Cardinal Bessarion in 1453. Two years earlier, in 1451, he had been in Rome, where he moved the columns from the Temple of Minerva for their incorporation into Saint Peter’s Basilica. This was yet another instance in which Fioravanti would have been able to impress patrons who would have been points of contact for Ivan III and Sophia, in this case Pope Nicolas V along with other members of the papal hierarchy. After his youthful display of talents, Fioravanti earned a respectable degree of fame and soon began working in cities around Italy, mainly fixing old walls that were leaning or in other ways unsound. He worked for the Duke of Milan from 1458-64, during which time he also travelled to other cities, including Parma, Venice, and Cremona, to work on a variety of hydraulic and engineering projects. He returned to his native Bologna in the mid-1460s.  

His career was not limited to repairs and feats of engineering, however, and he did establish himself as a true architect. One of the few architectural projects he is known to have participated in is the construction of the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan (Fig. 1.11). Antonio Filarete, with whom Fioravanti was friendly, was put in charge of this project in 1456. Although the extent of Fioravanti’s participation in this building is unknown, the fact that he is known to have been involved at all is illuminating. Through his work on this building he would have gained experience creating new architecture in the Lombard style. Like the Cathedral of the

63 The extent to which Fioravanti seems fated to have become involved with Muscovy makes it plausible that Fioravanti may even have been summoned to Venice for the very purpose of meeting Tolbuzin in 1475. The meeting may not have been coincidental at all, and it would certainly explain Fioravanti’s otherwise inexplicable presence in Venice.


65 For more on Fioravanti’s relationship with Filarete see ibid., 51–56.
Dormition in Moscow and other Italian constructions in Moscow, this building betrays a deft understanding of Renaissance architectural ideals that incorporates local decorative tastes, in this case, the late-Gothic style evident in the windows and the characteristically Lombard style of red brick construction. In addition, Fioravanti is believed to have created a model for the Palazzo del Podestà (Fig. 1.12). Although it is not clear whether the building itself followed his model (since the model is not extant), that he built the model shows his involvement in one of Bologna’s most important architectural projects.66

Fioravanti’s relationship with Filarete tells us a great deal about his role in (and feelings towards) the classicizing styles that were gradually coming to the fore in Quattrocento Italy. It is evident that Fioravanti and Filarete were closely involved. Not only did Fioravanti collaborate with Filarete on the prominent Ospedale Maggiore in Milan, but he also featured prominently in Filarete’s 1465 Trattato d’architettura, in which he is often referred to by the nickname Letistoria. In his treatise, Filarete writes in the tradition made famous by Alberti in his De re aedificatoria (1485). As with Alberti, Filarete proposes various utopian ideals in his Trattato for architecture in general, and he sketches models of ideal buildings and cities.67 That Fioravanti was close enough with Filarete to make multiple appearances in the Trattato suggests that he was privy to Filarete’s architectural ideas. Moreover, it establishes Fioravanti as an architect whose career had brought him into the heart of the northern Italian Renaissance. It seems highly unlikely that a figure like Filarete would not have exerted some influence on Fioravanti; further, it seems unlikely that what ideas he picked up during his time working with Filarete would have been erased from his mind when he found himself working as capomaestro in Moscow. Is it

66 Ibid., 111.

67 Filarete, Treatise on Architecture; Being the Treatise by Antonio di Piero Averlino, Known as Filarete (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); Anna Finoli, Trattato di architettura : (di) Antonio Averlino detto il Filarete (Milano: Il Polifilo, 1972); Leon Battista Alberti, De re aedificatoria (Florence: Nicolaus Laurentii, 1485).
even possible that Fioravanti had a copy of the *Trattato* that made its way to Russia with him or with the subsequent arrival of northern Italian architects in Moscow?\(^{68}\)

Beyond his skill and fame, Fioravanti was right for the job in Moscow because he had already shown a willingness to travel, not only beyond his home of Bologna, but also beyond Italy. In 1465 he had spent several months in Hungary, working on military engineering projects for King Matthias Corvinus. Moreover, Fioravanti had a new motivation to flee Italy when he was charged with creating counterfeit money during a 1473 stint in Rome, presumably when he was moving a large obelisk for the Pope. He was arrested but soon exonerated and freed; the circumstances of his arrest are strange and there is some evidence to suggest that rivals who were jealous of the important commission he had received from the Pope had framed him.\(^{69}\) It is not clear what Fioravanti did with himself in the years between his arrest and his 1475 recruitment in Venice by Tolbuzin. All that is known is that at some point in the ensuing two years, he made his way to Venice where the future course of his career and his life was changed.

Ultimately, the offer of employment allowed Fioravanti to leave Italy and to continue working as an architect, but on an even more creative and autonomous scale than he had experienced during his career in Italy. Furthermore, he was offered a very generous salary of ten rubles per month.\(^{70}\) Thus in Fioravanti Tolbuzin had found an engineer who had the exact credentials necessary for the job of rebuilding the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow and in Tolbuzin’s offer, Fioravanti found a way to continue—and advance—his career as an architect. The timing was perfect. So in 1475 Fioravanti and his son, whom the Russian chronicle calls Andrei, left Venice for Moscow, along with a servant named Petrusa, where they joined

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\(^{68}\) This important question will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.


\(^{70}\) Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri frjazy’ a Mosca,” 158.
Moscow’s small but growing Italian expatriate community. However, Fioravanti would spend the rest of his life in Russia, never setting foot on Italian soil again.

Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin

When Fioravanti arrived in Moscow, he immediately set to work on repairing the Cathedral of the Dormition. It did not take him long, however, to determine that rebuilding the existing structure was impractical. His analysis of the old cathedral led him to conclude that the building materials were faulty; the lime the earlier builders had used was unstable and the stonework was weak. Therefore the problem was more in the materials used than in the way those materials were put together. He determined that the old cathedral needed to be demolished and seems to have met little or no resistance in this decision. He quickly set to work on demolishing the old building, and his demolition method seems to have greatly impressed his Muscovite hosts, for the Sophia Chronicle discusses the process at some length, concluding that “it was extraordinary to see that which was made in three years come undone in less than a week.” Thus, Fioravanti very quickly proved his mettle as a problem-solving engineer upon his arrival in Moscow. He was then left to prove his worth as a designer and builder—a true “master” architect.

Shortly after the old building was torn down, Ivan set to work on building the new cathedral that would replace it. However, Fioravanti was not left to his own devices entirely, and indeed continued to be valued for his proven technical expertise more than for his artistic vision, for Ivan had very specific plans for his new cathedral. The Grand Prince specified that the new

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71 Ibid.

72 “Chudno videti ezhe tri goda delali, vo edinu nedelyu I men ’she razvali.” PSRL, vol. 6, 199-200.
Cathedral of the Dormition should be modeled on the twelfth-century church of the same name in the nearby city of Vladimir (Fig. 1.8), which was the former seat of the Orthodox Church in Russia. Like Moscow, Vladimir had become a new Orthodox capital largely on account of an ideological program which had been forged by its twelfth-century ruling prince Andrei Bogoliubski. In Vladimir the prince had established a new capital of which he was autocrat, a bold move that cast aside the time-honored Russian tradition of a shared, fraternal rulership. Furthermore, Prince Andrei set out to establish his capital of Vladimir as the Metropolitan see in Russia, second not to Kiev but to Constantinople itself. The parallels to fifteenth-century Moscow are striking, especially with regard to the desire to shift the seat of religious power.

What better city was there for Ivan to quote in the architecture of his own city than the former capital of autocratic Russian rule, center of Orthodoxy in Russia? Thus Ivan was not only centralizing Muscovy’s political power in Moscow, he was connecting that political power to the very core of the Orthodox Church, and thereby to the ultimate authority of God. More importantly, with the fall of Constantinople, Ivan’s appropriation of Vladimirian religious authority left Moscow subordinate to no one; Moscow was now at the top of the hierarchy.

Ivan’s decision to directly quote the main church of Vladimir, the Cathedral of the Dormition, made the transfer of power absolutely clear. Therefore, before Fioravanti could begin any planning or building of Moscow’s Cathedral of the Dormition, he traveled to Vladimir, more than one hundred miles to Moscow’s east, to study his model, as had the Russian architects Krivtsov and Myshkin earlier in the century when planning the church Fioravanti had just torn

73 Vladimir’s rise also coincided with a period of political weakness for Kiev, as it struggled with conflict from within and without. Thus, the Metropolitan would not have needed too much incentive to leave Kiev for Vladimir.

74 Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 28, 84.
In Vladimir, Fioravanti found a massive cross-in-square church that seemed to combine Byzantine, Russian, and Western European elements (Fig. 1.13). Interestingly, the Russian chronicles note that upon first seeing the Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir, Fioravanti exclaimed that “this was made by our masters.” While Fioravanti’s statement may seem somewhat puzzling given the current appearance of Vladimir’s Dormition, knowledge of restorations made subsequent to Fioravanti’s visit shed light on how the building would have looked in the fifteenth century. As Michael Il’in explains, the building would have had a distinctly northern Italian appearance, with the central dome resting on a square drum and with the use of distinctively northern Italian triangular pediments both inside and outside of the building.

Dmitry Shvidkovsky and Michail Il’in argue that northern Italians travelled to Germany, as well as east into Russia, thereby helping to shape the appearance of Vladimirian architecture in the eleventh century. The knowledge of the alterations made to the Dormition in Vladimir—and the way those alterations obscured its Lombard Romanesque qualities—makes Fioravanti’s proclamation that this building was made at the hands of his countrymen far less puzzling. Certainly the Dormition in Vladimir would also have had distinctively native characteristic coexisting with the Lombard features. Thus, there was a fascinating degree of hybridity on display in Russian architecture even as early as the eleventh century. The cathedral combines the Middle Byzantine cross-in-square plan and the basilican plan; it also combines facades with

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75 Ibid., 84.
76 Cazzola, I ‘Mastri frjazy’ a Mosca, 159; PSRL, vol. 6, 199-200, 221; Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 84.
78 Il’in, “La Cattedrale dell’Assunzione,” 185-87; Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 36.
zakomary (arched gables), typical of post-Kievan Russian architecture with an application of Romanesque surface ornamentation.

This massive cathedral was built on a much smaller scale in its original iteration in 1158, consisting of a tripartite apse, a large central dome, and a floor plan three bays wide and four bays deep. In the 1180s the cathedral was rebuilt and significantly enlarged by a new aisle added onto the north, west, and south sides of the preexisting church. Additionally, four smaller domes were added atop the easternmost corners and the second row of bays from the west within the new walls of the church. The simply decorated cubic church topped by five tall domes would become the hallmark of Vladimirian—and later Muscovite—architecture. Fioravanti must have taken very careful measurements, for his Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow has the same general appearance: a massive stone church in the shape of a cube with arched zakomary at the roofline, five tall domes, and distinctly Romanesque exterior ornamentation. It is not clear whether Fioravanti’s Russian architectural education went beyond his trip to Vladimir. Pietro Cazzola, for one, argues that Fioravanti very well may have visited Novgorod, where he would have seen the Church of Saint Sophia, as well as many other ancient Russian cities.\(^79\)

Although the Vladimir Dormition was the model for the Moscow Dormition, Fioravanti was not tasked with creating an exact replica of this older building, and the church he built in Moscow is most definitely a unique structure, however indebted it may be to Vladimirian precedent. One of the main ways the Muscovite cathedral diverges from its model is in terms of size. Even before Fioravanti’s arrival in Moscow, size had been an important issue to Metropolitan Filipp, who was involved in the planning of the cathedral. He had envisioned a church that equaled the size of the massive church in Vladimir. As the chronicle says: “we desire

\(^79\) Ibid., 161.
to see a church of the same dimensions." Later, the plan for the cathedral was expanded so that the Moscow Dormition would be even larger than its rival in Vladimir, which symbolically let Moscow supersede its medieval rival.  

In spite of the difference in size, the two cathedrals are superficially quite similar. Let us first consider their exterior ornament. Both cathedrals are imposing grey stone structures whose massive walls are divided into bays by strong vertical bands (large pilasters and *lopatki* in Moscow, and engaged columns in Vladimir) and delicate blind arcades that bisect the facades in half vertically (Figs. 1.14 and 1.15). Within each bay on both cathedrals is one long thin window just under the roofline, whose arched top is echoed by a rounded gable (*zakomara*) above, and a second similar window within the blind arcading below. The five tall gilded domes and the gilding around the edges of the *zakomary* add to the resemblance.

A closer look at their exteriors, however, reveals subtle but important differences that suggest an entirely different approach to and conception of the architectural project in the Moscow Kremlin. Generally, there is a much greater emphasis on the plasticity of the wall surface in Fioravanti’s building than in the twelfth-century model. Even more, Fioravanti was able to achieve a greater level of harmony in his building, by correcting certain elements that were awkwardly handled by the architects of the Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir. The simple way Fioravanti achieved these two exacting goals was by adjusting and simplifying the exterior ornamentation. Where the exterior of the Dormition in Vladimir is divided into bays by slender, engaged columns, Fioravanti chose to convert these vertical elements into massive, unadorned rectilinear pilasters in his cathedral. Furthermore, Fioravanti greatly simplified the

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80 Quoted in Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 84. This has been translated into English from Shvidkovsky’s original Russian. The original language from the chronicle is not cited.

81 *PSRL*, v. 20, part 1, 297.
articulation of the basic architectural elements: whereas the arched shape of the top half of each bay in Vladimir is emphasized by tiers of framing blind arches, Fioravanti left his bays unadorned. Likewise, Fioravanti’s narrow windows have none of the tiered articulation of the Vladimirian building, which makes his windows seem much smaller, though they are, in fact, of roughly the same proportions.

Fioravanti also saw fit to make adjustments to the blind arcades that run around the middle half of the building, which hint at his profoundly different understanding of the interrelatedness of different architectural elements. The blind arcades that run around the middle of the building in Vladimir are handled somewhat awkwardly. First, the number of blind arches within each bay is inconsistent, which reveals the fact that the bays themselves are of different sizes: In some of the bays there are groups of six blind arches, in others only five, and in still others there are eight. As if to emphasize the awkward handling of the blind arcading, the lower windows are sometimes situated within the blind arcade and sometimes just below it, as in the main façade. The clumsy treatment of these decorative elements not only creates a frenetic quality on the exterior of the building, but it also calls attention to the uneven proportions of the building. Furthermore, the height of the blind arcading in the Vladimirian cathedral is not consistent from façade to façade, the result of the tall main portal, which forces the whole row of arcading higher up on the western entrance than it is on the other sides. Instead of a continuous circuit around the building, the arcading in Vladimir is choppy and interrupted.

Fioravanti solved these problems by drafting a plan with more harmonious proportions (Fig. 1.16). Although he maintained the general effect of the Vladimirian blind arcade, he readjusted its application to create a more balanced effect. His first significant improvement was the adjustment of the plan so that the exterior bays are all the same size. The seemingly subtle
adjustment was actually a rather dramatic shift away from the traditional cross-in-square plan and a church with twelve bays of equal size. As a result of his adjustment, Fioravanti’s design allows for exactly seven blind arches to fit into each bay without variation. Not only did his adjustment create a more harmonious aesthetic on the building exterior, it also allowed for a much less awkward handling of the lower-level windows; the central blind arch of each bay frames a window. More significantly in terms of the overall impression of the building, Fioravanti elongated the engaged columns of these blind arcades, giving them a greater presence on the wall surface. He also made sure that the blind arcading on each façade was at the same height as the arcading on the adjacent façade, creating a continuous band around the three sides of the church, with the exception of the apse end, which does not follow the same decorative pattern as the other sides of the building.

The apse end accommodates the slightly curving walls of the five-part apse, but uses subtle decorative devices to fit this façade into the overall scheme of the cathedral’s exterior ornamentation (Fig. 1.17). Although the decorative scheme of the apse differs from the rest of the cathedral, each of its three bays is distinguished by a zakomara at the roofline, thereby allowing for the continuation of the rhythm of the other three sides of the building. Fioravanti also added six engaged columns, which continue up to the lower roofline of the apses. Interspersed with these engaged columns are narrow arched windows, whose shape and size are very similar to the lower-level windows in the arcading of the other three facades. The windows themselves are also carefully placed at the same middle register of the walls as the arcading on the adjacent facades, allowing the eye to travel all the way around the middle half of the building with no visual interruptions. Thus the repetition of vertical decorative elements, combined with
the careful placement of the windows, provides a visual cohesion and draws this façade, which does not follow the pattern of the other facades, into the overall program of the cathedral.

As a result of these various adjustments, when one first encounters Fioravanti’s building one immediately sees broad expanses of stone wall, which are rhythmically punctuated with a few distinctive architectural elements that are precisely and strategically applied to the surface. The exterior bays are identical, repeating the same decorative scheme around the circumference of the building. The wide pilasters boldly frame each bay, a device that serves to break up the mass of the facades horizontally. The bays are also meticulously divided into upper, middle, and lower sections by the windows in the upper level, the blind arcading at the middle level, and blank wall surfaces at the lower level. Thus, while the overall decorative scheme is borrowed from Vladimir, Fioravanti’s application of that decorative scheme to the Cathedral of the Dormition reveals an Albertian sophistication and unity. Regardless of whether Fioravanti was actually aware of Alberti’s work or deliberately quoting Albertian principles in his building, Fioravanti’s Cathedral of the Dormition reveals a thorough understanding of the principles of early Renaissance architecture.

Fioravanti’s handling of the plan of the church as a whole further serves to prove his knowledge of Quattrocento architecture. Although Fioravanti’s Dormition is enveloped in the architectural ornament of the Dormition in Vladimir, the space of the building is entirely re-imagined. The Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir is a traditional Russo-Byzantine cross-in-square church, with the largest, central dome resting over the largest bay at the crossing, and a tripartite apse that protrudes from the eastern end of the building, breaking through the perimeter of the square of the church. Fioravanti, more interested in architectural harmony than the dictates of the Orthodox liturgy, abandoned the traditional organizational precedents in his cathedral in
Moscow. Whereas the Dormition in Vladimir is a large square with a protruding apse, the Dormition in Moscow is a large rectangle with an apse that does not protrude. Although Fioravanti’s cathedral is larger than its Vladimirian predecessor, it has the plan of a smaller-scale church. As opposed to the plan at Vladimir, which is five bays wide by five bays deep, with each bay distinguished by a pier, Moscow’s Dormition is only three bays wide by three bays deep, with the bays separated by four large central columns. As a result there is a strong sense of centralization. The large central dome rests atop the central bay defined by the four large columns, a placement that accentuates the centrality of the space by drawing the eye upward into the high drum and dome above.

In truth, the centralized feeling of the interior is an illusion, since the apse end of the church continues on the east end of the three-by-three square of the main church space, with two large piers that create an apse that fits into the equivalent of three more bays, hidden behind an iconostasis. The interior bays correspond exactly with the exterior bays as defined by the exterior large pilasters, and the last bay on the east end of the cathedral corresponds with the apse, which is masterfully concealed by the placement of large piers at right angles to the easternmost pilasters on the north and south facades; this creates the illusion of a continued wall and serves to conceal the slightly rounded walls of the five-part apse. Likewise, the apse is hidden in the interior by a tall iconostasis that acts as another faux wall, and maintains the illusion of centrality on the interior (Fig. 1.18).

By dividing the space of the Moscow Dormition in this way, Fioravanti once again found a solution for the inelegant handling of some of the architectural details exhibited at Vladimir. Instead of constructing a perfect square with the ungainly bulge of an apse protruding from one

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82 In truth, the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow is actually four bays long, when the mini-bay at the apse end is considered, but Fioravanti took great pains to conceal the apse end so as to maintain the illusion of a perfect cube.
side, Fioravanti constructed a pure rectangle, the integrity of which is not compromised with an awkward protrusion. His design was architectural alchemy: A simple rectangle on the exterior is met with a simple square on the interior. Upon entering the cathedral the visitor is surprised to discover that the space one expected to be longitudinal is actually centralized.

Fioravanti did more than divide the floor plan in an even, balanced way; he applied the same sense of harmony throughout the entirety of the space. While more abstract, this sense of spatial harmony creates a striking effect that distinguishes Fioravanti’s building from its predecessor in Vladimir and from the entire earlier tradition of Russian architecture. Like many Italian Renaissance buildings, indeed like many western European buildings, the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow achieves a mathematical harmony by establishing a basic unit of measure that is consistently applied through the building. It was the square bays of the cathedral that served as the basic unit of measurement for the building as a whole. Unlike Vladimir, whose bays are of varied sizes and shapes, Moscow is composed of twelve bays of equal size, whose measurements dictate proportional relationships throughout the building (Fig. 1.19). The height of the base of upper-level windows is equal to the width of two bays, for example.\(^\text{83}\) Fioravanti’s attention to mathematical relationships and exact geometrical proportions caught the attention of the Russian chroniclers, who reported “and everything was made according to the rule of the compass.”\(^\text{84}\)

One reason why churches like the Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir had such unevenly proportioned bays was to accommodate the varied sizes of the domes. Typically,

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\(^{84}\) “e tutto fece a regola di squadra di compasso.” Quoted in Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri frjazy’ a Mosca,” 159. Cazzola quotes the Russian chronicles frequently in his article, translating the original text into Italian. He does not provide the original Russian in his citations.
Russian quincunx churches had an enlarged central dome with four smaller domes of equal size. Thus, the bays beneath the domes were likewise of varied proportions, dictated by the size of the drum and dome above (Fig. 1.20). Because Fioravanti standardized the bays in his Dormition, he was faced with a new challenge in accommodating the Russian tradition of a large central dome surrounded by four smaller domes; because the size of all of the bays was the same, he had to be creative in forming the drums of the domes at the roofline. He worked around this problem by artificially expanding the diameter of the drum above the central bay to create the illusion that the central dome was larger than the rest (Fig. 1.21). Thus, from the exterior of the building, the tradition of a large central dome surrounded by four smaller domes was preserved, even though the size of the bays beneath each of the five domes was identical. Once again, he was able to achieve seemingly contradictory goals in the Cathedral of the Dormition. Just as his building somehow manages to be both a rectangle and a square and to have a rounded apse yet seem to be a contained rectangle, Fioravanti managed to create a building with bays of the same size, whose corresponding domes appear to be of different sizes.\(^85\)

It is because of his basic unit of measure that all of the other details of the building are able to fit together so perfectly. Because he was willing to have a main dome that only appears larger than the rest, Fioravanti was able to create twelve bays of identical size. But his decision to make all of his bays of equal size had a significant effect on innumerable other, seemingly unrelated elements of the building, even down to the superficial decoration. Bays of identical proportions on the interior allow for the width of the exterior bays to be identical, which in turn allows the blind arcading on the exterior to be identical from bay to bay. The uniformity of the blind arcading, in turn, allows for a uniform handling of the lower windows, which are neatly incorporated into this simple decorative element. His balanced handling of the bays also allows

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\(^85\) Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 86.
for the concealment of the apse end within the rectilinear form of the building: The five small apses fit neatly within the three easternmost bays of the building. This way of thinking about the architectural space was new and impressive to the Muscovites. The Russian chronicles report at length about the extent to which people were amazed by the light and spaciousness of Fioravanti’s building. The Patriarskaya chronicle reports that the Cathedral of the Dormition “was very marvelous for its size and height and brightness and acoustics and spaciousness, such as never before seen in Russia, with the exception of the church of Vladimir; and the master was Aristotele.”

What seemed to impress the Muscovites even more than Fioravanti’s conception of space was his introduction of several new building materials and techniques that enabled him to build his church so quickly and efficiently. This was no minor detail for the Muscovites, since it had been, after all, on account of bad-quality building materials that the old Cathedral of the Dormition collapsed in 1473. Many different Russian chronicles pay a significant amount of attention to the new materials created and used by Fioravanti, as well as the unique ways he applied those materials to his building. It seems that he exceeded expectations in the contributions he made in this regard. As the Tipografskaya Chronicle reports for the year 1475, Fioravanti “started to work with his fine skills, unlike those of Muscovite masters.” He introduced a whole new approach to building to Moscow architecture.

When he first arrived in Moscow, Fioravanti assessed the building materials and techniques used by the earlier builders and, finding fault with both of these things, planned to use

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87 “e cominciato a operare con la sua arte fina, e non come i maestri moscoviti.” Quoted in Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri frijazy’ a Mosca,” 159.
better, stronger building materials combined with the engineering principles he had learned in Italy that had brought him such fame and success. The decision to tear down the old building and start from scratch allowed for a more sound construction of the building, down to the level of the foundations. Indeed, one of the first things Fioravanti did before traveling to Vladimir and after tearing down the old Dormition was to dig new, deeper trenches for the new building’s foundations. The care taken to dig such deep foundations must have impressed the Russians, for the Russian chronicle reports that “the depth was of two sazhens and in one place even more,” suggesting that this sort of attention to detail in laying a building’s foundations was new—or at least unusual—in Moscow. The Russian chroniclers were also impressed by Fioravanti’s method for creating bricks, which he introduced shortly after he began construction on the Dormition in Moscow, and which made use of a much stronger recipe than had been used by the Russians. There were many advantages to Fioravanti’s recipe. First of all, his bricks were more durable and less brittle. Secondly, they were lighter. Thus, Fioravanti’s bricks could be counted on to withstand greater pressure without breaking while also exerting less force on other parts of the building. Fioravanti used these lighter-weight bricks in the vaulting of the Cathedral of the Dormition, and because they were so light, they could span greater distances than had been seen previously in Russian architecture (Fig. 1.22). They were light enough that they needed fewer supports than did traditional Russian vaulting, and their weight could easily be supported by the four central piers, which accounts for the feeling of height and openness that was so impressive to the Russian chroniclers. Thus, the implementation of Fioravanti’s new recipe for brick-making radically opened up the possibilities for the forms of Russian buildings, not to mention the effect of those forms on the local populace.

88 “glubina rvov” dve sazhena, a v” inom” meste i togo gluble.” Ibid., vol.12, 157. One sazhen is equivalent to about six feet.
Fioravanti’s other significant technical innovations in Moscow included the implementation of an improved lime mixture and the use of iron ties in the vaulting. Upon his initial review of the collapse of the old Dormition, Fioravanti noted that the lime mixture used by the Russians was weak and largely composed of sand, without enough solidity and strength to support heavy stone architecture. He called for a new recipe for lime that was more substantial, with a pastier consistency, incorporating a more consistent use of stone rubble, in contrast to the weaker composition, largely formed of sand, which had been used by the Russians. Fioravanti also incorporated iron ties that were fixed into the walls with pins, to securely bind the brick and masonry construction together.

Combined with his technological innovations, Fioravanti’s mathematical approach to architecture had a truly dazzling effect on the Muscovite populace. As already mentioned, his implementation of lightweight bricks in the vaults gave him the freedom to build a high, open space whose vaults are supported on relatively slender supports. One chronicler reported that it was as though the vaults stood up “on trees of stone,” an analogy that calls to mind both the impressive sturdiness of the construction as well as its massive scale. Fioravanti further opened up the interior space by choosing not to include the traditional Russian choir gallery, which would have been above the west entrance. Not only did the gallery’s absence contribute to the sense of openness in the interior, but it also allowed light from the windows to filter into the vast expanse of the church interior unobstructed. Indeed, the Russian chronicles report that the interior of the cathedral was “like a hall,” suggesting how unexpected the openness of this

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89 Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri frjazy’ a Mosca,” 158; Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 90; *PSRL*, vol. 6, 205.

90 Cazzola, "I 'Mastri frjazy' a Mosca," 159.

91 “su alberi di pietra.” Quoted in ibid., 161.

92 Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri frjazy’ a Mosca,” 159.
Russian church interiors were typically more cramped, with larger, more obtrusive piers, placed more closely together to support lower vaults spanning a smaller space. Fioravanti’s interior was truly unprecedented in Muscovy. The effect is a direct result of his general conception of architecture; however, as Dmitry Shviskovsky notes, he may also have deliberately sought to give the interior a lofty feeling, being well aware that the cathedral was to be a coronation church. Whether or not Fioravanti had the function of the building in mind when devising his plan, the end result was a cathedral that visually lived up to the grandeur implicit in a church that would crown Russia’s grand princes. Ultimately, it diverged from its Vladimirian predecessor more than it followed in its footsteps. Although it has a familial resemblance to the medieval cathedral, it represents a new architectural consciousness and hails the subtle, but definitive, debut of Renaissance architectural philosophy in Muscovy.

In its understanding of space and overall conception, the Moscow Dormition has more in common with the kinds of buildings that had been—and continued to be—constructed in Quattrocento Italy than to medieval Russian architecture. The Russian architects who worked in Russia before Fioravanti, as exemplified at Vladimir, seem to have approached each element of a building independently, fitting independent elements together according to Byzantino-Russian tradition. Different elements did not need to be unified; it was the symbolism of different architectural elements that was more important. Certain programmatic details, such as the fact that domes needed to be of different sizes, with one large dome surrounded by four smaller domes, dictated other architectural elements, such as the sizes of the bays. In Vladimir, this resulted in irregular bays, which in turn resulted in irregularities throughout the building. The designers of the cathedral did not seek to develop a cohesive plan in which different architectural

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93 “simile a una sala.” Quoted in ibid.
94 Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 86.
elements could work together as one. Fioravanti introduced this novel way of thinking about architecture into fifteenth-century Russia. In the Cathedral of the Dormition, he married his native architectural tradition, which approached architectural design holistically, with the motifs and symbolic programs of Russian Orthodox architecture. His Cathedral has all the elements of a Russian Orthodox cathedral, but it is more truly a product of Quattrocento Italy. In this sense, Italian Renaissance architectural philosophy had infiltrated Moscow.

By 1479, construction on the Cathedral was complete, and the building was widely regarded as a success. Not only did the impressive new cathedral help to boost Moscow’s case for claiming itself as the heir of Byzantium, but the church also, quite literally, declared itself the heir of Vladimir, and thus indirectly of Kiev. More importantly, the cathedral turned out to be only the beginning of an exciting period of construction within Moscow. Fioravanti, however, played a surprisingly limited role in the subsequent architectural projects in Moscow, a fact that seems odd given his great success on the Cathedral of the Dormition. This oddity can be explained by Fioravanti’s wealth of other useful talents beyond architecture. One must not forget that Fioravanti’s career in Italy was based on his talents as an engineer and a founder, two skills that were especially useful for Ivan III in the 1480s, during which time he was engaged in military campaigns against Novgorod, Kazan, and Tver. Thus, Fioravanti’s architectural career was put on hold for the benefit of the Mucovite state. He was ordered to build a bridge over the Volkho River, near Novgorod, in December of 1478, presumably to make the attack on Novgorod easier for Ivan’s troops. According to the Russian chronicles, Fioravanti was also involved in Ivan’s 1482 military campaign against Kazan and his 1485 military campaign against Tver, mentioning the presence of “Aristotele with the canons” with Ivan’s army. Fioravanti was, after all, just as famous for his skills as a founder as he was as an engineer, and one

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95 “Aristotele coi cannoni.” Quoted in Cazzola, "I 'Mastri frjazy' a Mosca," 164.
wonders if Semyon Tolbuzin selected Fioravanti, in part, because of his skills as a founder and in anticipation of Ivan’s need for such skills as he sought to annex neighboring Russian principalities and bring them into the fold of Muscovy.

As much as his skills were valued in Moscow, surviving documents reveal that Fioravanti was quite homesick for Bologna and, in 1483, he appealed to Ivan for permission to return to Bologna. Rather than obliging and allowing Fioravanti to return to Bologna, Ivan arrested him, along with other *friazi* masters. Clearly Ivan so valued the skills of Fioravanti and his other *friazi* that he would rather imprison them than allow them to remain at work in Moscow and risk their unapproved return to Italy. It seems that Fioravanti had wanted to return to Bologna for some time, because four years before his imprisonment—the same year that the Cathedral of the Dormition was completed—the Sixteen Reformers of the Commune of Bologna wrote a letter to Ivan on behalf of Fioravanti, requesting the safe return of their citizen and beloved architect. Interestingly, however, in the only known letter from Fioravanti to his home, which was hand-delivered to Duke Galeazza Maria Sforza in 1476 by Fioravanti’s son, he makes no mention of his desire to return home. Nonetheless, it is safe to conclude that Fioravanti had either asked for the help of the Commune of Bologna in securing his return from Moscow in a letter that has not survived, or that his absence and silence was enough to indicate that Fioravanti was being held in Moscow against his will. In either case, the letter from the Sixteen Reformers of the Commune of Bologna suggests that Fioravanti was still highly regarded in his homeland. More specifically, as Pietro Cazzola suggests, the Commune would have had a personal interest in Fioravanti’s

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96 Ibid.

return, as he had constructed a model for the new Palazzo del Podestà in Bologna, before he left for Moscow. The Commune very well may have been waiting for his return to begin construction on the building, as construction was only begun in 1483, when “hopes of reclaiming the architect to Bologna were lost.”

Sadly for Fioravanti, the supplications of the Commune of Bologna were fruitless and he died in Moscow, probably sometime in the year 1486. Aside from his involvement in Ivan’s military campaigns, he had also been made master of the mint in Moscow. But what is known about his further role as an architect in Moscow? Was the Cathedral of the Dormition his one and only architectural contribution? Indeed, the Cathedral is the only building that can securely be attributed to Fioravanti in Muscovy, although it seems plausible that he may have been involved in some of the preliminary planning for the construction of the fortifications of Moscow, work on which began in 1485, one year before his death. Ettore Lo Gatto suggested that he may have been involved in the planning—if not the actual construction—of the fortifications. Although he was variously engaged with the mint and with making weapons for Ivan’s campaign against Tver in 1485, his intimate knowledge of wall construction and the great fame he had earned in Italy building and fixing walls so that they would be stable make a strong argument for at least some involvement on Fioravanti’s part before his death. Unfortunately the documents say nothing about this. Whatever the case, it is not surprising that Ivan’s attention as architectural patron shifted from church building to fortification building. Having freed his people from Mongol subjugation and having conquered neighboring regions, he now sought to assure the security of his emerging city with impregnable fortifications.


99 Lo Gatto, Gli artisti italiani in Russia, 17.
Two more Italians, Anton (Onton) “Friazin” and Marco “Friazin,” are mentioned in the Russian chronicles in the 1480s, although it is not clear whether they had already been in Moscow with Aristotele Fioravanti or were brought to Moscow with a subsequent ambassador. Some suggest that Anton may have come to Moscow as early as the 1460s, which would suggest a much earlier date of contact between Moscow and Italy than is generally accepted. However, our knowledge of Anton’s contributions is limited and it seems that his contributions were likewise limited, so even if he had been around Moscow for some years, the implications for Russian architecture remain the same. What we do know about both Anton and Marco is that they were involved in the early stages of the rebuilding of the Kremlin fortifications, a rather pressing project given the fact that the fourteenth-century limestone walls built by Dmitri Donskoi had become weakened and deteriorated by the late fifteenth century. Anton began work on the first of the Kremlin towers, the Taynitskaia and Vodovzvodnoia Towers (Figs. 1.23 and 1.24), in 1485. Marco worked on the Beklemishevskaia Tower (Fig. 1.25) around the same time. These three towers were the first to be built because they were of the greatest importance, strategically: being on the river, they were most vulnerable to attack. The entire project of the walls, gates, and towers of the Kremlin fortifications was an enormous undertaking and would continue into the second decade of the sixteenth century, during the reign of Vasily III. The walls extend more than 7000 feet around the Kremlin with twenty towers in all. Perhaps recognizing the magnitude of the project, and most certainly wishing to use the most skilled possible builders, Ivan sent another mission to Italy, to fill the void that had been left by Fioravanti’s

100 Brumfield, A History of Russian Architecture, 542.

101 Ibid., 99.

102 Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 92.
1486 death. By 1490, a new group of Lombard architects had taken their places in Moscow, led by their star Pietro Antonio Solari.

Second Mission to Italy

In 1490, Dmitri and Manuel Ralev (Raev), the brothers of Sophia Palaiologina who had moved with her to Russia, returned from a mission in Italy, bringing with them a fresh group of Lombard recruits. Although the Russian chronicles give some sense of who arrived as a result of this recruiting mission, as well as what they built when they came to Moscow, there is not nearly the same degree of information about them as there is about Fioravanti. It is not known how Dmitri and Manuel Ralev located, selected, and wooed these Italian “masters” to return with them to Moscow. More frustratingly, the chronicles are silent about their work once in Moscow; there is no word about the wishes of their patron, the specific contributions of each builder, or the reception of their work by local Muscovites.

Laconic though the Russian chroniclers were with regards to Ivan’s new batch of friazi, they clearly held them in some esteem, for the chronicle refers to them as “fryaskie masters, who knew how to do, rather ingeniously, churches and buildings.”103 But beyond this brief expression of praise, the chronicle only goes on to address some of the most basic facts about their work in Moscow, reporting what was constructed, when, and by whom.

The dearth of specific information on these architectural projects in the Russian chronicles most likely relates to the fact that they were secular projects, and thereby not

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103 “friazkie, che sapevano fare assai ingegnosamente chiese ed edifici.” Quoted in Cazzola, "I 'Mastri frjazy' a Mosca," 166.
ideologically loaded like the patronage of the Cathedral of the Dormition. With the Cathedral, Ivan III and the Moscow Metropolitan had been engaged in constructing a rather complicated political and religious ideology that sought to elevate Moscow, combining political and religious power from a variety of sources into one place by likewise combining architectural styles as a way of communicating that succession. Simply put, the Cathedral of the Dormition was symbolically very important for the leaders of Muscovy, and therefore it was well worth mentioning in the chronicles. The fortifications around the Kremlin and the secular buildings within the Kremlin were important, but they were important for their utility, rather than their symbolism. Nonetheless, they were very significant projects that assured the continued strength of Ivan III’s new capital, and they were to become emblematic of Moscow.

Pietro Antonio Solari

One of the most important Italian architects who came to Moscow with the Ralevs, who was involved in construction of many secular building projects for Ivan III at the end of the fifteenth century, was Pietro Antonio Solari from Milan, referred to as “Pyotr Antony Fryazin Architekton” in the Russian chronicles. Solari’s time in Moscow was brief; he had been working in the city for just over three years when he met an untimely death in 1493. Still, his contributions to the Kremlin are significant, especially considering the brief time he spent there.

Solari was from the successful Solari family of architects that worked in Milan during the Quattrocento. His grandfather, Giovanni, had worked on the Certosia di Pavia (Fig. 1.26) and Milan Cathedral (Fig. 1.27) and had been named official builder to Duke Francesco Sforza in

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104 Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri Frjazy’ a Mosca,” 166.
1450. Pietro’s father, Giuniforte, like Giovanni, had also been involved in the construction of the Certosa di Pavia and Milan Cathedral, and he also worked on the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan (Fig. 1.11). (One wonders whether Aristotile Fioravanti had made the acquaintance of the young Pietro when working with Pietro’s father on the Ospedale Maggiore, which could account for the fact that Pietro was later recruited by Ivan’s ambassadors, seemingly out of the blue, in 1490. At the very least Fioravanti’s acquaintance with the Solari family is suggestive of a potentially meaningful connection between the earlier and later generations of Italian expatriates in Moscow.)

Pietro was raised in the bosom of his architecturally prominent family, absorbing the style of his father and grandfather with whom he worked on the Cathedral and the Certosa as early as 1476. When his father died in 1481 he took over for him as head architect on those projects that were still unfinished, most importantly the two major projects of Milan Cathedral and the Certosa di Pavia. Pietro Antonio is also credited with working on three other churches in Milan: Santa Maria del Carmine (Fig. 1.28), Santa Maria Incoronata (Fig. 1.29), and Santa Maria della Pace (Fig. 1.30). In addition, Pietro was a proficient—albeit not highly acclaimed—sculptor. He carved the 1484 tomb of Marco de’ Capitani in Alessandria Cathedral. Thus by the age of thirty-one, Pietro had established himself as one of the leading masters working in Milan. In fact, Pietro and his family had, as Dmitry Shvidkovsky states, “played a key part in the formation of the architectural language of Milan from 1460 to 1480.”

105 It should be noted that Giovanni worked with Filarete at Milan Cathedral, the same Filarete with whom Fioravanti had been friendly, suggesting the coincidental interconnectedness of these architects at the very least, or perhaps a meaningful relationship that deserves further investigation.


107 Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri frjazy’ a Mosca” 166.
The chronological outline of Pietro Antonio Solari’s final nine years in Milan, from the time of his father’s death to his departure for Moscow, is uncertain. It is safe to assume that he was busy working on and supervising the final stages of construction on the Certosa di Pavia, which was not completed until 1494 (by which point he had already left for Moscow and died there), and Milan Cathedral, which was also a long-term project that would have commanded much of his time and attention.\textsuperscript{108}

The documentary evidence is similarly scanty regarding the circumstances that resulted in Solari’s departure from the city that had been the center of his family’s successful architectural empire for several decades, for the complete unknown of Moscow. Some scholars have suggested that Solari’s departure for Moscow is evidence of the fading popularity of the distinctive Solari style in Milan. The Solari combination of Lombard Romanesque, Italian Gothic, and Early Renaissance architectural features, these scholars maintain, would have begun to seem dated and unstylish in the wake of early Renaissance styles that began gradually seeping into northern Italian cities. Dmitry Shvidkovsky specifically mentions the presence of architects like Donato Bramante in Milan by the 1480s as evidence of the growing dominance of Renaissance styles.\textsuperscript{109}

Although the theory that the Solari style was not sufficiently classicizing fits neatly with the traditional paradigm of Renaissance art history, which espouses an early emergence of a classical Renaissance followed by a “mature” blossoming of that style by the end of the fifteenth century in Italy, there is no concrete evidence suggesting that the Solari building style

\textsuperscript{108} Cazzola, “Pietro Antonio Solari.”

\textsuperscript{109} Shvidkovsky, \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}, 92. Shvidkovsky is not the first to point out that the style of Renaissance Florence made its way to Lombardy, ultimately pushing out the local, late-medieval styles. One of the first modern scholars to address this process was Ludwig Heydenreich; \textit{Architecture in Italy, 1400-1500}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} revised ed. (New Haven: Yale University, 1996), 102-17.
specifically had fallen out of favor in Milan. Indeed, many Lombard artists who had established their careers in the “outdated” style exemplified by the Solari remained in Milan and continued to have successful careers. For example, Giovani Antonio Amadeo, with whom Pietro had worked on both the Milan Cathedral and the Certosa di Pavia, continued to have a very fruitful career under the new Sforza duke at the end of the fifteenth century.\footnote{See F. Malaguzzi-Valeri, \textit{Giovanni Antonio Amadeo: Scultore e architetto lombardo (1447-1522)}, (Bergamo: NP, 1904) and Janice Shell and Liana Castelfranchi Vegas, eds., \textit{Giovanni Antonio Amadeo (1447-1522): scultura e architettura del suo tempo} (Milan: Cisalpino, 1993).} Pietro’s cousin, Cristoforo Solari, is another example; he had apprenticed under Pietro in the 1480s, presumably learning to work in the distinctive Solari style, and yet he continued to receive prominent commissions from Duke Sforza throughout the 1490s.\footnote{See Anne Markham Schulz, “Cristoforo Solari at Venice: Facts and Suppositions,” \textit{Prospettiva}, liii–lvi (1988–9), 309–16.}

The fact that other architects working in the older Lombard style continued to have successful careers in Milan in the last decade of the fifteenth century and after makes the idea that Pietro Antonio Solari would have been singled out for dismissal purely on account of stylistic proclivities unconvincing. Indeed, if Duke Ludovico Sforza did cast Pietro aside, it would have been more likely on account of Pietro’s connection to the former duke, Galeazzo Maria Sforza. Galeazzo, a tyrannical and unpopular ruler, had been assassinated in 1476. In the decades following his assassination, his brother and rightful heir Ludovico sought to distance himself from Galeazzo. In fact the Sforza family destroyed many of Galeazzo’s artistic projects after his death in an attempt to expunge his memory and boost its own political fortunes.\footnote{See Gregory Lubkin, \textit{A Renaissance Court: Milan Under Galeazzo Maria Sforza} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and Evelyn S. Welch, \textit{Art and Authority in Renaissance Milan} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).}

Thus, the architectural style of Pietro Antonio Solari would have been a visual reminder of Galeazzo Maria Sforza’s patronage and power, and thereby of his tyrannical rule. If Pietro
were passed over by the new Sforza duke in favor of younger architects like Bramante, the duke’s politics likely played a larger role than did a desire for a more modern, classicizing style; at the least, political concerns would have played a significant role. Regardless of Ludovico Sforza’s motivations, the fact remains that, with increased competition from a new generation of young architects, Pietro found himself in the role of patriarch of an architectural family that was no longer in a privileged position in Milan. An opportunity to continue working in a principal role in Moscow must have seemed like a boon to him. And so, he arrived in Moscow in 1490 and, like his predecessor Fioravanti, he would never again return to his native land.

Solari’s primary role in Moscow was as a builder of the walls and towers of the Kremlin fortifications, and also as a builder of palaces within the Kremlin walls. Let us first turn to the fortifications, work on which had already begun shortly before his arrival. Since the old stone fortifications of the Kremlin had been in disrepair for some time, it should not be surprising that this was one of the most pressing concerns for Ivan, who was well aware of Moscow’s continued vulnerability even after gaining independence from the Tatar Khanates. A strong city wall could assure the continued independence of Muscovy. But beyond this very practical motivation one wonders whether there was also an ideological motivation for building new, architecturally impressive fortifications.

By the 1480s Moscow’s view of itself as heir of Constantinople and, ultimately, of Rome had been established, even if this idea had not yet been clearly spelled out in the official “Third Rome” doctrine. Moscow’s heir-apparent relationship to these two once-great capitals was already simmering in the cultural imagination, and, as already discussed, the legitimacy of this role had been bolstered with Ivan’s marriage to Sophia Palaiologina. Moscow had already begun to mimic Rome and Constantinople with the construction of large stone churches and palaces.
But both of those ancient cities were delineated with imposing city walls that displayed their defensive strength while also serving to frame them elegantly. Fortification walls had been prominent features in both Byzantine Constantinople and Imperial Rome. The Theodosian walls were built in the early fifth century (Fig. 1.31), and Rome’s emperors had surrounded their city with fortification walls as well, first with the Servian walls (Fig. 1.32) and later with the brick construction of the Aurelian Walls in the third century (Fig. 1.33). Indeed, the fortifications around these capital cities helped to establish them simultaneously as architecturally imposing and impenetrably strong, two vital features of any major capitol. To follow in the footsteps of its predecessors, Moscow would need to replace its old stone fortifications.

The building of fortifications was not, in and of itself, an ideological act. Indeed, most cities in Russia at this time had some form of wall to provide protection from the threat of invasion at the hands of hostile marauders; city walls were a practical element essential for the protection of the citizenry. But Ivan’s desire to rebuild his walls using foreign architects at precisely the moment that Moscow’s autonomy and prestige were increasing does suggest a motivation beyond just the sensible desire to fortify his capital. After all, the appearance of a city’s fortifications was of great importance, since fortress walls provide the first impression of the city to any visitor. Moreover, the city walls actually defined the city, as they physically delimited its geographical space. Shabby, poorly made walls would create the impression of an inferior city, one without financial resources or skilled craftsmen, a city, in sum, not worthy of carrying the mantle of political and religious power. Ivan’s walls should immediately convey to any visitor that Moscow was not just any Russian city, but that it belonged to an old tradition of great walled cities. Ivan did not put just any architect to work on his walls, instead searching for some of the best builders in Italy. Thus his mission to Italy in search of architects to rebuild his
city walls suggests that he fully understood the abstract power of city fortifications as well as their potential to redefine his capital city.

The walls, gates, and towers of the Kremlin, with the help of Ivan’s *mastri friazi*, succeeded in providing Moscow with a suitably imposing and impressive physiognomy, while also helping to define Moscow as more than just a provincial outpost. The crenellated, brick construction of the fortifications is not stylistically unique, but instead follows a clearly defined template of fortification construction. As many scholars have noted, the general appearance of the fortifications is that of northern Italian defensive architecture. More specifically, the crenellated brick walls with their twenty rounded and squared towers bear a familial resemblance to the city walls around Bologna (Fig. 1.34), Milan (Fig. 1.35), and the Venice Arsenal (Fig. 1.10), not to mention the aforementioned Aurelian Walls around Rome and the walls around Constantinople. The style of the Kremlin walls, towers, and gates is very much in the architectural tradition established by the Solari family in Quattrocento Milan. As with the Certosa di Pavia, on which three generations of Solari had worked, the Kremlin walls and towers are tall, planar, red brick constructions with minimal white stone embellishment. This, combined with Solari’s contributions to the Kremlin fortifications, has led many to conclude that Solari had a primary role in the design of the fortifications. But Pietro did not arrive until 1490, after other *friazi* masters had already been working on the fortifications for some five years.

As mentioned above, the *friazi* masters Anton and Marco had already built the Tainitskaia, Vodovzvodnaia, and Beklemishevskaia towers in the 1480s. This implies that by the time Pietro arrived in Moscow, even if only a small fraction of the fortifications had been rebuilt, some level of planning had already been done and there were preexisting elements that Pietro

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113 For example, see Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri frjazy’ a Mosca,” 167; Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 38; Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 92-3.
and the other artists had to work with. It is impossible therefore for Pietro to have been
responsible for the general appearance of the fortifications, regardless of how Solari-esque they
may appear. This fact lends credence to the idea that Fioravanti may have been involved in the
early stages of the fortifications before his death in 1486. Indeed the Solari style that
predominated in Quattrocento Milan was actually representative of a general “late-medieval”
Lombard style that had predominated in Fioravanti’s native Bologna as much as it had in Solari’s
Milan. Furthermore, Bologna had impressive city walls and towers of its own, built in the twelfth
century and before, which could certainly have served as inspiration for Fioravanti had he been
tasked with planning similar walls and towers for the Muscovite capital. Notable for their red
brick construction with crenellation around the top, the Bolognese walls do resemble the walls
that would be built at the Kremlin at the end of the fifteenth century in many ways.

Between Fioravanti’s established skill as a builder and repairer of walls and his lifelong
exposure to the defensive architecture of his native Bologna, it is indisputable that he had the
qualifications necessary to design the Kremlin’s fortifications. Moreover, the unbridled success
of Fioravanti’s Cathedral suggests that his skill as an architect was highly prized. Thus his
involvement in the planning, if not the actual construction, of the Kremlin’s fortifications seems
almost certain.

Fioravanti’s role in shaping the outcome of the Kremlin fortifications might even have
extended to the recruiting of Pietro Antonio Solari himself. After all, Fioravanti had worked in
many centers throughout northern Italy, including Solari’s home of Milan. It was there that he
worked on the Ospedale Maggiore with his friend Filarete, a project on which Solari’s father,
Guinafortes, had also worked. Although it is not clear how well Fioravanti knew the Solari—if at
all—it is highly probable that he would have at least been aware of the family’s work in Milan.
That the Solari were trained in the heart of Lombardy and intimately understood the principles of Lombard-style defensive architecture would have made them ideal candidates to complete the fortifications. It seems quite possible that Fioravanti could have remembered the Solari family and suggested them as possible of mastri friazi to his superiors in Moscow. This could account for Dmitri and Manuel Ralev’s trip to Lombardy and the subsequent hiring of Pietro. Unfortunately there is no known documentary evidence that can prove this theory, but it seems highly possible, given the chronology of events. As with the circumstances leading up to Fioravanti’s recruitment, the interconnectedness of people in Ivan’s court and in northern Italy suggests more than mere coincidence. In any case, Pietro accomplished a large amount of work in the short time he was in Moscow before his death.

Even though it is improbable that Solari played a key role in conceiving the designs of the Kremlin fortifications, his role in their subsequent construction was significant. He worked quickly, completing the Borovitskaia and the Constantine-Elena towers (Figs. 1.36 and 1.37) in 1490, the Spasskaia and Nikolskaia towers (Figs. 1.38 and 1.39) in 1491, as well as large segments of wall between the towers during these two years. It is likely that he could have completed even more work on the fortifications, but his attention was diverted by work on the Terem Palace, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Unfortunately, art-historical study of the Kremlin towers as constructed at the end of the fifteenth century is complicated by Moscow’s own fraught history. The tops of most of the towers were altered with distinctive spires in the seventeenth century. Additionally, many of the towers were destroyed and rebuilt over the centuries. Thus, when studying the Kremlin fortifications, as with so much pre-modern architecture in Moscow, scholars must rely on the
scholarship of archaeologists as well as the clues available in old drawings and paintings. The task of sorting out which artists were responsible for which parts of the Kremlin is also complicated, since the Russian chronicles only mention a handful of the towers that were completed. Were there other Italians masters who had come to Moscow with Pietro and, earlier, with Antonio and Marco friazi, who contributed to this massive building project? Or were Russian builders working side by side with the friazi? Unfortunately these questions remain unresolved and open to interpretation.

Even with the later changes made to the upper levels of the towers it is easy to appreciate the northern Italian feeling of these fortifications. Whether inspired by Venetian, Bolognese, or Milanese architecture—whether the design of Fioravanti, Solari, or someone else—what is certain is that the Kremlin fortifications have a relationship to northern Italian architecture. For one thing, the merlons of the crenellation are Ghibelline, or swallowtail, meaning that there is a deep, curved “v” indenting the top of the rectangle of the merlon. The Ghibelline merlon was a distinctive northern Italian style. The effect of the fortifications taken as a whole, as well as specific details such as the shape and height of the towers, the Ghibelline merlons, and the brick construction are strongly reminiscent of such Quattrocento buildings as the famed Castello Sforzesco in Milan (Fig. 1.40), rebuilt at the behest of Francesco Sforza in the second half of the fifteenth century. The building would have been familiar to Fioravanti and Solari both, as well as perhaps to the other friazi working in Moscow. The Kremlin towers themselves quote other

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114 Virtually all of the modern scholars writing about the building of the Kremlin fortifications take the subsequent alterations into consideration. Some particularly useful drawings are available in Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri Frjazy’ a Mosca,” 162.

115 The Venice Arsenal and the city walls of both Bologna and Milan include merlons similar to the Kremlin fortifications.

116 The split “swallowtail” merlons typical of northern Italian medieval architecture had political significance, as suggested by the fact that they are also called “Ghibelline” style merlons. Rectangular merlons were associated with papal, or Guelf, factions, whereas the swallowtail style was associated with the anti-papal, imperial faction.
northern Italian buildings like the Certosa di Pavia in their strong vertical emphasis created by the use of bold pilasters set against plain brick walls. The fortifications also bear a strong resemblance to medieval defensive architecture of northern Italy, especially the eleventh-century walls of the Venetian Arsenal, which, like the Kremlin, feature swallowtail crenellation, rectangular brick towers, and white stone accents. The contrast of the dark red brick with white stonework accents had been a hallmark of northern Italian architecture for centuries, and this motif was transferred to Moscow in the building of the Kremlin fortifications.\(^{117}\)

Although building on the fortifications was not completed until the early part of the sixteenth century, several years after Ivan’s death, considerable progress was made in Ivan’s lifetime, which definitively succeeded in distinguishing Moscow as more than a minor Russian outpost. Dmitry Shvidkovsky calls Ivan III’s Kremlin “the largest Renaissance citadel in Europe at the end of the fifteenth century.”\(^{118}\) Indeed, the Kremlin fortifications created a bold impression of Moscow, helping to place it on the same level as the major city-states of northern Italy and alluding, in their grandeur and refinement, to the even more important capital cities of Rome and Constantinople. By surrounding his capital city in impressive Lombard-style fortifications, Ivan essentially provided the whole city with a broader contextualization. The framing walls, gates and towers helped to define all of the other buildings inside of the Kremlin walls, literally framing them with the historical authority of Renaissance Europe, antiquity, and—ultimately—Byzantium. Although the fortifications may have been of lesser importance for the Russian chroniclers and church leaders, who were much more concerned with


\(^{118}\) Shvidkovsky, \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}, 93.
ecclesiastical buildings in Moscow, Ivan’s patronage of the Kremlin fortifications had an enormous effect on his city.

Pietro Antonio Solari is also credited with another major secular building project in the Kremlin, the Terem Palace (Fig. 1.41). The massive palace must have been finished by 1491, for the chronicle for that year states that in “that year Marko and Pyotr Antoniy architect, Friazove, finished the grand palace of the prince on the square.” Construction was begun in 1487, before Solari’s arrival, so as with the walls, one is left to wonder about the extent of Solari’s contributions to this palace. Even more frustratingly, only a small section of the palace survives within the building now known as the Granovitaya Palata, or the Faceted Palace (Fig. 1.42). Much like the fortifications surrounding the Kremlin, the Terem Palace had a troubled history that has left modern art historians very little concrete information with which to work. Shortly before Solari’s death in 1493, the building burned down and was rebuilt by another friazi master beginning in 1499. Further, there were extensive renovations on the palace in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth centuries that left very little of the original structure intact.  

Nonetheless, there is sufficient information available in the form of archaeological research, as well as engravings and paintings from the nineteenth century, to provide some sense of the original appearance of these structures (Fig. 1.43). From these sources we know something of the appearance and structure of the original Terem palace. It was composed of

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120 Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 93.

121 Two of the most important sources for information regarding destroyed buildings within the Moscow Kremlin are Yakovlev, who writes about the archaeological research conducted by Pod’iapol’ski in the 1990s, and Belyaev’s more recent investigations into the archaeology of Moscow’s architecture. See D. Yakovlev, “Novie Svedeniia o Vlikokniazheskom Dvortse v Kremle Kontsa XV Veka,” in Materiali Konferentsii “Brunovskie Chteniia,” ed. Moskovskii arkhitektturnii institut (MARKhI) (Moscow, 1998); Leonid A. Beliaev et al., *Moskovskaia Rus’: problemy arkheologii i istorii arkhitektury* (Moscow: Institut arkheologii RAN, 2008).
three rectangular blocks, each of two stories, capped by a large hipped roof, with the different building sections arranged such that there was a large central courtyard between them. Shvidkovsky points out that the façade of each block of the palace was similar to the Medici Bank in Milan (Fig. 1.44) as recorded in Filarete’s *Trattato d’architettura*.¹²² The appearance of the Terem Palace façades has been preserved to some extent in the form of nineteenth-century engravings and paintings, which reveal façades that bear a similar overall composition and decorative scheme (Fig. 1.45). As in the case of the Medici Bank in Milan, there is a strong horizontal emphasis provided by rows of double lancet windows within one larger frame. From what can be determined about this building, it belongs firmly within the Quattrocento palace tradition, combining the order and harmony of Alberti with the decorative schemes of northern Italy. Buildings such as the Castello Sforzesco in Milan (Fig. 1.41), with its simple, ordered courtyard, and the Palazzo Ducale in Venice (Fig. 1.46), with its Gothic-style windows encircling the façade, seem likely sources of inspiration for the northern Italian masters responsible for the Terem Palace’s construction. Unfortunately there is no evidence that tells us about the planning or inspiration of this now destroyed building, but the origin of the Italians working on it and the appearance of princely palaces in northern Italian cities can provide a reasonable idea of the architectural styles these artists may have taken with them to Moscow. As frustrating as the loss of the majority of this palace is for the modern art historian, the simple fact that it was constructed is instructive. With Ivan’s main church and surrounding fortifications in order by the end of the fifteenth century, he could turn his attention to his personal residence, commissioning what amounted to a massive Renaissance-style palace. With the completion of this palace, Ivan’s role as a princely patron was complete: He had constructed a cathedral for his new capital, legitimizing the new center of religious authority; he had constructed an imposing

¹²² Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 93.
city wall around his capital, assuring the safety of and suggesting the military might of his city; and finally, he had constructed a grand palace, the final architectural element that put Ivan the patron on the same level as some of the greatest fifteenth-century statesmen.

**The Faceted Palace**

Although most of Ivan’s fifteenth-century palace does not survive, it is instructive to turn to the small fragment that does, albeit in slightly altered form: the so-called Faceted Palace, or Granovitaya Palata. The palace served as the banqueting hall for the royal palace, and the style of its construction reveals the continued importance of Russian building tradition even in a Moscow that was rapidly assimilating northern Italian building traditions. As William Craft Brumfield notes, the arrangement of the interior space is very similar to the archbishop’s chambers in Novgorod (Fig. 1.47). As with that building, the Faceted Palace is divided into four large squares by one massive central pier out of which spring four low groin vaults. From the outside, the building appears to be three stories high, with a tall basement level, and two upper levels defined by two tiers of windows. Instead, the building houses one large main story that rests atop a very tall basement level. Although there is an inherent order to the four-part interior space, the building lacks the delightful sense of harmony that Fioravanti was able to achieve in his nearby Cathedral of the Dormition. The interior of the structure, then, although it was built by Italians, follows Russian building precedents and does not have the same spatial harmony that so awed the Russians in Fioravanti’s church.

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The building does, however, introduce new northern Italian elements in the approach to its exterior. Granovitaya Palata is Russian for “Faceted Chamber,” a name that derives from the distinctive diamond-shaped rustication that adorns the exterior walls of the palace. The rusticated treatment of the exterior walls was entirely unprecedented in Moscow and was a style quite distinct to northern Italy. As Shvidkovsky notes, the rustication directly quotes the exterior ornament on several northern Italian palaces from the Quattrocento: the Palazzo Diamanti in Urbino and the Ca’ del Duca (Fig. 1.48) in Venice, both of which bear the same striking diamond-shaped rustication.\textsuperscript{124} This distinctive style of rustication was to remain popular in northern Italian palace architecture well into the sixteenth century. Two more northern Italian palazzi, the Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara (Fig. 1.49), which dates to 1493, and the Palazzo Bevilacqua in Bologna (Fig. 1.50), which dates to 1530, bear this distinctive architectural ornamentation. Thus, the Faceted Palace is boldly sheathed in a distinctly northern Italian style, a style that could not even be disregarded as old-fashioned back in Italy. So, the palace is a truly hybrid building; its interior follows long-standing Russian building traditions, while its exterior asserts a daring new Renaissance style.

Even beyond the rusticated ornamentation on the exterior, this building would have borne a striking resemblance to northern Italian Quattrocento architecture. The main façade is harmoniously divided into three distinct levels, with an unadorned basement level; a middle level, punctuated by large, evenly spaced windows; and a top level with smaller windows between the two outer windows of the middle level. These elements divide the space of the façade into three distinct horizontal registers. Unifying these levels were two large engaged columns extending the full height of the façade. The engaged columns framing the façade were constructed in the quintessential Italian Renaissance style, with their Solomonic spiral incising

\textsuperscript{124} Shvidkovsky, \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}, 97.
and decorative capitals.\footnote{Brumfield, \textit{A History of Russian Architecture}, 99.} Other decorative elements from the exterior of the Faceted Palace have been lost as well. The windows were replaced in the seventeenth century, but would have originally resembled the scheme of the windows on the Terem Palace, with paired lancet windows, each pair grouped within a carved frame with classical columns. Also like the Terem Palace, the Granovitaya Palata would have once been crowned with a tall, hipped roof. The two sides flanking the rusticated façade would have been brick, painted a deep red to contrast against the white stone of the faceted rustication.\footnote{Ibid., 99–100.}

In spite of its later restorations, the design of the Faceted Palace remains an obvious example of the introduction of a new northern Italian style at the Moscow Kremlin. The use of diamond rustication, which was original to the building, was entirely new to Russian architecture and, to anyone familiar with the architecture of northern Italy, its presence was an obvious quotation of northern Italian architectural tradition. The other Renaissance decorative elements on this building were also utterly new to Russian architecture. In essence, the decorative pieces of the Granovitaya Palata were a bold declaration of northern Italian Quattrocento style, but the conception of the building in its entirety belongs more securely in the Russian tradition. Thus, the Granovitaya Palata is the inverse of Fioravanti’s Cathedral of the Dormition. Where Fioravanti’s cathedral can be called a Russian-looking building built in an Italian spirit, in the Granovitaya Palata the architects created what is essentially a Russian building, but one that is cloaked in Renaissance finery. In sum, by the last decade of the fifteenth century Ivan III had commissioned buildings that incorporated the skills and styles of his friazi masters in greatly varying ways. Importantly, the different combination of northern Italian and traditional Russian


126 Ibid., 99–100.
elements related to the different ideological function of his buildings: religious, political, or
humanistic.

Other Friazi Working in Moscow

Aristotele Fioravanti and Pietro Antonio Solari were the two leading Italian architects
working in Moscow under Ivan III, but they were certainly not the only Italian architects to have
played important roles in shaping Moscow’s architecture. There were many other friazi masters,
but the extent of their involvement in the building projects at the end of the fifteenth century is
uncertain. We have already heard about Anton (Onton) “Friazin” who may have been the Italian
Antonio Gislardi. Little is known about his life in Italy, but it is known that he worked on the
Kremlin fortifications.\textsuperscript{127} Marco “Friazin,” also worked on the fortifications as well as the
Granovitaya Palata with Solari.\textsuperscript{128} This Marco has often been identified as the Italian Marco
Ruffo, based on Nikolay Karamzin’s research from the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{129} Later scholars,
however, such as Piero Cazzola, have recently called this identification into question, leaving
uncertainty as to the Italian identity and origins of Marco. Whatever his Italian identity, his
contributions were significant. He not only worked on at least two of the towers of the Kremlin,
but his work on the Granovitaya Palata must have been extensive, since work on it was begun by
1487, three years before Solari even arrived in Moscow.\textsuperscript{130} The timeline of the building suggests
that the Granovitaya Palata really was more Marco Friazin’s project than it was Solari’s, and

\textsuperscript{127} Lo Gatto, \textit{Gli artisti italiani in Russia}, 24.
\textsuperscript{128} Shvidkovsky, \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}, 92.
\textsuperscript{129} Lo Gatto, \textit{Gli artisti italiani in Russia}, 24.
\textsuperscript{130} Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri Frjazy’ a Mosca,” 158.
thus suggests that Marco may have been just as important a figure in Moscow’s architectural
history as Pietro Antonio Solari or Aristotile Fioravanti.

After Solari’s sudden death in 1493, Ivan sent yet another mission to northern Italy,
presumably to replace Solari and to assure a continued supply of *maestri friazi* for his continuing
building projects. In 1494 Ivan’s ambassadors Manuil Angelov and Danil Mamiryov travelled to
Milan and Venice to bring more masters back to the Muscovite court. This trip resulted in the
recruitment of several *friazi*, about whom we know very little. One of the most prominent
Italians was Aleviz “Friazin,” also known as Alevisio “the Elder,” to distinguish him from
another Alevisio who would come to Moscow at the turn of the sixteenth century. It is this
“elder” Alevisio who is identified as Alevisio Carcano. The Russian chronicle refers to this
Aleviz as a “master of walls and of buildings” and specifies that he came from Milan. 131 The
chronicles also mention that in the year 1499 Aleviz worked on the fortifications of the Kremlin,
the same year that Ivan “ordered that the foundations of his court be laid.” 132 Since we know the
Terem Palace burned down in 1493, it seems that when Ivan requested “that the foundations of
his court be laid,” he was ordering the rebuilding of his destroyed palace. 133 Also, the fact that
the 1494 mission followed shortly on the heels of this destructive fire suggests that the mission’s
motivation was to find builders to reconstruct the destroyed palace, and we can safely credit
Aleviz with a primary role in its rebuilding.

There are a handful of other Italians—mainly from Milan—who also went to work for
Ivan III. Although we know very little about them, we can safely assume they had important

131 “*mäster stennago i polatnago.*” *PSRL*, vol. 4, 238.
132 “*ordinò di gettare le fondamenta della sua corte.*” Quoted in Cazzola “I ‘Mastri Frjazy’ a Mosca,” 167.
133 It should also be noted that the 1493 was a significant year since, according to Orthodox tradition the world
was supposed to have ended in the year 7,000, which corresponds with 1492. Thus, the year 1493, when the world in
fact continued to exist, would have marked the start of a new era in Russian Orthodox history. Martin, *Medieval
Russia, 980-1584*, 258-59.
roles in the construction projects in the Kremlin at the end of the fifteenth century. Several Italians had already made their way to Moscow before the 1494 mission in the company of Pietro Antonio Solari. Nikolay Karamzin identified several masters who travelled with Solari in 1491: a pupil named Zanantonio, a founder named Jacopo, and a metalsmith named Cristoforo.  

Nothing is known of their roles in Moscow. Two architects also travelled to Moscow with Aleviz Carcano (Alevisio the Elder) on the 1494 mission, although the only information we have about their tenure in Moscow is from documents in Italian archives; there is no mention of them in the Russian chronicles. These two masters are Bernardo (Bernardino da) Borgomanero, a builder, and Michele Parpayone, a metalsmith, both of whom were hired by Carcano, and therefore we can presume that they served as his assistants.  

In addition to the Russian chronicles, which state that Ivan ordered Carcano to lay foundations for his palace in 1499, the 1493 contract of Bernardino da Borgomanero provides a sense of Ivan’s intentions as a patron. The contract stipulates that Bernardino was to build “castles and palaces,” the two pressing secular building projects of late-fifteenth-century Moscow.  

Though Bernardino’s role has been obscured by the silence of the Russian chronicle, his contract suggests that he, along with his superior, Carcano, were largely responsible for completing the secular buildings of Moscow’s Kremlin.

The legal witness mentioned in both Bernardino’s and Michele Parpayone’s contracts is Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, an architect who was well acquainted with the Solari family. He had been apprenticed to Pietro’s uncle Francesco and married Pietro’s sister. As Cazzola notes, the close relationship of Pietro Antonio Solari and Giovanni Antonio Amadeo could explain why Ivan’s ambassadors ended up in Milan again after Pietro’s death, and why they hired the men

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135 Ibid., 168.
136 The contract is quoted in ibid.
they did. Unfortunately, after these men left Milan, there is no further trace of them in Italian or Russian records and therefore we do not know whether they returned to Milan, later moved to a different court, or lived out the rest of their days in Moscow. The one exception to this is Aleviz himself, who died in Lublin, Poland around 1512. His presence in Poland invites speculation about a possible three-way connection between Muscovy, Poland, and northern Italy, a question that will be explored in more detail in the conclusion of this dissertation. Still, the fact remains that it is unknown what took Aleviz to Lublin or how long he was there before he died.

Ivan’s Final Mission to Italy: Alevisio Novi

Shortly before Ivan’s own death, he sent one last mission to recruit new masters to work in Moscow. The chronicle reports that in 1499 “the Grand Prince sent Dmitriy Ivanov, son of Ralev the Greek, and Mitrofan Fedorov, son of Karacarvo, on an embassy beyond the sea to the Italian countries for his needs.” In Italy the ambassadors recruited a group of Italian masters that included Alevisio Novi (“Alevisio the New”), one of the most important foreign architects to make his way to Moscow. The return of the embassy was greatly delayed, because the Russian-Livonian war made the normal route from northern Italy to Moscow impassible. The group took a detour to Bakchisaray, where they stayed at the court of the Crimean Khan for over a year, before finally returning to Moscow in November of 1504. When Alevisio Novi arrived in

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137 Ibid.


139 “Togo zhe mesyatsa Marta, poslal’ knyaz’ velikij posolstvom’ Dmitria Ivanova syna Raleva Greka da Mitrofana Fedorova syna Karacharova za moredo Italijsikh’ stran’ o svoikh’ potrebakh’.” *PSRL*, vol. 12, 249.
Moscow, he was quickly put to work on the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael (Fig. 1.51), which was to be the burial church of the princes and, later, tsars. Once again, Ivan had turned to friazi for the construction of an important, ideologically symbolic cathedral. Ivan never saw the completion of this important cathedral, since he died in 1505, three years before the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael was finished. The project would be taken over by his heir, Vasily III, who would oversee a new phase in Muscovite architecture; therefore the building of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Ivan III’s role in shaping the architecture of Muscovy was undeniably important. His involvement, or lack thereof, in the planning and decision-making of specific building projects (aside from the Cathedral of the Dormition) remains uncertain, but he was undeniably responsible for promoting the continued contact between Italy and Russia that had begun earlier in the fifteenth century. He deliberately set out to recruit Lombard and Venetian architects to rebuild his capital. More importantly, his interest was not fleeting. He sent several missions to Italy over several decades, first in 1468, followed by others in 1475, 1490, 1494, and 1499. Although Ivan and the church leaders continued to use local builders for certain projects, the most important projects were given to Italians. There can be little doubt that, having lost faith in the competency of Russia’s indigenous builders, Ivan especially valued the technical abilities of his friazi masters.

It should be emphasized that it was the skill of friazi masters that Ivan valued above all else. When he recruited Italians, he did not recruit them to build Bolognese- or Milanese- or Venetian-looking buildings for him. Just as importantly, however, Ivan did not reject the styles these Italian masters brought with them. Thus, his Cathedral of the Dormition, which was of

central importance in establishing Moscow as the new seat of Orthodoxy in Russia, was built according to a local aesthetic, but was also suffused with Italianate structural innovations. Ivan got the Russian building he required, but there can be no overlooking the fact that it involved the hand of an architect trained in Italy. More interestingly, Ivan’s secular building projects are blatantly Italian-looking, even if, as is the case with the Granovitaya Palata, the interior space follows Russian building tradition. Thus, when it mattered for ideological reasons, Ivan’s Italian-constructed buildings adhered to tradition, but when religious ideology was not at play, Italians could, and did work in their own, distinctive styles. The different approaches make sense. Religious buildings needed to be more conservative in terms of decoration.

While Ivan and the Russian metropolitans made use of the skills of Italian architects, they had to be certain not to suggest that they were in any way adopting the religious principles of the “Latin West.” After all, it had been exactly that sort of assimilation to the Catholic West that had ultimately led Russia to sever ties with Constantinople. When Metropolitan Isidore of Kiev had pledged Russia’s complicity in Constantinople’s joining with the Catholic Church, Russians were outraged, and ultimately broke away as an independent wing of Orthodoxy. In the still fledgling religious environment of Ivan III’s Moscow, churches were extremely symbolic, not just of the spiritual world, but of who the proper custodians of that spiritual world were.

With the Cathedral of the Dormition, Ivan had successfully used *friazi* masters from the heart of the Latin West to build a church that declared Muscovy’s connection to the “true” church in the Orthodox East. With his secular architecture, he had declared another side of Muscovite culture: a majestic principality in the tradition of the Western European courts. In Moscow, then, Ivan III was establishing a capital like none seen in the Orthodox world since the founding of Constantinople. Drawing on the traditions of different cultures as they suited

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different projects, Ivan established Moscow as a new cultural, religious, and political capital. As the next chapter will show, his son, Vasily III, would expand upon the developments made by his father and bring even more new stylistic traditions into the Russian architectural lexicon.
The years bracketed by 1505, when Ivan III died and his son Vasily III became Grand Prince of Muscovy, and 1539, when the last known Italian fled Moscow, encompass a new phase of Muscovite architecture. Though most of this phase coincides with the rule of Vasily III, who died in 1533, Vasily, unlike his father, did not set out to re-imagine and recreate his city with the help of foreign architects. Instead, Vasily inherited the Italian architects who worked for his father along with their architectural traditions, both of which remained in Moscow at the time of Ivan’s death. Although Vasily’s role in shaping Muscovite architecture was less direct than his father’s, the architecture created during his rule is specific to the unique position of Moscow in the first third of the sixteenth century. Moreover, as the new era almost exactly coincides with his years on the throne, Vasily’s rule approximately frames this period. Working in Vasily’s Moscow, two Italian architects had a major hand in shaping the emerging architecture of the city: Alevisio Lamberti da Montagnana and Pietro Annibale. They, along with a handful of other Italian architects, created a new Italo-Russian style that proliferated in and beyond Moscow. What remained when the last Italian fled Moscow in 1539 was a unique Italo-Russian style, whose forms were poised to merge into a novel, hybrid architecture, which is the subject of the next chapter.
When Vasily took the throne, he continued and completed many of his father’s campaigns, both political and cultural. Where Ivan had begun to consolidate Russian lands into a unified Muscovite state and took the first steps towards freeing his people from more than three centuries of Mongol subjugation, Vasily brought ever more territory into the Muscovite realm and oversaw the definitive break of Moscow from Mongol rule. Where Ivan had initiated contact with the Italian Renaissance and recruited a small community of northern Italian architects to build churches, palaces, and fortifications, Vasily honed the skills of the Italians who remained in Moscow after his father’s death, while also bringing at least one very important Italian to his capital. Just as in the reign of Ivan III, Italian architects under Vasily III blended their native traditions with those of Muscovy, but the buildings created in Vasily’s Moscow reveal an ingenuity and confidence that sets the early sixteenth century apart as a new era in Muscovite architecture.

One of the most striking ways Italian architecture in early-sixteenth-century Muscovy stands apart from the architecture created at the end of the fifteenth century is in the bolder use of decorative forms of obvious foreign origin. Because Ivan III’s architects had already made the first subtle, even tentative, adaptations of Italian style, by the early sixteenth century, Italian architects in the early sixteenth century were more easily able to be experimental in their projects, breaking away from architectural conventions. Ivan’s reign, in terms of architecture, had amounted to an introduction. But over the course of more than thirty years, elements that initially had been foreign to Muscovy eventually became a part of the local architectural vocabulary. The assimilation of foreign elements into local architecture involved two seemingly contradictory processes: Italian styles and principles were more explicitly on display in Moscow’s architecture, and the architecture of Moscow began to assert a unique and independent
voice with ever-increasing clarity. As it turns out, the latter trend of a clarified Russian style was the result of the more explicit use of Italian architectural principles; it was the very steeping of Italian elements in Moscow that allowed for the emergence of a new Muscovite building style to match the newfound cultural authority of Moscow as the capital of Russia and center of Orthodoxy. The resulting style is marked by a greater level of hybridity, which ultimately paved the way for the quintessentially Muscovite architectural style that flowered in the latter half of the sixteenth century (which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter).

Under the influence of northern Italian architects and “masters,” who will be discussed below, the odd duality of foreignness and indigeneity played out with Vasily III serving as an unwitting architectural director. Examining the figures involved in this process along with their significant architectural contributions to Moscow will illuminate this pivotal period in Russian architectural history. Indeed, I will assert that this period was a productive and creative experimental phase, in which styles and ideologies, building on those of the previous phase, were developed and tested, thereby paving the way for a fully developed Russian architectural style that flowered in the decades after the Italians left Moscow—the style that is exemplified by the iconic Saint Basil’s Cathedral on Red Square.

Vasily Succeeds Ivan III in 1505

Before exploring the architecture built in Moscow during Vasily III’s rule, it is useful to understand the unique identity of the new Grand Prince as well as his rather tumultuous rise to power, for the architecture built during this period served the interests of Vasily and his court. His position at the top of the Muscovite political hierarchy was far from inevitable. Although
Vasily was the son of Ivan III and his second wife, the Byzantine princess Zőe-Sophia, and thus a legitimate heir of Grand Prince Ivan III, there were other heirs in Moscow who had competed with Vasily. Ivan’s first wife, Maria of Tver, had died in 1467, but not before leaving a male heir, prince Ivan Ivanovich. Ivan III’s marriage to Sophia resulted in four more sons, including the future prince, Vasily. The line of succession should have been very straightforward, with Ivan Ivanovich claiming the throne with no quarrel, since he was Ivan’s eldest son. A period of strife began in 1490, however, with the sudden death of Ivan Ivanovich. His death left things extremely confused, for he himself had produced a male heir, the young Prince Dmitry, who as the eldest son of Ivan’s eldest son, also had a legitimate claim to the throne. Thus, a dispute arose regarding whether Ivan’s grandson from his first marriage, the six-year-old Dmitry, or his eldest surviving son, the eleven-year-old Vasily, from his second marriage, should succeed him as grand prince. Furthering the complication was the fact that no straightforward method for selecting a successor had been established in Muscovy; historically, family members of the same generation—brothers and cousins—could be named as successors. There was no clear precedent and both heirs had a legitimate claim.

Ivan did not confront this problem until a scandal forced him to action. In 1497 an assassination conspiracy against his grandson Dmitry was revealed. Blame for the plot was placed in the hands of Sophia Palaiologina and her entourage; it seems that either she was directly involved in plotting against Dmitry, or at the least that her supporters were involved. Ivan acted quickly and punished those connected with the conspiracy. Some were merely

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3 There was no strictly vertical rule of succession in Muscovy, making it possible for members of the same generation—cousins and brothers—to succeed a prince to the throne. For more on this, see ibid., 245–48.
imprisoned, while others were executed. Sophia and Vasily were spared their lives, but were disgraced. Presumably in response to this scandal, early in 1498 Ivan’s grandson Dmitry was made official co-ruler of Muscovy in a coronation at Fioravanti’s Cathedral of the Dormition. This ceremony was unprecedented, and probably took place as a means of legitimizing the unconventional choice of grandson as heir; even though there were no hard and fast rules regarding succession, the more direct line of ascendancy, from father to son, was more typical. In spite of the seemingly definitive coronation ceremony, Ivan changed his mind within just a few short years. Vasily was restored to his father’s good graces by 1499 and in 1502 Dmitry and his mother, Elena, were placed under house arrest.4

The clash between Dmitry’s supporters and Vasily’s supporters was very dramatic and urgent for those involved. Not only were the fortunes of these two young men at stake, but so were the fortunes of their supporters, especially their mothers, who were particularly involved in the dynastic feud. Not only did Elena and Sophia have high hopes for the political ambitions of their sons, but they had a great deal of self-interest as well, for a courtly woman’s role in society was largely dependent upon her status as a mother to an heir.5 There was a great deal of behind-the-scenes wrangling that influenced the outcome of the dynastic dispute, which would also later have a significant effect on the architecture of early-sixteenth-century Moscow. After all, Dmitry and Vasily were Russian princes, but they were also marginally tied to different cultures.

4 Donald Ostrowski, “The Growth of Muscovy (1462-1533),” in The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume 1: From Early Rus’ to 1689, ed. Maureen Perrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 220. Also see ibid., 245-47. Given the fact that Dmitry would still have been a child at the time of his arrest, and that there had been significant political scheming going on in the years leading up to his arrest, it was presumably a politically motivated and unjust house arrest. There appears to have been no justification for his arrest.

Dmitry’s lineage was more truly Russian. His father, Ivan Ivanovich (Ivan “Molodoi”), was the eldest son of Ivan III and his Russian wife Maria of Tver. Dmitri’s mother, Elena, was from nearby Moldavia. Vasily’s heritage, in contrast, was more diverse than his nephew’s. Indeed, the diversity of his heritage complicated his relationship with the Muscovite people, for the better as well as for the worse. On the one hand, Vasily, via his mother, Princess Sophia, could boast a direct connection to the vaunted Byzantine world. Cast in the wrong light, however, Vasily’s ancestral connection to the rather remote world of Byzantium could make him appear to be a foreign interloper, and thereby potentially less legitimate as grand prince of Muscovy. Political acumen required that Vasily overcome this potential weakness, or better yet turn that weakness into an asset.

Vasily’s mother, Sophia, was his most effective advocate, and examination of an unusual liturgical object from the end of the fifteenth century attests to the extent of her involvement in determining Vasily’s dynastic fate. Sophia commissioned a tapestry and donated it to the Trinity-Sergius Monastery, one of the chief monastic centers of Muscovy, in 1499 at the height of the dynastic dispute after Dmitry had been named coregent and before Vasily and his mother were returned to the prince’s favor (Fig. 2.1). While at first the imagery and accompanying inscription may seem innocuous enough, considering this object in the context of the high drama of 1499 gives it new meaning, and indeed makes the inclusion of certain details quite poignant. The inscription on the embroidery reads as follows:

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6 It should be remembered that, after the collapse of Byzantium in 1453, the Orthodox Church in Muscovy viewed itself as the last remaining center of true Christendom. This was a source of cultural pride for the Muscovite elite.

7 Dmitry’s mother also commissioned an embroidery in 1498, the same year that Dmitry was crowned co-ruler of Muscovy. Unlike the embroidery commissioned by Sophia, however, Elena’s embroidery celebrates her son’s and her own family’s actual position in Muscovy. Sophia went beyond this, arguing for a hoped for position of power for herself and her son, Vasily. For a reproduction and description of Elena’s 1498 embroidery, see Kollman, “Muscovite Russia, 1450-1598,” 51.
In the year 1499 this tapestry was made during the reign of the Grand Prince Ivan Vasil’evich of all Russia and his son, the Grand Prince Vasilii and the archbishop and metropolitan Simon, with the deliberation and at the order of the tsarevna of Constantinople and grand princess of Moscow, Sofiia, [the wife] of the grand prince of Moscow. She prayed to the life-giving Trinity and to the miracle-worker Sergius and affixed this tapestry.8

As Isolde Thyrêt argues in her book about the role of women in Muscovite society, this inscription worked as a powerful piece of religiously based propaganda for Princess Sophia on behalf of her son Vasily during a period of tremendous dynastic uncertainty.9 Combined with the imagery of the embroidery surrounding the inscription, it proves a quite potent commission indeed. The composition follows the form of a Byzantine icon and, significantly, Vasily’s name saints, Gabriel and Basil of Parion, are prominently included; these two saints are strategically placed beneath the image of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, placing the saints in the privileged position directly in contact with the Holy Spirit. As Thyrêt puts it, “By making her son Vasilii the receiver of Divine Grace and associating him with the king figure of the Pentecost image, Sofiia stated the claim that Vasilii was the rightful, divinely blessed successor to the grand princely throne.”10

Further, it is significant that the tapestry publicly declares that Sophia prayed to Saint Sergius, who was a saint directly associated with the fortunes of the Muscovite dynasty. In linking herself to a saint who was so important for Moscow, Sophia thereby sought to override any lingering wariness about her foreign birth. This ploy certainly had very real implications for the perception of Vasily’s own Russian identity in Moscow. Even more politically masterful was Sophia’s proud declaration of her Byzantine birth and role as Muscovite grand princess, almost


9 Thyrêt, Between God and Tsar, 22–23.

as if the two distinct titles were one uniquely Russian title. Thus Sophia’s embroidery proclaims an abiding connection to Muscovy for herself and for her son, “the Grand Prince Vasilii,” while also elegantly solving the potential problem of their connection to Byzantium.11 This one example shows how Sophia tried to merge the two concepts into one; she made them seem nearly synonymous in her wording of the inscription.

Whether or not this example of propaganda played any significant role in the outcome of the late-sixteenth-century dynastic dispute, its very existence tells us a great deal about the political climate in Muscovy at the time. The inscription on the tapestry suggests that Sophia’s link to Byzantium—as princess of Constantinople—was significant. Her Byzantine heritage was a weapon that she could wield for herself and her children, while Prince Dmitry certainly could not boast a connection to the first capital of Orthodox Christianity. But Sophia seems to have been aware that her foreignness could also be used against her and her son. Her foreign heritage was an ambiguous part of her vita that required further definition, so Sophia set out to clarify just exactly what her unique heritage meant. The embroidery elegantly and succinctly defined Sophia as equally Byzantine and Muscovite, not just one or the other. While the embroidery specifically speaks to Sophia’s heritage, the implicit significance of the tapestry’s message related to Vasily, whose future hung in the balance in that fateful final year of the fifteenth century.

Sophia had defined herself as equally Byzantine and Muscovite, which set the tone for Vasily’s rule. Thus at the turn of the century, when Ivan III was determining who would succeed him, Muscovite and Byzantine culture were becoming somewhat fused in the public eye. Not only did Sophia seek to create this fusion in her tapestry, but the idea of Moscow as a “Third Rome” or “New Byzantium” had also been brewing among the church hierarchy in Muscovy for

11 Ibid., 481.
As has already been established, the concept of Moscow as a “Third Rome” is contentious among modern scholars, and although it is unlikely that Sophia thought of Muscovy’s Byzantine inheritance in precisely those terms, the erudite writings about a “Third Rome” certainly didn’t hurt her cause. Regardless of the terms in which people thought of it, the fact remained that Muscovy had taken the spotlight away from the former Byzantine capital, consolidating a new Byzantino-Russian Orthodoxy in the Muscovite capital.

The stage had been set for a new era in Muscovy, a world in which Moscow did not simply emulate the Byzantine capital of Constantinople but became the new Byzantine capital in a still freshly post-Byzantine world. Fittingly, the architecture produced in Moscow during Vasily’s reign represented a greater shift away from Byzantino-Russian tradition toward a redefined Byzantine style than the architecture produced during his father Ivan III’s tenure. Whether the new look of Muscovite architecture was part of a deliberate campaign to adjust the built environment so that it matched Vasily’s reigning ideology, or the change was more subliminal is not clear from the surviving written documentation. Nonetheless, the surviving architecture suggests a clear—if not necessarily considered—shift towards a new Byzantine style. The designation as a “new” Byzantine style is important, as will be discussed later in this chapter, for a Byzantino-Russian tradition had been local to Muscovy for some five hundred years. A fresh new interpretation of Byzantine style was called for in the wake of Muscovy’s

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12 It should be remembered that even before the fall of Byzantium the leaders of the Orthodox Church in Russia officially distanced themselves from the Byzantine Orthodox Church after the Byzantines had shown a willingness to join the Catholic Church. With the fall of Byzantium in 1453, Russia had become (in its own eyes) the last custodian of the true Christian faith. For more information on Byzantine heritage in Russia after 1453 and the “Third Rome” idea, see John Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantine, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 113–30; Nancy Sheilds Kollman, “Muscovite Russia, 1450–1598,” in *Russia: A History*, ed. Gregory L. Freeze (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 51; D.B. Rowland, “Moscow--the Third Rome or the New Israel?,” *Russian Review* 55, no. 4 (October 1996): 591–614; and Mikhail P. Kudryatsev, *Moskva: tretii Rim, istoriko-gradostroitel’noe issledovanie* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Troika, 2008).
new role on the Byzantine stage. Beginning with Vasily’s reign, Muscovite architecture took
great strides towards creating a new architecture for a new historical moment.

**Vasily’s Architectural Inheritance**

When the dispute over Ivan III’s heir had been settled and Vasily III was finally crowned
Grand Prince in 1505, he inherited Muscovy’s unique political climate as well as an evolving
architectural landscape. Grand Prince Ivan III left one major building project, the Cathedral of
the Archangel Michael, incomplete at the time of his death, leaving the task of completion in
Vasily’s hands. Ivan had also left Vasily a robust community of architects that included a
number of transplants from northern Italy. So even though Vasily did not initiate contact with
foreign architects at the beginning of his rule, his father’s legacy assured that he had significant
contact with Italian architects, and Vasily continued to employ those masters who had already
travelled to Muscovy in earlier decades.

Vasily had no need to look elsewhere for architects, as Moscow had already become an
important architectural capital during his father’s reign. By the time Vasily took the throne, there
were a number of Italian-made structures distinguishing the cityscape of Moscow; there was also
a sizeable community of northern Italian expatriates populating the workforce. The two most
celebrated Italian architects had come to Moscow and died there in the previous century:
Aristotele Fioravanti arrived in 1475 and died by 1486 and Pietro Antonio Solari arrived around
1490 and died by 1493. Even though these celebrated architects were already dead by the turn of
the sixteenth century, their architecture lived on and continued to wield influence on the
changing face of Muscovite architecture.
There were also at least nine other northern Italian masters who may have still been alive and active in the early days of Vasily’s rule. Marco “Friazin” and Antonio Gislardi both had arrived in the 1480s. Three other masters, identified simply as Zanantonio, Jacopo, and Cristoforo, had come to Moscow with Pietro Antonio Solari in 1490. Alevizio Carcano (Alevizio the Elder), Bernardo Borgomanero, and Michele Parpaione had all arrived in 1494. Finally, Alevizio “Novi” had arrived in 1504. There is an unfortunate dearth of documentary information on the fates of most of these figures, leaving uncertainty as to the whereabouts and activities of most of these men by the early-sixteenth century. Nonetheless, it is not unreasonable to assume that many of these men were still working in Moscow, especially considering the fact that Ivan III had a history of holding Italian architects hostage in Moscow. The only one of these artists about whom we do have concrete information for during the time of Vasily’s reign is Alevizio “Novi”. He arrived just a few months before Ivan III’s death and the Russian chronicle has quite a bit to report about his work and life in Moscow; his architectural career in Italy and Moscow will be discussed in detail below. Whatever the fate of the other eight northern Italian masters about whom we have no information, it can safely be assumed that their activity under Ivan III affected the city’s architectural development.

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13 I say “at least” nine Italian architects, since the Russian chronicles do not necessarily record the presence of every middling architect or builder who found his way into Moscow during this period. Thus the nine architects are those who are specifically named in the historical records. Given the frequency with which the records mention “unknown assistants” who traveled to Moscow with more celebrated Italian architects, it seems highly likely that there were a number of Italian apprentices who may have become masters in their own right after a period of apprenticeship in Moscow.

14 As discussed in chapter 1, information from the Russian chronicles along with letters preserved in the State Archives in Milan indicate that Aristotele Fioravanti sought to return to his homeland, even seeking the assistance of the Bolognese government. Ivan refused Fioravanti’s wishes and the pleas made by the Bolognese on his behalf. In the 1530s, as will be discussed later in this chapter, another prominent Italian master was also held against his will and fled to neighboring Livonia in secret.

15 The Russian chronicles exclusively refer to this architect as Aleviz Novi, meaning the “New” Aleviz, presumably to distinguish him from Alevisio da Carcano, who arrived in Moscow at the end of the fifteenth century.
Moscow had been forever changed by the activities of these men during the last two decades of the fifteenth century as their buildings were becoming a vital part of the local architectural landscape. It is worthwhile to recall that Aristotele Fioravanti had begun work on the Cathedral of the Dormition thirty years, or about a full generation, before Vasily took the throne. Thus Italo-Russian constructions such as the Cathedral of the Dormition were already established as a definitive part of the Moscow in which Vasily and his generation of Muscovites grew up. The generation of architects that would be active during Vasily’s rule, then, was well versed in the styles of the increasingly hybridized architecture created under Ivan III. The architects and patrons in Vasily’s Muscovy had the advantage of having developed a greater level of comfort with foreign forms. Under Vasily Italian architects precipitated the next phase of Moscow’s architectural evolution, building upon the solid foundations laid by Ivan III and the first generation of Italian expatriate architects.

Cathedral of the Archangel Michael and Alevisio “Novi”

Vasily’s career as an architectural patron picked up exactly where his father’s had ended, when he took over the construction of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael after his father’s death (Fig. 1.55). This cathedral was one of the most significant Italian-built churches in the Kremlin, because it was to serve as the burial church for the Muscovite Grand Princes. As such, it held just as central a role in Muscovite dynastic life as did Fioravanti’s important Cathedral of the Dormition, which stood just across the square. Ivan deserves the credit for initiating this project, but it was during Vasily’s rule that most of the construction was completed and so this building more securely fits into the second phase of Italian architecture in Moscow (1505-39).
Still, Ivan’s legacy is quite apparent in this project, since his last mission to Italy had brought new talent to Moscow to work on the cathedral. Thus, it is necessary to backtrack briefly to the final five years of Ivan III’s rule.

Ivan III had sent his final artistically minded mission to Italy in 1499 to find masters who could build what was to be the Kremlin’s Cathedral of the Archangel Michael. (There almost seems to be an element of prescience in the fact that Ivan first sent a mission to Italy to find architects to build his coronation church shortly after he took the throne and that this last mission went to Italy to find architects to build a burial church just a few short years before his own death.) Ivan’s ambassadors discovered Alevisio “Novi” on this journey to northern Italy. Alevisio was eventually brought back to work in Moscow, but there were delays along the way, and the mission did not return to Moscow until November of 1504. Construction on the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael began early the next year, but the project was further hampered by Ivan’s death in October, just a few months after building had begun. Nonetheless, construction carried on after Ivan’s death, and the unique style of the building stands as something of a monument to the new era in Russian architecture that was ushered in when Vasily III was crowned. The style of the Cathedral was truly unprecedented in Muscovy, introducing an entirely new decorative vernacular into Muscovite architecture that will be discussed in detail below. The tradition would continue throughout his lifetime in the works of a number of different architects, but the fresh new style was largely indebted to the influence of Alevisio “Novi,” the Venetian stone carver discovered by Ivan III’s last mission to Italy.
Alevisio’s Background in Italy

The innovative character of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael can be credited to the daring application of blatantly Venetian elements by its architect, Alevisio. The man whom the Russian chronicles call “Alevisio Novi,” meaning “Alevisio the New” (to distinguish him from the older Alevisio Carcano), is almost certainly identifiable as Alevisio Lamberti da Montagnana, a stone carver from Padua who worked in Venice, Ferrara, and Montagnana. Although this Alevisio’s identity remained unknown for many years, the Italian scholar Sergio Bettini suggested Alevisio Novi’s identity in a 1966 article, and most subsequent scholarship agrees with Bettini’s identification. Bettini’s astute analysis of a number of archival sources in northern Italy convincingly suggest that Alevisio Lamberti from the Veneto is the same Alevisio who found himself working in early sixteenth-century Moscow. Based on this analysis, it is possible to ascertain important details about Alevisio’s life and career before he moved to Moscow, details that are extremely useful in understanding how and why he applied certain stylistic details to buildings in Moscow. This knowledge is especially useful when examining Alevisio’s first project in Moscow, the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, which is especially noteworthy for its “exotic” Venetian character.

Sergio Bettini’s analysis of the documentary evidence shows that Alevisio Lamberti was active in Venice through 1494, where he worked on the decoration of the façade of the Scuola di San Marco alongside Mauro Codussi, one of Venice’s most accomplished architects (Fig. 2.2).

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The importance of Alevisio’s familiarity with Codussi can hardly be understated, given Codussi’s tremendous role in the transition of Venetian architecture from a late Gothic style to a distinctly Venetian Renaissance style by the latter half of the fifteenth century. Codussi is considered a pioneer in Venetian architecture, masterfully blending Byzantine, Gothic, and Renaissance architecture into what scholars now consider the Renaissance tradition in Venice.\textsuperscript{17} The fact that Alevisio worked alongside this important architect indicates that Alevisio was trained in the epicenter of Venetian Renaissance architecture. Further, the unique styles that were being melded together in Codussi’s circles may very well have served as models for Alevisio later in his career, as he created his own hybridized forms in Muscovy.

Records indicate that Alevisio was also working in Ferrara from 1498 to 1500.\textsuperscript{18} The most noteworthy monuments with which Alevisio is associated from this period are the funerary monument of Tommasina Gruamonte (Fig. 2.3), which was made for the Church of Sant’Andrea in Montagnana, and—much more tentatively—the Church of the Annunciation in Brendola (Fig. 2.4), as well as sculptural contributions to the Chapel of San Antonio in the Cathedral of Montagnana (Figs. 2.5 and 2.6).\textsuperscript{19} The Gruamonte Monument is crafted in a very classicizing manner: a nude putto stands in contrapposto with drapery swirling over one shoulder and around to the other side of his body. He holds up a plaque with text honoring Gruamonte, under which is included a signature reading “ALOISIUS MONTAGNANA FACIEBAT.”\textsuperscript{20} Above the plaque an effigy of Tommasina sits within a scalloped roundel. If Alevisio is indeed responsible for this sculpture, it attests to his knowledge of the classical forms of Renaissance sculpture before his departure

\textsuperscript{17} Deborah Howard, \textit{The Architectural History of Venice} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 132–35.

\textsuperscript{18} Pietro Paoletti was the first to publish these documents in the nineteenth century. See Mazzi, “Indagini archivistiche per Alvise Lamberti da Montagnana,” 97.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 99–100.

\textsuperscript{20} Bettini, “L’architetto Alevis Novi in Russia,” 587.
for Moscow as well as his early affinity for the scallop-shell motif, which would feature prominently in his later architecture, both in Italy and in Moscow.

The other works in and around Ferrara have been hypothetically attributed to Alevisio on the grounds of style more than on concrete documentary evidence. Thus, while it is interesting to consider these works, it is impossible to determine if they were in fact the work of Alevisio. Nonetheless, since it has been confirmed that Alevisio was in Ferrara during the last years of the fifteenth century, these works would have at least informed his style, even if he did not work on them. Like the Gruamonte Monument, the chapel in Montagnana Cathedral also features a prominent scallop shell along with classicizing figural sculpture. There is a definite stylistic affinity between the funerary monument and the sculptural details in the chapel in Montagnana Cathedral.

The Church of the Annunciation in Brendola is the only purely architectural example from this period that has been attributed to Alevisio. Again, the hypothesis has not been proven, but on purely stylistic and geographical grounds, the hypothesis is not unreasonable. Scallop-shell motifs are prominently featured in the gables of the façade, adding to the more-or-less sculptural feeling of the exterior of this chapel. Even more interesting and convincing for an attribution to Alevisio are the other ornamental details of the exterior, which bear a notable similarity to the ornamentation on the exterior of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael in Moscow, which will be discussed in more detail below. Although it would be convenient to attribute this building to Alevisio, stylistic affinity does not provide sufficient evidence of authorship; moreover, the question is ultimately unimportant. It is enough to note that Alevisio was working in a region and at a time when buildings like this were being constructed—buildings that would later be replicated to some degree in Moscow.

21 For more on the question of the attribution of the church in Brendola see ibid., 592–93.
Alevisio is Recruited

The detailed documentary information regarding Ivan’s recruitment of previous Italian architects is lacking in the case of Alevisio. Ivan sent two ambassadors, Dmitri Ralev and Mitrofan Karakarov, to Italy in 1499. They arrived in Venice in November of 1499, where they made brief visits to Bassano and Padua. They were in Rome from February to April of 1500, and departed for Russia in May. It is unclear what their activities were in Venice or why they travelled to Rome. Giuliana Mazzi suggests that the ambassadors could have met Alevisio (in Ferrara or Brendola) on their travels around the Veneto or to or from Rome.22 One can only speculate as to why Alevisio was selected by the ambassadors, but it seems reasonable to assume that he could point to a number of projects on which he had worked that seemed to suit the needs of Ivan III back in Moscow.

Alevisio’s next known whereabouts are with Ivan’s ambassadors in Bakhchisaray in the Crimea where they were guests of Khan Mengli-Girey from 1503-1504. The normal route from northern Italy to Moscow would have led the group through war-torn Livonia, so the travelers made a necessary detour through the Crimea. The group’s stop in Bakhchisaray turned out to be a useful opportunity for Alevisio to continue to prove his artistic worth and to curry favor with the Khan, who commissioned him to construct a doorway for his palace. The portal, known as the “Iron Gate” is an elaborately carved doorway with floral and ornamental motifs that draw heavily on Alevisio’s experience as a stone carver in northern Italy (Figs. 2.7 and 2.8). Classical pilasters, which are decorated with floral sculptural motifs, flank the doorway, and an ornamented lunette, accented with distinctly Venetian volutes and a prominent scallop shell—a

22 Mazzi, “Indagini archivistiche per Alvise Lamberti,” 100.
hallmark of Alevisio’s work—crowns the whole ensemble. This small doorway is a masterpiece of architectural ornament and it is all the more interesting because, although it is immediately recognizable as a product of the Venetian Renaissance, it also reveals distinct flourishes that are unique to the local culture of the Crimea. Thus the Venetian scallop shell and capital volutes are paired with a large central medallion and lintel both of which are decorated in a decidedly Eastern tradition. Further, the medallion and lintel are both dominated by an Arabic inscription. The inscription in the medallion reads “The owner of the residence and king of the area—Sultan, the greatest noble Mengli Giray Khan son of Haji Khan, Allah will forgive him and his parents in both worlds.” The inscription on the lintel reads “The sultan of two continents and two seas, Hakan Sultan, son of Sultan Mengli Giray Khan, son of Sultan Haji Giray Khan, ordered the construction of this magnificent threshold and this sublime greatest door in the year 909 [C.E. 1503/4].”

This was clearly an important monument from the khan’s perspective, leading one to wonder just how Alevisio managed to earn such a commission. While the details may remain obscure, the fact that he was given this project suggests that his reputation and body of work were both impressive.

In his expert melding together of distinct stylistic elements, Alevisio proved his ability to work successfully in a foreign environment by adapting what he had learned in his home country to the specific tastes and requirements of his patron. His “Iron Gate” is neither wholly Venetian

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23 This is my translation of Ernst’s translation from the original Arabic into Russian: “Vladelets étogo zhilishcha i tsar’ étoí oblasti—sultan velichaïshii vlagorodneïshii Mengli Girei khan syn Khadzhi Girei khana, prostitut Allakh emu e ego roditeliam v oboikh mirakh.” Nikolai L. Ernst, “Bakhchisaraiskii khanskii dvorets i arkhektor velikogo kniaizia Ivana III Friazin Aleviz Novii,” Izvestiia tavoricheskogo obshchestva istorii, arkeologii i etnografii. 2 (1928): 39.

24 This is my translation of Ernst’s translation of the original Arabic into Russian: “Prikazal postroit’ étot velichestvennyi porog i étu vozvysheñnuïu vysochaïshiu dver’ sultan oboikh materikov i khakan oboikh moreï sultan syn sultana Mengli Girei khan syn sultana Khadzhi Girei khana v datu 909 goda.” In ibid.
nor wholly Crimean; it is a genuinely hybrid work, anticipating the kind of work Alevisio would be doing in the coming decades in Moscow. So, by 1504, when he finished work on the gate, he had already gained experience in combining artistic forms of distinct cultural origins. Additionally, the “Iron Gate” is not at all the awkward experiment one might have expected from a young artist newly trying his hand at melding stylistic elements; on the contrary, Alevisio’s merging of East and West at Bakhchisaray was viewed as a tremendous success. In fact, the khan was so impressed that he wrote a letter of recommendation on Alevisio’s behalf addressed to Ivan III, describing Alevisio as an “excellent master, unlike other masters, but a truly great master.”25 This initial experience creating a hybridized art form most certainly served as invaluable experience for Alevisio, who would put this skill to use on a much larger scale as soon as he arrived in Moscow.

Alevisio in Moscow

Alevisio and the rest of the group arrived in Moscow at the end of 1504, and it was not long before Alevisio’s talents were put to use on the ever-expanding Moscow cityscape. Indeed, Alevisio’s first project in Moscow, the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, is now considered one of the most striking buildings in Moscow; its Renaissance character must have been even more striking at the time of its creation. From the outside, the building looks very much like a product of the Venetian Renaissance. Scholars have been discussing the heavily Venetian character of this cathedral for decades, speculating as to its source long before Alevisio Novi was

25 “bravissimo maestro, non come certi maestri ma maestro veramente grande.” Quoted in Bettini, “L’architetto Alevis Novi in Russia,” 580. Bettini provides what is presumably a translation into Italian from the original language. There is no citation to lead us directly to the letter; thus, this requires further investigation.
identified. Now that scholars agree that the Alevisio Novi who built the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael is Alevisio Lamberti, it is easier to understand exactly why such unexpectedly foreign forms are so confidently employed on the building’s exterior.

Each façade of the building is divided into two stories by a wide classical-style entablature and classical pilasters further divide each side of the building into clearly delineated vertical bays (Fig. 2.9). The delineated bays of the exterior are broken up even further by more architectural elements that further enliven each façade: Within the lower bays of each façade are a series of blind arches, which are themselves set on short classical pilasters. Each bay, on the upper and lower levels of each façade, is further enlivened with a narrow window. At the roof level, each bay is crowned with a traditional Russian pointed gable, or zakomara, which Lamberti ornamented with his signature scallop-shell motif. The capitals on the pilasters that divide the bays also seem to be derived from the Italian Renaissance, with their combination of foliate and scroll designs (Fig. 2.10). In fact, the capitals on the Cathedral’s exterior are nearly identical to the decorative capitals used in many Venetian buildings of the late fifteenth century. One interesting example is the Clock Tower in the Piazza San Marco, believed to have been built by Alevisio’s colleague in Venice, Mauro Codussi (Fig. 2.11). Also notably Venetian is the cluster of four small oculi above the west entrance (Fig. 2.12), a common decorative device in Venetian buildings, as seen in Santa Maria dei Miracoli, to name but one example (Fig. 2.13). Further contributing to the Cathedral’s Venetian personality were Gothic-style pinnacles that originally stood within the zakomary. The Venetian character of Alevisio’s building is all the more apparent when one considers the original appearance of this building. The building has

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26 Pod’iap’ol’skii is one of the most important scholars who has written on this topic. Sergej S. Pod’iap’ol’skii, “Le fonti veneziane dell’architettura della Cattedrale dell’Arcangelo Michele di Mosca,” *Arte Lombarda* 44/45 (1976): 188–90.
been painted white since its original construction, but in its original state it would have been red-painted brick contrasted against the white stone accents of pilasters, entablatures, and blind arches (Fig. 2.14). This contrast of building materials, as discussed in the previous chapter with regards to the Kremlin fortifications, was typical in fifteenth-century architecture throughout much of northern Italy, including in Venice.

Thus, from the exterior, the Cathedral appears to be an offspring of the Italian Renaissance. This familial resemblance is not only owed to the use of Renaissance decorative elements, such as the scallop-shell motifs that crown the building in the zakomary, the use of classical articulation, and the Venetian-style group of roundels above the main portal, all of which most certainly do derive from the Italian Renaissance; the resemblance also derives from the way in which these elements are systematically applied to the building’s exterior. The façade is neatly divided into an orderly grid by the classicizing pilasters, entablatures, and blind arches, in the tradition of so many famous Renaissance buildings, such as Leon Battista Alberti’s famed Palazzo Rucellai in Florence.

More useful for the purposes of this discussion, however, is a comparison between the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael and those Italian buildings on which Alevisio worked or is suspected to have worked. Since documents prove that Alevisio was working on the Scuola di San Marco in 1494, comparison of the Scuola to Alevisio’s first building in Moscow is very insightful (Fig. 2.2). Like the Scuola di San Marco, the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael is divided into two stories by a wide entablature and each story is further divided into bays by pilasters. The rooflines of both buildings are distinguished by a series of rounded gables. Additionally, two prominent decorative features from the Scuola are also used in the Cathedral: The same type of composite capital crowns the pilasters on both structures and the cluster of
roundels over the doorway on the Cathedral mimics the marble ornamentation in the lower bays of the Scuola.

Even more revealing is the comparison between the Cathedral in Moscow and the Church of the Annunciation in Brendola (Fig. 2.4). This small chapel dating from the last decade of the fifteenth century appears to be something of a precursor to the larger Cathedral in Moscow. Like the Moscow Cathedral, this chapel is a simple square divided into vertical bays by pilasters and blind arcades. The façade of the chapel is especially similar to the Cathedral in Moscow, since it is also divided horizontally into two stories. Perhaps the most striking similarity is the use of the decorative scallop shell in the gables of the main façade. Indeed, the façade of the Brendola chapel follows the same general pattern that would be used on the four exterior walls of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael about a decade later in Moscow. Whether the church in Brendola can be attributed to Alevisio does not matter as much as the fact that this church was built in northern Italy before Alevisio left for Moscow. Whoever its creator was, it can be viewed as one of the important sources of inspiration for the “new” style put to use in Moscow in the first decade of the sixteenth century.

The Venetian details of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael lend it a complexity and interest that would have made it both exotic and elegant, qualities apparently desired by Moscow’s rulers in the early sixteenth century. Comparing this church to Fioravanti’s Cathedral of the Dormition, just across the square, one can see that a real change has taken place in the official architecture of Muscovy (Fig. 1.1). But at the same time, there is an important level of continuity that maintains the visual as well as ideological connection between these two churches and their patrons, Ivan III and Vasily III. On the one hand, both cathedrals are typically Byzantino-Russian in their essentially cubic, cross-in-square layout crowned with five domes.
Furthermore, the articulation of the exterior of these buildings is essentially the same: The facades are divided up into smaller units by pilasters and each of these units is decorated with a narrow window. Each bay is topped by a rounded gable, so that a steady procession of arched gables encircles the roofline of the buildings. In these basic details, both cathedrals belong to the same architectural family. But the spirit of each building is quite different, speaking to the shifting tide of Muscovite culture at the beginning of the sixteenth century with the new leadership of Vasily III.

The most obvious difference between Fioravanti’s cathedral and Alevisio’s is the ornamentation on the exterior and the choice of materials. Fioravanti’s cathedral, though revolutionary for its spatial conception, adheres very closely to medieval Russian tradition; built of limestone, it celebrates the natural color of the stone. Alevisio’s cathedral, on the other hand, was made of brick with white stone accents, a use of materials that was essentially foreign to Moscow before the building of the Kremlin fortifications by northern Italian masters in the last decades of the fifteenth century. In this aspect, then, Alevisio’s cathedral does not have the same connection to Russia’s ancient past; instead, it looks both to the Italian source of this style, and—more importantly—to Moscow’s own recent past. The brick and white stone used on the Kremlin fortifications built under Ivan III had initially been a hallmark of northern Italy, but by Vasily III’s rule these materials had become, because of their prominent use in the Kremlin, a signature of Moscow. The red brick construction, then, had a dual signification.

What was new and daring in Alevisio’s building was the use of so many ornamental motifs that originated in the Italian Renaissance: the scallop shell, the classical orders, the cluster of roundels above the main portal, and the interweaving of horizontal and vertical forms into a grid. Thus, new features were applied to a building that was, in almost every other respect,
traditionally Muscovite. Still, the application of these details introduced an entirely new element into Muscovite architecture that assisted in the continued transformation of Moscow’s architecture.

In spite of the stylistic daring on display on the exterior of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, the overall conception of the church does not stray from the Byzantino-Russian tradition established in medieval Russia. As already mentioned, the church is organized in a traditional cross-in-square layout, with four large, central piers dividing the space into nine large bays. Further, the construction employs none of the structural innovations used by Alevisio’s predecessor, Aristotele Fioravanti. The square bays of the interior, for example, do not harmoniously relate to one another, and are instead of differing sizes and shapes. The result is a rather dissonant spatial organization. Additionally, the feeling of openness that Fioravanti achieved in the Cathedral of the Dormition—and that so impressed the Russian chroniclers—is replaced with a decided weightiness in the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael. The awkward division of space is also evident from the exterior of the church. Unlike Fioravanti’s cathedral, which has bays of equal size encircling the building, Alevisio’s building has bays of differing widths wrapping around the building. Furthermore, the number and size of vertical bays around the exterior of the building is inconsistent. Whereas the main (west) façade has three bays of roughly the same size, the north and south facades are made up of five bays of varying widths; on both sides, the westernmost bay is so narrow as to seem out of place. There is no attempt to mitigate this problem with an orderly arrangement of bays of different sizes; instead, the arrangement seems random and marks a return to the kind of spatial organization seen in Russian architecture that predates Fioravanti.
This organization of space is indicative of an architectural approach in which space and ornament are two distinct and unrelated elements; the one does not shape the other. As much as this may seem like a “step backward,” the building is still tremendously innovative in its application of Italian Renaissance decoration. Alevisio’s architectural contributions in his first building in Moscow were very different from Fioravanti’s, but they were no less innovatory.

Dmitry Shvidkovsky argues that the contradiction between exterior and interior in Alevisio’s cathedral—innovative exterior decoration applied to a very traditional use of space—is very much in line with Moscow’s own divided nature in the early sixteenth century. After all, he points out, Vasily III had become grand prince of Muscovy by virtue of Ivan’s selection of him as heir, in preference over his eldest grandson. As has already been discussed, this was a rather daring and contentious decision. Shvidkovsky argues that out of the contention involved in settling the dynastic dispute two opposing factions arose in early-sixteenth-century Moscow: a traditional faction, favoring native Russian culture, and another that was more accepting of the Byzantine culture to which Vasily was maternally linked, and therefore to foreign culture in general. As a result, political cunning required that the appearance of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, the first public building patronized by Vasily, satisfy the competing Muscovite factions. In visual terms, the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael seems to have done just that quite successfully.\textsuperscript{27} Vasily’s political and cultural adaptability, along with a general increasing comfort with Italian styles in Moscow, can account for the disjunction between exterior and interior on this striking building.

Shvidkovsky’s analysis is convincing. As has already been discussed, there was a simmering tension in Moscow that came to a boil with the dynastic dispute in the 1490s. Moreover, there still certainly would have been tension in Moscow with regard to Byzantium.

\textsuperscript{27} Shvidkovsky, \textit{Russian Architecture and the West}, 102.
On the one hand, Byzantium was the origin of the one true Orthodox religion; on the other hand, Byzantium had fallen not long after “betraying” Orthodoxy at the council of Florence. Thus, Muscovites had conflicted feelings about Byzantium (and by extension, Venice). This ambivalence is made clear in the fifteenth-century religious text *The Tale of the White Cowl*, which was initially written to justify the authority of the Novgorodian church, and was later adopted by the Muscovites to assert the Muscovite role as the last remaining custodian of the Orthodox faith. *The Tale of the White Cowl* includes the story of a vision of Patriarch Philotheos of Constantinople, in which he learns that “this imperial city of Constantinople will be taken by the sons of Hagar because of its sins, and all holy shrines will be defiled and destroyed.”

Byzantium was at once revered epicenter of Christendom and “sinner”—a symbol of the disloyalty to and failure of Orthodox Christianity. Seeking to fashion his capital as a sort of Byzantium reborn, Vasily certainly would have sought to walk the fine line between promoting Byzantine culture, to which he had dynastic ties, and promoting Russian culture. The hybrid form of his first major church in the Kremlin does speak to the complicated identity—and ideology—of early-sixteenth-century Muscovy. This building marks the beginning of a new phase in Russian architecture, in which indigenous and foreign architectural elements carried equal importance.

**Alevisio’s Other Projects in Moscow**

Looking beyond Alevisio’s best-known project, the architecture built in Vasily’s Muscovy was almost always suffused with a recently developed stylistic tension between

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Russian tradition and an innovative application of foreign style. Alevisio was Vasily’s leading architect on many such exciting new projects around Moscow. In fact, there can be no doubt that Alevisio Lamberti had an illustrious career in Moscow even after the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael was completed in 1508. The Russian chronicles mention at least eleven other churches built by “Alevisio Novi” in Muscovy, but they provide no other information regarding their dates of construction, information about how they were commissioned, or their appearance. Even more frustrating, almost none of these churches is still standing and those few that are extant have been dramatically altered since their original construction. Therefore, it is difficult to determine a timeline of Alevisio’s activity in Moscow, let alone a definitive sense of his style and architectural contributions after the completion of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael. Regardless of these many challenges, it is important not to ignore these buildings simply because they are not accessible to the modern scholar. The sheer number of buildings credited to Alevisio implies that he was one of Moscow’s premier architects, and there can be little doubt that he exerted a tremendous influence on sixteenth-century architecture in Moscow. It is important to attempt to understand as much as possible about what his architectural contributions were.

Fortunately, it is quite possible to get a sense of the original appearance of many of Alevisio’s destroyed and altered buildings by examining the written descriptions of scholars working before the destruction of Alevisio’s buildings, old photographs and drawings, and information gleaned from recent archaeological explorations. While analysis of Alevisio’s destroyed buildings via the aforementioned sources is imperfect, and often leaves gaps

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29 Construction on the cathedral was completed in 1508 and it was consecrated in 1509.

30 For older scholarship with useful drawings and descriptions see Michail Krasovskii, Ocherk’ istorii moskovskogo perioda drevnei-russkogo tserkovnogo zodchestva : (ot’ otsnovaniia Moskvy do kontsa pervoi chetverti XVIII veka) (Moscow: Lissnera i Sobko, 1911); Ivan Mikhailovich Snegirev, Moskva; podrobnoe istoritcheskoe i arkheologicheskoe opisanie goroda, 1865. For recent archaeological investigations with useful photographs and drawings see Leonid A. Beliaev et al., Moskovskaia Rus’ : problemy arkheologii i istorii arkhitектury (Moscow: Institut Arkheologii RAN, 2008).
inconsistencies, it still provides a general impression of the form and style of several of Alevisio’s important architectural projects. Indeed, these combined sources provide a reasonably reliable account of Alevisio Lamberti’s oeuvre in sixteenth-century Muscovy.

The eleven churches that the Russian chronicles attribute to “Alevisio Novi” are: the Church of the Holy Mother of God, Saint Vladimir in the Old Gardens, the Annunciation in Vorontsov, the Nativity of the Virgin, Saint Leonty Rostovsky behind Neglinnaya, the Annunciation on Vagankov(o), Saint Aleksey the Man of God in the Devichy Convent, the Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist below the Forest in Zamoskvorechy, Saint Peter the Metropolitan in the Upper Monastery of Saint Peter, the Church of the Holy Mother of God on Sretenka, and Saint Barbara.31 The only one of these buildings that survives today is Saint Peter the Metropolitan, but even this church has been remodeled, and so its original appearance has been obscured just like the other churches. Although a comprehensive review of all eleven of these churches is impossible, careful analysis of the existing documentation brings together a significant amount of information about a handful of these buildings, analysis of which reveals that many of these churches were built in a consistent style that could be called “Alevisian.”

One of the churches for which we have solid documentary information is the Saint John the Baptist, which Alevisio was working on in 1508, just as work on the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael was coming to a close.32 According to Russian scholar Ivan M. Snegirev, the Church of Saint John the Baptist was built as a replacement for a 1463 church of the same name.

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31 Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei (PSRL), vol. 8 (St. Petersburg-Moscow: Nauka, 1846-1989), 254-55. Also see Bettini, “L’architetto Alevis Novi in Russia,” 581; Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 391. It is difficult to get a sense of how these churches may have been distributed around Moscow, since the name of many of the churches is literally the only information available.

that had fallen into disrepair by the 1490s. It was a brick construction, typical of Alevisio, set on preexisting fifteenth-century stone foundations.\(^{33}\) The church appears to have been demolished in the first half of the nineteenth century under the orders of Tsar Nicholas I, to make room for a new building, the Church of the Savior.\(^{34}\) A plan of the church as it stood before its destruction (Fig. 2.15) reveals a cross-in-square church with a tripartite apse, surrounded on the south and west sides by three square rooms, and on the north side by a porch. I have not located any scholarship that discusses alterations made to this church after its construction in 1508, but based on the typical layout of Muscovite churches in the sixteenth century—and the typical layout of Alevi churches at this time—it seems highly likely that the extraneous square rooms and the porch were additions made to the original 1508 construction.\(^{35}\) An anonymous reconstruction drawing, made in the 1920s, gives a sense of what the building’s north side, and also provides a sense of what this church core would have looked like (Fig. 2.16). As with Alevisio’s Cathedral of the Archangel Michael and the church in Brendola, which may be Alevisio’s work, the church core is a vertically oriented square whose exterior is ornamented with classicizing elements that divide the façades into a grid: A wide entablature creates two stories, each story divided into three bays by four classical pilasters, crowned—on the upper story—by blind arches.

Around the same time, Alevisio began work on the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in the Simonov Monastery (Fig. 2.17).\(^{36}\) Based on an undated photograph, published by Ettore Lo Gatto, it is possible to get a good sense of what type of building this was. Like the typical

\(^{33}\) Snegirev, Moskva, 22-23.

\(^{34}\) For a summary of Krasovskij’s analysis of the church, see Lo Gatto, Gli artisti italiani in Russia, 51.

\(^{35}\) This supposition is supported by the fact that Russian scholar Michail Krasovskii believed that Alevisio rebuilt the Church of St. John the Baptist on preexisting foundations dating to the fifteenth century, which most likely would have adhered to the cross-in-square tradition. See ibid.

\(^{36}\) Bettini, “L’architetto Alevi Novi in Russia,” 581; Lo Gatto, Gli artisti italiani in Russia, 51.
Byzantino-Russian church, the Church of the Nativity is appears to be a cross-in-square cubic church with a tripartite apse crowned with one dome set on an elongated drum. In this regard, the building adheres to Byzantino-Russian architectural tradition. The ornamentation of the exterior, however, reveals the hand of a foreign architect. As with Alevsi’s previous two buildings in Moscow, the exterior of the Church of the Nativity is defined by an interweaving arrangement of horizontal and vertical classical elements that provide a sense of harmony to the building’s exterior. The façades are divided into three bays, which are connected at the roofline by rounded arches. The façades are also divided horizontally into two stories by a pair of ornamental bands, which encircle the entire building. Unlike on the previous two churches built by Alevsi in Moscow, the bays of the exterior are created by colossal-order pilasters, rather than with two levels of smaller-scale pilasters. True to what seems to have been the taste in early-sixteenth-century Moscow, this church was built in brick and the architectural ornament of white stone stood out against this.

These three churches built by Alevsi, the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, the Church of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, and the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in the Simonov Monastery, reveal a consistent architectural style used by Alevsi in early-sixteenth-century Moscow. Based on these examples, his style follows the traditional Russian cross-in-square plan, but introduces new Italianate ornamentation. As with the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, there is a Russian “core” that is overlaid with a northern Italian ornamentation. Specifically, his buildings have a consistent style of exterior decoration with façades divided into bays by classical pilasters, which are themselves connected by blind arches. The facades are further divided horizontally into two stories by a classical entablature. In most of his churches, Alevsi used the characteristically northern Italian contrast of red-painted brick set
against white stone accents. To see so many churches with these specific characteristics in early-sixteenth-century Moscow suggests the development of a new trend in Muscovite architecture, especially considering that these characteristics did not exist in Moscow before Alevisio’s arrival. Although deeply rooted in earlier architectural tradition, the combination of Russian tradition with ornamentation of foreign origin is an architectural type entirely new to Muscovy. These buildings can accurately be called “Alevisian.”

There is evidence that Alevisio also introduced a second church type to Moscow in the second decade of the sixteenth century. Analysis of two of his churches, the Church of Saint Peter the Metropolitan (Fig. 2.18) and the Church of Saint Barbara (Fig. 2.19), both built around 1514, suggests a developing taste for smaller, central-plan churches. The new form seems to be a logical development in a culture that both admired Byzantine tradition and used Italian architects. In many ways, the rise of small, central-plan churches seems almost like an inevitability in Russian architecture. As we shall see, this church type allowed for the subsequent development of the archetypal Russian architecture of the middle of the sixteenth century.

The Church of Saint Peter the Metropolitan still stands, but has been extensively remodeled. Still, its overall form is unchanged and can give a sense of Alevisio’s hand. What is immediately apparent from the outside of this building is that the cubic appearance typical in Byzantino-Russian churches has been abandoned in favor of a rounded, tiered organization. The plan reveals that the church is set up with a circular central space surrounded by eight circular lobes of alternating size (Fig. 2.20); the second story is an octagonal space that rests directly above the central space of the lower story. A single dome crowns the octagonal second story. It seems that the alterations made to this church were superficial; it is likely that rather than the rectangular windows that now exist, there would have been lancet windows much like those on
the older churches of the Kremlin.\textsuperscript{37} Although we know very little about the original decoration on the exterior, we do know that it was built of brick, which was Alevisio’s favored medium and which served as an ideal backdrop against which to set white stone accents.

Any trace of Alevisio’s other church from 1514, the Church of Saint Barbara, was thought to be lost until 2007, when a team of Russian archaeologists excavated the basement of the existing Church of Saint Barbara, which dates to the late eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{38} Not only did the team learn important details about the original church’s construction, such as the fact that it was built with brick and white stone, but they also got a sense of how the original plan related to the new church’s Neoclassical plan. The original sixteenth-century Church of Saint Barbara was a central-plan church, composed of a central square around which semicircular lobes radiated, creating a quatrefoil space. The plan is slightly more complicated than the plan of the Church of Saint Peter, as the perimeter is actually made up of two interlocking squares, one with ninety-degree corners and the other with rounded corners. Just as at the Church of Saint Peter, the newness of the plan is mediated by the use of the trademark Alevisian building materials—red brick and white stone. Still, the rounded centralized church type that Alevisio seems to have introduced to Moscow is unprecedented in Russia, and marks an important turning point in the history of its architecture.

The consistent style of exterior decoration, wherein the brick façades are enlivened with classical articulation in white stone, must have provided a consistency to the cityscape. While these buildings do not have the same boldly Venetian sculptural details as the Cathedral of the

\textsuperscript{37} William Craft Brumfield, \textit{A History of Russian Architecture} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 114; \textit{Arkheiturnye ansambli Moskvy XV-nachala XX vekov: printisipy khudozhestvennogo edinstva} (Moscow: Stroiizdat, 1997), 47.

\textsuperscript{38} For an analysis of what the team discovered see G. S. Evdokimov, "Khram XVI veka v podklete tserkvi Varvary na Varvarke: predvaritel'nie itogi issledovanii" in \textit{Moskovskaia Rus': problemy arkheologii i istorii arkhiitektury}, ed. Leonid A. Beliaev (Moscow: Institut Arkheologii RAN, 2008), 233-43.
Archangel Michael, they still reveal Italianate decorative features. Thus, by the second quarter of the sixteenth century, Italian ornamental motifs had become a part of Muscovite architecture. Not surprisingly, it was in the years immediately following Alevisio that Muscovite architecture in general began to take on a decidedly decorative character. Unlike Alevisio’s predecessor Fioravanti, who had followed Russian architectural tradition in his architectural decoration and plan, Alevisio more fully merged Russian and Renaissance aesthetics, creating a hybrid style that could be applied to a new historical moment. As the next chapter will discuss, this hybrid style paved the way for later Russian architecture; Alevisio left a lasting imprint on his adoptive home.

Unfortunately, the select churches analyzed above shed only some light onto Alevisio’s career in Moscow, for there are several other churches mentioned in the Russian chronicles for which there is simply no information. Nonetheless, these few examples are revelatory in terms of the consistency of Alevisio’s style. He worked in two distinct styles in Moscow, creating two related but distinct varieties that, given the number of Muscovite churches attributed to him, must have enjoyed great popularity during the rule of Vasily III. Moreover, the profusion of his buildings around Moscow must surely have influenced the taste of other lesser-known patrons and architects.

Indeed, there are many churches in and around Moscow that resemble the Russo-Venetian church type established by Alevisio. Especially prevalent are churches that resemble Alevisio’s cross-in-square churches. Two examples that deserve further inquiry are the seventeenth-century Church of the Transfiguration on the Sands, whose scallop-shell motif in the zakomary strongly suggests the influence of Alevisio’s Cathedral of the Archangel Michael (Fig.

39 Alevisio was active in Moscow until the 1520s and owned a house in Moscow until at least 1531. See Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 104.
2.21), and the even more provocative Cathedral of the Dormition in nearby Dmitrov (Fig. 2.22), built in the early-sixteenth century when Alevisio was still active in Moscow.

The Church of the Transfiguration on the Sands is one of many seventeenth-century churches in Moscow that reveal an interest in the Venetian motifs that Alevisio succeeded in assimilating into Moscow. The reverberations of Venetian-inspired architectural designs in the seventeenth century and beyond were palpable, but they speak more to the architectural traditions of later Russian art. Nonetheless, the very fact that certain features that are distinctly Venetian, and which were first introduced to Moscow by Alevisio Lamberti at the beginning of the sixteenth century, continued to be incorporated into Russian architecture in later centuries suggests the lasting importance of Alevisio Lamberti and his many buildings in Moscow.

The Cathedral of the Dormition in Dmitrov is an example of the spread of Alevisio’s style outside of the confines of Moscow, and suggests the widespread infiltration of Venetian stylistic features into Russian architecture. As such, it warrants analysis within the context of the discussion of Alevisio Lamberti’s career. Unfortunately, the building was extensively altered in the eighteenth century, leaving very little trace of the building’s original exterior appearance. Nonetheless, archaeological analysis helps to provide some sense of the building in its original sixteenth-century construction.

The Cathedral of the Dormition in Dmitrov was built by unnamed Italians between 1509 and 1533, under the oversight of Prince Yuri Ivanovich, Vasily III’s younger brother. The building shared many exterior features with the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael in Moscow, from its brick construction to the horizontal and vertical division of the facades by pilasters and cornices. Alterations were made that radically changed the layout of the church: a new porch was

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erected in the 1660s, and in the 1790s there were significant changes to the building in the form of structural repairs, reorganization of interior rooms, and the addition of a bell tower.\textsuperscript{41} Still, its plan and general decorative scheme—combined with the fact that the building was known to have involved the use of Italian masters—makes this a particularly intriguing example. Moreover, it suggests that the Italo-Russian style that had become so associated with Moscow was also spreading out to neighboring Russian cities and principalities.

The cross-in-square church remained popular in Russian architecture for centuries after Alevisio’s arrival, especially for more traditional architecture. But there can be little doubt that Alevisio’s distinctive decorative scheme sparked a period in which Russian architecture was much more decorative, as will be discussed in the following chapter. As mentioned, his new church type—the centralized, circular-plan church—was also tremendously influential on the architecture that would develop around the middle of the sixteenth century. One of the most important examples of architecture inspired by Alevisio’s centralized church plan will be discussed below.

Vasily’s Mission to Rome

By the end of the 1520s, when Alevisio’s career seems to have come to an end in Moscow, Vasily needed to find new architects to meet the demands of his growing capital, which was undergoing a building boom following the invasion of Muhammad Giray.\textsuperscript{42} So Vasily

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 272–76.

followed in his father’s footsteps and looked beyond his borders to the by now familiar and friendly Italian peninsula. At some point in 1527, Vasily dispatched two ambassadors to locate and recruit new talent. Unfortunately, very little is known about Vasily’s specific motivations or precisely when he dispatched his ambassadors. Whether Vasily had a specific building in mind for which he hoped to find an architect or if the expedition was simply made with the goal of keeping Moscow’s artistic coffers full cannot be determined from the surviving documentation either. Whatever his motivations, the tremendous building activity in Moscow under Vasily both before and after he dispatched this final mission suggests that Vasily had architecture very much on his mind.

Vasily dispatched his ambassadors Trusov and Lodygin to the Pope in Orvieto in 1527. By 1528, Trusov and Lodygin had made their way to Orvieto, which had become Pope Clement VII’s makeshift headquarters after the sack of Rome the previous year. The only glimpse into Vasily’s wishes comes from a letter addressed to the Pope on February 1, 1528, in which he requests architects for his use in Moscow. Only four months later, in June of 1528, the embassy arrived in Moscow by way of Venice. Trusov and Lodygin had found the architect the Russian chronicles refer to as “Petrok Maly,” meaning “Little Peter.”

43 During Vasily’s reign the dialogue between the Catholic Church and Muscovy that had begun and later come to a halt in the fifteenth century was renewed, as both the Pope in Italy and Vasily in Moscow were concerned about threats from the neighboring Turks. For more on this see Joseph Fiedler, Ein Versuch der Vereinigung der russischen mit der römischen Kirche im sechzehnten Jahrhunderte (Wien: Gerold in Komm., 1862); Paul Pierling, L’Italie & la Russie au XVIe siècle: voyages de Paoloetto Centurione à Moscou, Dmitri Guerasimov à Rome [et] Gian Francesco Citus à Moscou (Paris: E. Leroux, 1892), 27–47.


45 Petrok Maly is the only architect we know of who returned to Moscow with Trusov and Lodygin; however, it is likely that other lesser-known artists and builders came with the group as well. This is supported by the fact that Vasily had requested architects as well as “machinery builders” in his letter to the Pope. The question of what other Italians may have been at work in sixteenth-century Moscow will be discussed later in this chapter. See Fiedler, Ein Versuch der Vereinigung, 22.
Identifying ‘Petrok Maly’ as Pietro Annibale

Petrok Maly’s identity was a mystery for many years, but it is now generally agreed that he is Pietro Annibale from Florence. The Russian chronicles reveal almost nothing about Pietro’s background before his arrival in Moscow and there is virtually no scholarship that has revealed information on Pietro Annibale’s career in Italy. What is known about Pietro Annibale today comes from an unexpected source: An analysis of several documents in the Swedish State Archives in Stockholm has revealed a wealth of information about Pietro Annibale, providing us not only with his name, but also with a few key details about his career in Moscow and origins in Italy.

The documents in question are legal documents, relating to court proceedings that took place after Pietro fled Moscow and was arrested in Livonia in 1539. After Vasily died in 1533, his heir, the future Ivan IV (the Terrible) was only three years old, so Ivan’s widow Elena Glinskaya and her advisors became the de facto rulers of Moscow. This marked the beginning of a very tenuous situation that only worsened upon Glinskaya’s death five years later. As historian Janet Martin puts it:

the extreme youth of the heir blurred the lines defining the relationships of members of the elite to the grand prince and among themselves . . . Without the presence of a figure, firmly emplaced at the center of the system, to modify their effects, the intensely competitive relationships among the elite families deteriorated into a debilitating struggle for power.

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While Elena remained alive, Pietro remained in a favorable position, since he had been a favorite of Vasily and his wife, but when Elena died, Pietro’s status among Muscovy’s elite—and thereby his personal wellbeing—became threatened.\textsuperscript{49} So, in the autumn of 1538, Pietro fled Moscow in a most dramatic fashion. Taking only his most valuable possessions with him, Pietro and a group of guards headed for neighboring Livonia in the middle of the night.\textsuperscript{50} Presumably, he fled in secret because he was not given permission to leave Moscow.

The fugitives made their way into the city of Vastsiliina in Livonia, but matters quickly went awry. Three of the guards who had come with Pietro escaped back into Russia. It is unclear why they returned to Russia, but Pietro apparently was afraid of being turned in and turned on two of the guards that remained with him, and stabbed them. At that point, he was arrested by the authorities in Vastsiliina and sent for trial to Dorpat.\textsuperscript{51} Because of a peace treaty between Moscow and Livonia, the Livonian authorities were obligated to extradite any Russian fugitive found in Livonian territory, which is why Pietro’s departure resulted in a trial. Since Pietro had fled Moscow against the wishes of the Muscovite authorities, he was a fugitive. So, Pietro was apprehended and forced to face a court in the city of Dorpat.\textsuperscript{52}

It is within the context of the court in Dorpat that ‘Petrok Maly’ is first named as Pietro Annibale, which in itself is a significant revelation. The documents also reveal some information about Pietro’s contract with Grand Prince Vasily III and his situation in Moscow. Pietro told the court in Dorpat that he was being held in Moscow against his will. Pope Clement VII had

\textsuperscript{49} Kivimae, “Peter Frjazin or Peter Hannibal?,” 66.

\textsuperscript{50} According to the documents in the National Archives of Sweden, one of the guards who left Moscow with Pietro was called Grigory Mistrobonov. It has been suggested that this man is the son of Bon Friazin, who built the Bell Tower of Ivan the Great, a hypothesis that could be useful in further examination of the Russianization of Italian families who made their way into Moscow during this period. See ibid., 67.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
granted Grand Duke Vasily the use of Pietro for a period of three to four years; however, by the time of his defection to Livonia, Pietro had been in Russia for ten years.\footnote{Ibid., 62–63.} This detail reveals an interesting continuity between Ivan III and his son Vasily III, in that both of these rulers were unwilling to return their valued Italian architects to Italy. Beyond the information of Pietro’s true identity and the circumstances of his tenure in Moscow there are few details. Nonetheless, this information fills in some of the crucial gaps about one of Moscow’s most esteemed architects. Frustratingly, the documents from the Dorpat trial do not indicate what ultimately happened to Pietro, so it is unclear whether he remained in Livonia, was returned to Moscow, was allowed to travel back to Italy, or if he met some other unfortunate fate.

As limited as the information gleaned from the National Archives of Sweden may be, it is invaluable for the simple fact that it has provided scholars with a concrete identity for the architect formerly known only as “Little Peter.” Moreover, the fact that we know that Pietro was recruited from among the circle of artists working for—or at least known to—Pope Clement VII provides some useful clues about Pietro’s early life and training in Italy. It should be noted that Pope Clement VII was famous for his patronage of the arts. He patronized works by some of the most celebrated Renaissance artists, including Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, Raphael, and Michelangelo.\footnote{See Loren W. Partridge, \textit{The Art of Renaissance Rome, 1400-1600} (New York: Abrams, 1996).} Indeed, Pope Clement VII was a significant art patron in the sixteenth century and had immediate access to some of Europe’s most valued artistic talent.

It is doubtful that when Vasily’s ambassadors arrived at Clement’s court the pope would have been willing to dispatch one of his favorite architects to distant Muscovy; still, that it was Clement himself who dispatched Pietro is significant. To be sure, Pietro was expendable in the eyes of the pope, but Pietro’s proximity to Pope Clement—and presumably to some of the pope’s...
favored artists—suggests that he was from an elevated class of artists. It seems highly likely that he would have trained with some of Rome’s most important artists and architects. As for the question of what exactly his contributions were in Italy before leaving for Moscow, the answer may never reveal itself.\(^{55}\)

In Jyri Kivimäe’s analysis of the chronology of Pietro Annibale’s life, which makes careful use of the archive in Stockholm, there are a few more tantalizing pieces of information that could potentially reveal some more significant information about Pietro Annibale’s life. First, Kivimäe says that Pietro identified himself to the court as a Catholic from Florence. This passing statement suggests that Pietro was originally from Florence and presumably later moved to Orvieto and Rome. This small detail could possibly prove useful in determining more about Pietro’s origins from primary source material in Italian archives. The second piece of information that Kivimäe reveals is that “it appears that with the assistance of the Pope the deputies from Muscovy had hired one bombardier [sic].”\(^{56}\) Kivimäe suggests that Pietro himself was the bombardier in question, a soldier in charge of firing bombards, but it is also possible that this bombardier was another man who came to Moscow with Pietro. It should not be surprising that Vasily would have been interested in acquiring a bombardier, since Muscovy had increasingly tense relations with its neighbors both in the East and in the West. These tense relations continued during Vasily’s rule, and in many instances led to all-out war.\(^{57}\) There is no doubt that military prowess could have boosted Pietro Annibale’s credentials in the eyes of Vasily III who sought to maintain the dominance of his fledgling Russian state.

\(^{55}\) Although a few scholars have endeavored to learn more about Pietro’s life in Italy, an exploration of both the Vatican and Orvieto archives seems warranted in the hopes of gleaning some more information about this figure’s life before leaving for Moscow.

\(^{56}\) Kivimäe, “Peter Frjazin or Peter Hannibal?,” 63.

\(^{57}\) Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 302.
Pietro’s activity in Moscow shortly after his arrival in June of 1528 is almost as hard to determine as his activity in Italy. Still, the Russian chronicles specifically mention Pietro after his arrival in Moscow. Significantly, they refer to him as “architect,” a title rarely used in the Russian chronicles. Most of the Italian architects were referred to as “master” in the chronicles, and this was even the preferred term for such celebrated figures as Aristotele Fioravanti; the only other Italian architects described as “architects” in the Russian chronicles are Pietro Antonio Solari and Alevisio Novi. The curious use of this title indicates that Pietro was highly regarded in Moscow. Supporting this theory, the documents resulting from Pietro’s trial in Dorpat mention the fine quality of Pietro’s clothes and the high salary (100 rubles per year) he had been earning while working in Moscow. Therefore, it is safe to assume that by the time of his defection in 1538, Pietro had secured a position of high status in Moscow. In spite of his status, the Russian chronicles have little to say about Pietro’s life and career in Moscow—especially when compared to the detailed information provided for Aristotele Fioravanti. Still, it is possible to piece together a rough chronology of Pietro’s activity in Moscow for the crucial ten years between his 1528 arrival and his 1538 defection to Livonia.

**Pietro Annibale’s Defensive Architecture**

Pietro’s architectural activity appears to have begun almost as soon as he set foot on Russian soil; however, it is his later work on various fortification projects in the 1530s that

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59 Pod’iapol’skii, “Arkitektor Petrok Maloii,” 34.

60 Kivimae, “Peter Frjazin or Peter Hannibal?,” 65.

garners the most attention in the Russian chronicles. Much like the Milanese-born architects working for Ivan III in the last decades of the fifteenth century, Pietro also spent a significant amount of time and energy during his time in Moscow building defensive fortifications. The heart of Moscow had already been secured, so Pietro primarily worked on defensive structures on the outskirts. Lest there be any doubt about the perceived importance of these defensive structures in Moscow, it should be noted that these are the projects to which the Russian chronicles pay the closest attention; his work on ecclesiastical buildings receives short shrift in the same chronicles. The Russian chronicles indicate that Pietro worked on at least one important fortress in the 1530s, and possibly three: In 1534, he was building the fortresses of Kitai Gorod (China Town), a commercial area just to the east of the Kremlin (Fig. 2.23). By 1534 or 1535 he was working in Sebezh on the western border of Russia, and in 1536, he was working in Pronsk, to the southeast of Moscow; exactly what his activity was in these latter two cities is uncertain. Given the crucial defensive locations of Sebezh and Pronsk, it seems plausible that Pietro was working on defensive architecture in both cities. It is not surprising that Vasily would commission so many defensive fortifications, given the many wars and tensions that were flaring over the course of his reign; there were wars with Livonia and Lithuania and continued threats from the khans in the east. That Pietro proved himself a good defensive architect in a Moscow threatened by warfare makes it even less surprising that Vasily would not have wanted to allow Pietro to return to Italy after the short two- to three-year span originally agreed upon.

Furthermore, the mention of a “bombardier” returning with Vasily’s ambassadors is all the more intriguing when considered in this context. If Pietro had skills as a cannon soldier, that would

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62 *PSRL*, vol. 22, 523

63 The chronicles describe Pietro as “master” of Sebezh, but do not mention specifically what building projects he was responsible for there. *PSRL*, vol. 26, 322; Likewise, the chronicles say that Pietro was the master of the city of Pronsk, but no details are provided. Ibid., vol. 22, 524.
have made him especially useful to the Grand Prince, just as Aristotele Fioravanti was useful as both architect and cannon soldier to Ivan III some fifty years earlier. It seems highly likely that Pietro may have proven invaluable for both his ability to build buildings and fortresses as well as his ability to serve the grand prince in a military capacity.

Still, whether or not Pietro was directly involved in military campaigns remains speculative. Fortunately, there is concrete proof of Pietro’s activity as a defensive architect, since much of his handiwork on the fortress of Kitai Gorod still survives. Not surprisingly, it seems that Pietro was inspired by the architecture of the Kremlin walls and towers when he built his Kitai Gorod fortress. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Milanese architects who had worked for Ivan III at the end of the fifteenth century had already established a robust tradition of Italo-Russian defensive architecture in Moscow, which drew heavily from the traditions of northern Italy, especially Bologna, Milan, and the Veneto. Pietro built on this revered tradition in his own constructions dating to the 1530s, but his architecture also reveals the influence of more recent developments in military architecture that had taken hold in Italy around the middle of the fifteenth century, as pioneered by architects like Francesco di Giorgio Martini. By the 1530s these developments had been in place in Italian cities like Urbino for half a century, but they were novel in the architecture of Muscovy, since the architects who worked for Ivan III brought with them the older tradition of early-fifteenth-century defensive architecture. Just as the late-Gothic style from northern Italy that was losing ground to the more classicizing Renaissance style was able to continue in Muscovy at the end of the fifteenth century, the defensive architecture that was pioneered in the last quarter of the fifteenth century in Italy was given a new life in early-sixteenth-century Muscovy.
Like so many of the constructions mentioned in this chapter, there is little that remains of the original Kitai Gorod fortress built by Pietro, so today’s scholars must, to a large extent, rely on drawings and photographs. Fortunately, there are a number of reliable photographs of the Kitai Gorod fortifications taken in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, before significant alterations were undertaken. Like their predecessors at the Kremlin, the Kitai Gorod fortifications drew directly from the traditions of Italian defensive architecture. But whereas the Kremlin fortifications were built by Milanese architects carrying on the traditions of the early fifteenth-century defensive architecture of their homeland, the fortifications at Kitai Gorod reveal the influence of later-fifteenth-century developments in defensive architecture.

One need only glance at the photographs of the Kremlin and Kitai Gorod side-by-side to notice a striking aesthetic difference (Fig. 1.2). Even when taking into consideration the fact that the upper portions of the towers at the Kremlin were remodeled in the seventeenth century, there is a marked elegance and height—a decidedly Gothic character—inherent in the Kremlin fortifications that is entirely absent at the Kitai Gorod fortress. As many scholars have pointed out, the main difference between the new fortress and the late-fifteenth-century Kremlin fortress is that the walls and towers of Kitai Gorod are much lower than those of the Kremlin. As Podjapsolski notes in his article “The Architect Petrok Maly,” the lower height of the walls reflects developments in defensive architecture that were pioneered in fifteenth-century Italy. The new approach to defensive architecture was a direct response to new developments in warfare, especially the beginning of the use of firearms. Whereas previously high towers were

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one of the primary strengths of a fortress, fortresses now needed to emphasize strength more than height; thus, towers were squatter and denser, able to absorb artillery strikes with a sturdy foundation. With developments in warfare and the accompanying developments in defensive architecture, the graceful Gothic towers of the Moscow Kremlin, which had arrived by way of medieval Italy, had become obsolete.

The architect and engineer Francesco di Giorgio Martini led the shift away from the Gothic traditions of early-fifteenth-century defensive architecture in Italy. Although there is no evidence that Pietro was acquainted with Francesco di Giorgio, it is quite likely that their paths would have crossed at some point. The fact that Pietro spent his formative years in central Italy in the first half of the sixteenth century virtually guarantees that he would have been aware of the contributions of this important and famous architect. Francesco di Giorgio began his career repairing the subterranean waterways in Siena and would later prove himself to be a first-rate defensive architect, winning commissions to built fortresses for the likes of Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, and Giovanni della Rovere, future Pope Julius II. He built fortresses all across the Italian countryside at defensive outposts for his patrons. Almost more important than his actual architectural projects is his architectural treatise, written in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The existence of his treatise, combined with the large number of fortresses he built during his lifetime, make him an undoubted leader of defensive architecture in Quattrocento Italy. As a young bombardier/architect working in central Italy in the early part of the sixteenth century Pietro would very likely have been aware of Francesco di Giorgio’s


67 Francesco di Giorgio Martini, Carlo Promis, and Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, Trattato di architettura civile e militare (Turin: Tipografia Chirio e Mina, 1841).
treatise, or at least its building principles. It seems that Pietro took these new building principles with him to Moscow in the 1520s and applied them to the defensive architecture he built around Moscow.

In any case, the walls and towers of the Kitai Gorod fortifications do adhere to the architectural style of Francesco di Giorgio. Most notably, the walls and towers of the fortifications are lower than the Kremlin walls and towers. Not only does this new approach to defensive architecture make the Kitai Gorod fortress better prepared to handle artillery attacks, but it also dramatically changes the aesthetic of the fortress. Gone is the elegant, Gothic style of the Kremlin, in favor of a sturdier building aesthetic. It is tempting to view the shift away from the Gothic fortification style of the Kremlin to the sturdier style of Kitai Gorod as something akin to a shift towards classicism in Muscovite fortress architecture. As Podjapolskii notes, however, the new fortress style in Moscow more accurately marks the transition to a new bastion system of defensive architecture rather than an aesthetic adjustment, a transition that follows in the footsteps of Italian defensive architecture from the latter half of the fifteenth century.\(^{68}\)

Indeed, the towers of the Kitai Gorod fortifications bear a striking resemblance to Francesco di Giorgio Martini’s Fortress of San Leo, a cliff-top fortress in the small town of San Leo, built for Duke Federico da Montefeltro in the 1460s (Fig. 2.24). Although Pietro’s fortress in Moscow lacks the dramatic setting of San Leo, it does have a similar general appearance to the round towers of San Leo. Like the San Leo towers, the Kitai Gorod towers are rather squat in construction, seemingly more utilitarian than decorative. In both San Leo and Kitai Gorod, the towers flare at the base, taper inwards at the center, and flare out again ever so slightly in the uppermost tier. At the top of the Kitai Gorod tower, the rhythmic swallowtail merlons of the Kremlin fortifications are gone. Instead of the delicate Italian-Gothic merlons, which could

\(^{68}\) Pod’iapolskii, “Arkhitektor Petrok Maloi,” 32.
easily break off under artillery fire, the tops of the Kitai Gorod towers are solid and massive. Visually and practically, the towers convey a quality of impregnability. And in the towers’ resemblance to the fortresses of Francesco di Giorgio, they suggest that Pietro absorbed the newest style of defensive architecture and transferred it to his new home in Moscow.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the Italian styles that made their way to Muscovy were not, generally speaking, on the cutting edge. As the newer Renaissance styles were in demand in the major cities of Italy, older styles—styles that were dying out in Italy—were transferred to and adapted by Russian culture. Thus, just as the late-Gothic style of early-fifteenth-century northern Italy flourished in Moscow at the end of the fifteenth century, at the moment when it was being supplanted by new stylistic tastes back in Italy, late-fifteenth-century styles also made their way into Russian architecture approximately one generation after their peak in Italy. Francesco di Giorgio’s developments were innovative in the context of late-fifteenth-century Italy, but by the time Pietro Annibale was building fortresses in Muscovy, his ideas had long been absorbed into the Italian architectural tradition; in Muscovy they were still innovative. Once again, Russian patronage of Italian architects enabled older architectural styles to have a new life in a new locale.

**Pietro Annibale’s Churches**

Pietro’s work on fortifications in and around Moscow seems to have been among the most important of his projects in the eyes of his employers and the Russian chroniclers, but for the modern scholar interested in understanding the course of Byzantino-Italo-Russian architectural development, Pietro’s ecclesiastical architecture proves even more interesting.
Between his arrival in Moscow in 1528 and 1534, when he began building the fortifications of Kitai Gorod, Pietro is believed to have worked on two significant churches. The first, the Church of the Resurrection in the Kremlin, dating to 1532, is attributed to Pietro in the Russian chronicles. The second church is the Church of the Ascension in Kolomenskoe, a country estate on the outskirts of Moscow. Also dating to 1532, the Church of the Ascension is not attributed to Pietro in the chronicles and has only recently come to be accepted as his work.

**The Church of the Resurrection**

As with so many sixteenth-century Muscovite buildings, the Church of the Resurrection does not survive; it stood until the end of the seventeenth century, when another church was built in its place. Fortunately, as Pod’iapol’skii points out, a number of contemporary drawings were made of this church before its ultimate destruction (Figs. 2.25-2.28). Most of these drawings are crude, part of larger city views, and do not provide the detailed information of a sophisticated architectural rendering. Still, the recurrence of certain details among these different drawings provides a reasonably reliable sense of some of the most basic details of the building’s appearance.

In the four examples from the seventeenth century, “Kremlingrad,” “Sigismund’s Plan,” “Atlas Merian,” and the “Nesvizh Plan,” each artist renders the church as a single-domed square

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69 *PSRL*, vol. 20, 468

building with a tapering roofline; abutting this church core is a tall, tower-like structure. The tower-like structure is itself capped with one dome atop a series of stepped tiers. In each drawing, the tall, tower-like structure of the church is emphasized, and therefore must have been a prominent feature of its silhouette. Additionally, the drawings suggest that the building had a curved shape and was decorated with corbel arches. The drawings are also extraordinarily revealing, since they show the stepped, tower-like construction of a main portion of the building, a feature that would become a hallmark of much of Russian architecture beginning in the middle of the sixteenth century. The drawings do little to provide much evidence of the plan of the church, but based on the consistency of the drawings, it seems safe to conclude that the church consisted of a core building with an adjacent tower. In this regard, the church seems to anticipate the more ornate churches of the seventeenth century, such as Moscow’s Church of the Trinity in Nikitniki (Fig. 2.29). In many ways, then, Pietro Annibale’s destroyed church of 1532 is an early example of a new type of church being created in Moscow that would become more and more popular in the coming decades.

Church of the Ascension in Kolomenskoe

The Church of the Ascension in Kolomenskoe is widely considered one of the most important pieces of Early Modern Russian architecture, and is certainly Pietro’s most significant architectural accomplishment (Fig. 2.30). It is because of his association with this church that Pietro can be considered a truly pivotal figure in the history of Russian architecture, and arguably

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71 For close-up views of the Church of the Resurrection in these drawings and for an analysis see Pod’iapolskii, “Arkitektor Petrok Malof,” 37–38.
in the broader history of Early Modern architecture. With its striking, conical roof and compact, octagonal plan, it heralds a new moment in Muscovite architectural history.

The building diverges from traditional Russian church architecture in almost every way. A cursory glance at the exterior immediately reveals that there was a new architectural concept at work in Pietro’s building. He abandoned the traditional Russian cube crowned with domes in favor of something that more closely resembles a tower; an elongated, conical dome rests atop a tall, narrow, octagonal space. A look at the plan is even more revealing (Fig. 2.31). Whereas traditional Russian churches were roughly square with the space further divided by central columns or piers, Pietro followed in the footsteps of Alevisio Lamberti in creating a centralized, circular space. He maintained the Byzantino-Russian interest in a Greek-cross layout, but inscribed that within a small octagon. The interior space is very small, and the eye is drawn to the soaring space of the conical dome directly overhead. A wide gallery radiates around the central octagon, and three stairways lead up to the gallery level. The spatial layout alone, while related to the earlier developments of Alevisio Lamberti, is a dramatic break from long-held tradition.

But Pietro’s innovations go beyond the central-plan layout of the church. Where the building departs from the innovations introduced by Alevisio Lamberti and asserts its own, unique style is in the roof. The traditional Russian dome is here replaced with a striking shatior roof, a conical dome that extends the central space of the church below it upwards. The use of the shatior roof over a small, centralized space creates a narrow, vertically oriented space, with almost no distinction between the church itself and the dome up above (Fig. 2.32). The shatior roof church (also known as a “tent roof church”) became prevalent in Muscovy subsequent to the
construction of the Church of the Ascension, the first known example of this church type in Russian architecture.

Perhaps even more striking than the unusual spatial configuration of the Church of the Ascension are the decorative elements on the building’s exterior (Figs. 2.33 and 2.34). The exterior walls of the church are almost completely covered in architectural ornament, lending it a highly sculptural quality. Most importantly, the decorative elements on the exterior of this church truly blend together features from Renaissance Italy and medieval Muscovy, making this one of the first examples of truly hybridized architectural ornament in Early Modern Russia.

Earlier church exteriors in Moscow, such as the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, employed Italianate features on traditional Muscovite buildings, but Pietro seems to have been the first to develop a new language of decorative architecture that reflected the interests of a new Muscovite generation.

Within the hybrid decorative style, it is possible to distinguish specific Italian features. Pilasters define the facades of the central octagon, capitals crown the pilasters, and windows are framed by delicate pilasters and arches. All of these elements are derived from the Italianate classical style that was introduced to Moscow at the start of the century by Alevisio Lamberti. But the application of many of these elements is unusual, breaking from the orderliness of the Italian Renaissance. The pilasters running around the drum of the shatior roof wrap around corners; elsewhere pilasters are topped by double capitals; in other places only fragments of pilasters and their capitals emerge from the wall as though the architecture is overlapping itself. Further disrupting the Renaissance sense of harmony and order are freestanding double capitals in the center of each wall around the base of the shatior roof; they float in the middle of each side of the octagon, with no pilaster to hold them up. These floating capitals are at the same
horizontal level as the capitals of the flanking pilasters, providing a continuous horizontal movement around the base of the *shatior* roof without the use of a cornice.

In many ways, the manipulation of the classical Renaissance elements is akin to the Mannerist influence in central Italian architecture during the first half of the sixteenth century. It should not be surprising that Pietro would bring a hint of Mannerist architecture with him to Muscovy, since he would have been exposed to Mannerist architecture during his time in central Italy. Two of the most quintessentially Mannerist architectural projects were underway while Pietro was still in Italy: Michelangelo’s Laurentian Library in Rome and Giulio Romano’s Palazzo del Te in Mantua.

Regardless of the presence of Italian Mannerist characteristics, this is clearly not an Italian Mannerist building. The Mannerist elements are but one part of a much more intricate whole that includes distinctly medieval features. Consider, for example, the three tiers of kokoshniki that bridge the lower space of the central octagon and the narrower drum above. The use of kokoshniki around the base of a church drum had started to become common in Muscovite architecture at the end of the fourteenth century, as seen at the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin in Zvenigorod (Fig. 2.35) and the Cathedral of the Savior (Fig. 2.36). Just as decidedly not derived from the Italian Renaissance are the steeply pointed blind gables decorating the walls between the pilasters around the lower portion of the church. They do not have their origins in Russian architecture and seem more aligned with the traditions of Gothic architecture. Thus, the exterior of this building is a true combination of decorative elements from various regions and historical periods; the innovative way Pietro Annibale blended these elements into a cohesive decorative scheme shows his own ingenuity as an artist as well as the very complex nature of Muscovite architectural history.
Origins of the Shatior Roof

It is the use of the striking shatior roof, a first in Muscovite architecture, that has stirred so much debate among scholars, who have speculated about its origins since the nineteenth century. Surely, most conclude, such an innovative form had to come from an identifiable source. Scholars’ opinions of just how this unusual form found its way into an important architectural project commissioned by the Grand Prince vary widely. For years, the prevailing wisdom was that the shatior roof in the context of masonry architecture was developed in imitation of wooden architecture. Other scholars have suggested that the shatior roof was inspired by similar conical roofs prevalent in Asian and Middle Eastern architecture. More recently, some scholars have suggested that the church sought to imitate the form of church ciboria, thereby emphasizing the sanctity of the building and its patrons. All of these ideas make some sense and are argued convincingly by their proponents, and are therefore deserving of serious consideration. Still no scholar has put the issue to rest, and it does seem as though there may be crucial pieces of information that have been neglected by those scholars. Perhaps rather than attempting to hone in one specific source as the inspiration for the shatior roof church, it would be more useful to consider the unique combination of forces at work in Russian

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72 One problem with this theory is that there is no surviving wooden architecture predating the advent of the shatior roof that would have served as a precedent for this new and unusual form. For more on the suggestion that wood architecture played a role in the development of this new church type see Brumfield, A History of Russian Architecture, 114–17; George Heard Hamilton, The Art and Architecture of Russia, 3d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 200.


74 See Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 111–21.
architecture in the early part of the sixteenth century, and to contemplate the ways in which those forces shaped Russia’s architecture.

In many ways it seems more logical to examine the subtle changes that had taken place in Muscovite architecture over decades and centuries when considering the development of the new shatior roof church. Taking this approach, the aforementioned sources of inspiration that have been suggested by scholars would certainly have played a part; but importantly, there is no single “correct” answer to the question. It is my belief that the shatior roof church developed in a more organic manner, as a result of the developments taking place in architecture in Muscovy. Art history is rarely tidy enough to allow for a single, simple answer to the question of how complex forms arise; finding the answer to such questions almost always requires sorting through the myriad ingredients that come together to create a single culture. An examination of some of the changes in Muscovite architecture over the preceding century highlights exactly how such an organic evolution may have taken place.75

Even well before the first Italians came to Moscow in the 1470s, local architecture had begun to take subtle but distinct strides away from the traditional cross-in-square, five-domed Byzantino-Russian church. Increasingly, Muscovite churches such as the Cathedral of the Savior in the Andronikov Monastery emphasized greater centralization along with increased exterior ornamentation. Churches like this were usually topped with a single dome, whose drum was ornamented with layered tiers of kokoshniki, or decorative arches. The dome itself was raised high above the roofline, creating a greater verticality (and thus centrality) than in traditional

75 Because of the dearth of surviving fifteenth- and sixteenth-century wooden architecture, I will not consider how wooden architecture may have played a role in this evolution. That in no way is meant to discount the distinct possibility that wooden architecture was a part of this process. Similarly, though there is no doubt that Russia and Muscovy had tremendous contact with cultures to its east, it is beyond the purview of the present study to conduct an analysis of how eastern architecture may have played a part in the evolution of Muscovite architecture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. I fully acknowledge that eastern architectural influences may have been a part of the organic evolution that I will be discussing.
Byzantino-Russian churches. In addition, the tiers of kokoshniki created a transitional space between the rectilinear space of the building below and the rounded dome above. This resulted in a vaguely conical silhouette that anticipates later shatior roofs.

Italian architectural activity in Moscow at the turn of the sixteenth century had some of the same tendencies as well, perhaps encouraging the existing Muscovite trend towards centrality and verticality to continue. Spurred by the principles of the Italian Renaissance, Italian architects had brought with them to Moscow a general interest in central-plan buildings. These architects also seem to have brought an interest in uneven gables with them, an interest that coincided with the Muscovite taste for uneven tiers of kokoshniki, as seen in the aforementioned Cathedral of the Savior. The Venetian buildings of San Giovanni in Bragora (Fig. 2.37) and the Scuola di San Marco (Fig. 2.2) are good examples of the northern Italian building style with a central gable that rises higher than the flanking gables. This approach to church construction appears in Moscow with increasing frequency after the arrival of Alevisio Lamberti in 1504. The early sixteenth-century churches Saint Triphon in Naprudnoe (Fig. 2.38) and Saint Anne in the Corner (Fig. 2.39) serve as two good examples of Russian churches with this type of roofline.

It should also be remembered that Alevisio Lamberti built at least one single-domed, centralized building in Moscow, which also may have contributed to the development of the new church type. The church in question is the Church of Saint Peter the Metropolitan, which, as mentioned above, has subsequently been remodeled, but retains its small, central-plan layout. The slightly pointed dome atop an elongated drum is also noteworthy, suggesting a possible precursor to Pietro Annibale’s prototypical shatior roof. Like the shatior roof, the drum and dome of the Church of Saint Peter the Metropolitan is a narrow, tower-like extension of the church space. Although it does not take on the conical shape of the shatior roof, it serves the
same general spatial and aesthetic function. Thus, between Alevisio’s innovations, the general
tastes of northern Italian Quattrocento architecture, and Russian predilection, there were myriad
forces at work that were simultaneously coaxing Muscovite architecture towards the ultimate
centralization and verticality of the shatior roof church.

Other Friazi in Vasily’s Moscow

Alevisio Lamberti and Pietro Annibale were, without a doubt, the stars of early-sixteenth-
century Muscovite architecture, but there is also evidence to suggest that there were a handful of
other Italian masters at work in Vasily’s time, and any discussion of the Italian presence in
Moscow must attempt to account for their activities in Moscow, however slight their
contributions may have been. Several of these masters had come to Moscow during Ivan III’s
rule and may or may not have continued to work in Moscow during Vasily’s rule. As discussed
at the beginning of this chapter, these masters are Marco “Friazin,” Antonio Gislardi,
Zanantonio, Jacopo, Cristoforo, Alevisio Carcano, Bernardo Borgomanero, and Michele
Parpaione. Beyond these eight Italians, whose presence in Moscow during Vasily’s rule cannot
be proven, there were four other friazi about whom there is some documentation to suggest they
were active in Moscow after the beginning of Vasily’s rule in 1505. These friazi are Bon

The best documented of these four is Bon “Friazin,” who is known to have built a bell
tower in the Kremlin, dating to 1505-08.\textsuperscript{76} There is little information about Bon “Friazin,” but
scholars do tend to agree that he was an Italian. The bell tower he built was altered at the end of
the sixteenth century, and all that remains of Bon’s work is the lower section, which has been

\textsuperscript{76} PSRL, vol. 6, 53
incorporated into the Ivan the Great Bell Tower (Fig. 2.40). The octagonal base combines Fioravanti’s emphasis on simple decoration and structural harmony with Alevisio Lamberti’s interest in surface ornament. As William Craft Brumfield points out, Bon’s tower has proven itself to be a very impressive piece of engineering, having withstood many fires as well as a large explosion in 1812 that destroyed two nearby buildings. It is not clear what else Bon worked on in Moscow, but Lo Gatto claims that he worked on the walls of Nizhni-Novgorod from 1508-11 along with Pietro Francesco.

There is very little information about Pietro Francesco. Some scholars have suggested that he may have been French, given that the chronicle calls him “Francuzko.” At the same time, the Russians were known to refer to western Europeans in general as “Franks.” That there were so many Italians in Vasily’s Moscow makes it likely that Pietro Francesco was an Italian after all.

Ettore Lo Gatto mentions an Ivan “Friazin,” who is not mentioned by other scholars. He claims that Ivan “Friazin” built the Cathedral of the Mother of God in Tikhvin 1510-15, repaired the walls of the Pskov Kremlin in 1517, and built a dam in Pskov in 1538. Lo Gatto’s account of this architect is intriguing and deserving of further archival investigation, but the absence of this architect’s name from most other scholarship suggests that either Lo Gatto was incorrect about Ivan’s activity, or perhaps that Ivan was not an Italian. After all, the designation friazin could have referred to any foreigner, so Ivan could just as easily come from a neighboring Russian province as from Italy. Still, that Lo Gatto discusses Ivan in a book devoted to the work

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80 Lo Gatto, *Gli artisti italiani in Russia*, 25. There is some questions as to Lo Gatto’s reliability. He does not provide sources to back up his supposition, leaving the trail on Ivan Friazin cold. This requires further investigation.
of Italians in Moscow suggests that this Ivan was one of the many Italians to find their way to Moscow, and learning more about his identity could be very illuminating.\textsuperscript{81}

Finally, the chronicle mentions one Nikolai “Friazin,” who cast a 500-pound copper bell in 1532 and a 1,000-pound copper bell in 1534.\textsuperscript{82} I am not aware of any other mention of Nikolai “Friazin” or his activity in Moscow, but the fact that the chronicle mentions his work would suggest that he was a fairly celebrated artist. Once again, it is possible that Nikolai was not an Italian, but it would be worthwhile to learn more about his identity and cultural origins.

Although many questions remain about the identities of the Italians who were working in sixteenth-century Moscow, it is evident that there was a robust community of Italian friazi employed on various projects around Vasily’s burgeoning empire, from grand churches, to defensive architecture, to metal casting.\textsuperscript{83} While these artists may not have earned the same accolades as their more famous peers, they undoubtedly played a key role in shaping the appearance of Moscow and its environs.

During Vasily’s reign, Italian architects helped to transform the architecture of Muscovy. Ivan’s program of rebuilding Russia’s new capital with the assistance of Italian architects was continued in a second phase in which Russian architecture was redefined; foreign and local forms mingled and showed the first signs of fusing together into a cohesive architectural style. The patronage of Ivan III remained immensely important during this second phase; without his

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\textsuperscript{81} Although Lo Gatto cites a number of intriguing pieces of older Russian scholarship as evidence that Ivan Friazin was an Italian, I have been unable to track down these sources to determine the credibility of his analysis.

\textsuperscript{82} PSRL, vol. 26, 315.

\textsuperscript{83} Scholars have also casually mentioned several other Italian artists and architects who may have been active in sixteenth-century Moscow. In many cases, the evidence supporting their presence in Moscow is poorly substantiated. Nonetheless, it seems worth noting that Lo Gatto mentions a cannon caster named Paolo De Bosio (or De Boschio), a Carlo da Milano, and a Giovanni Salvatore Friazin. Lo Gatto and Cazzola both mention an Antonio Friazin, who may be synonymous with the Antonio Gislardi who was active in Ivan III’s time. The names of these men are worth noting, should any light be shed on their identities or activities in Moscow in the future. Cazzola, “I ‘Mastri Frjazy’ a Mosca,” 170; Lo Gatto, \textit{Gli artisti italiani in Russia}, 24–5.
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first experimental projects that walked the fine line between tradition and exoticism, the architecture produced by Italians in Vasily’s Moscow would never have been able to combine architectural forms in the way it did.

Alevisio Lamberti initiated the move toward an Italo-Russian hybrid style, with his distinctive churches that fused Venetian decoration with Russian form. Later in his career, it seems, he went even further in creating a new hybridized style, in which central-plan churches that recalled Byzantium and the High Renaissance still managed to look Russian.84 His activity in Moscow was both daring and ubiquitous, a combination that allowed him to pave the way for the development of an even more daring architectural style in the next phase of Muscovite history.

With Pietro Annibale’s Church of the Annunciation at Kolomenskoe, Italian architecture in Moscow reached the height of innovation. While certainly inspired by myriad forces of influence present within Muscovite culture, the architectural trends of the architect’s homeland combined with the impact of Alevisio Lamberti, played an enormous role in the development of the church, the first shatior roof church in Russia.

Indeed, it was with the arrival of this last batch of Italian masters that the final elements had been put into place to coax Muscovite architecture towards something entirely new. What

84 For an example of a central-plan Byzantine church that shares an affinity with Alevisio’s later churches, see Saint Sophia in Trabzon, built in the thirteenth century (Fig. 2.41). Like Alevisio’s church of Saint Peter the Metropolitan, Saint Sophia is a centralized space with a tall drum resting over the central bay. Thus, it has a feeling and conception that are similar to the Muscovite church. More generally, Middle and Late Byzantine architecture showed an interest in domed, centralized spaces in much the same way that Italo-Russian Muscovite buildings did. The atrophied Greek cross plan, for example came about as an evolution from the Greek cross plan, with the arms of the cross becoming smaller and smaller so that the church plan was essentially a centralized space with a tall dome. Byzantine architecture also developed the domed octagonal church type, which is very similar to the interest in centralization exhibited in the Italo-Muscovite churches of the sixteenth century. The parallels between the Byzantine and the Muscovite interest in various types of centralized buildings will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. For more on the atrophied Greek cross plan and the domed octagon, see Richard Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, 4th ed., The Pelican History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 337-38 and Robert Ousterhout, Master Builders of Byzantium (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2008), 97-8.
Pietro Annibale did in the Church of the Ascension that was so revolutionary was to combine several of the various features that had been developed in Muscovite architecture over several decades into one beautifully cohesive building. As such, Pietro Annibale is among the most important architects in Early Modern Russia. With his daring experiment at Kolomenskoe, Russian architecture was poised to begin a new phase in its history, indebted to but freed from the Byzantino-Russian tradition that had defined its architecture for more than five hundred years.

It cannot be denied that with the Church of the Ascension and the development of the shatior roof church type a new phase of Russian architecture began. Indeed, a new, distinctly Muscovite style was born in this Cathedral of the Ascension. Even though the use of Italian architects ceased after Vasily’s death, there can be no doubt that the Italian contributions were vital to the emergence of a national Russian style around the middle of the sixteenth century. As the boundary between local and imported traditions became increasingly blurred in the architecturally diverse city of Moscow, new hybrid forms blossomed. These uniquely Russian hybrid architectural forms, which make up the Muscovite Composite Style, will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE
AFTER THE ITALIANS: MUSCOVITE COMPOSITE STYLE

This chapter explores the nature of Russian artistic culture, vis-à-vis its architecture, after the end of the period of direct Italian interaction in 1539. It examines some of the most iconic Russian buildings, erected under the most notorious of Russian rulers, Ivan IV (“the Terrible”). A goal of this chapter is to examine how the previous decades of cultural interaction and transformation with regard to Italian culture fit into the larger picture of Muscovite and early modern history. Many twentieth-century scholars cite the shift away from reliance on Italian architectural expertise at the middle of the sixteenth century as evidence that the preceding contact with Italians was exceptional—that it was little more than a brief footnote in the long history of Russian architecture. As the following discussion will show, however, the reverse is true. In fact, the new architectural style that emerged in sixteenth-century Russia—which continued to thrive during the seventeenth century—was the final stage in the emergence of post-medieval Russian architecture that had begun with the Italian architects discussed in the previous chapters. The experimental architecture built under Ivan III and Vasily III precipitated a final phase of experimentation beginning around the middle of the sixteenth century that ultimately came to define Russian architectural style. Indeed, as Dmitry Shvidkovsky states, “The contributions of the Italian Renaissance masters were not only not forgotten, but took on representative significance at this time.”

By the mid-sixteenth century Russia’s patrons and architects began to synthesize the contributions of the two architectural phases discussed in the preceding chapters, the tentative introduction of foreign forms during Ivan III’s reign and the more daring integration of forms under Vasily III. From the middle of the sixteenth century up to the reign of Peter the Great in the late-seventeenth century, Russian architecture creatively adapted the forms that had evolved in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century architecture into a new, expressive architectural style, which is here being characterized as the “Muscovite Composite Style.”

During this period, Russian architecture fully blossomed. Deeply rooted in its varied history—Byzantine, northern Italian, and Vladimirian—Russian architecture reconfigured traditional forms into shockingly new and distinctively Muscovite buildings. I call this mature architectural style Muscovite Composite Style, because—like the Mannerist period in Western Europe—architecture in Moscow was beginning to play with and manipulate the established styles and traditions from the previous centuries. As shall be discussed below, forms and systems were reused in new and sometimes startling ways. What makes this Muscovite Composite Style distinct from Western European Mannerism, however, is the fact that elements from many different periods and cultures were adapted into a unified style. Unlike Western Europe’s Mannerist architecture, which adapted the

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2 Dmitry Shvidkovsky calls this period “Post-Byzantine-Mannerism,” a useful phrase, but one that I find does not fully explain the style. For one thing, I don’t feel that this period is truly “Post-Byzantine,” as the desire to remain connected to and a continuation of the Byzantine Empire remained. Furthermore, “Post-Byzantine” does not convey the tremendous scope of influences that had shaped Russian architecture in the centuries preceding the mid-sixteenth century. Moreover, Byzantine style was far from the only style that Muscovite architecture developed from; as the previous chapters have shown, Muscovite architecture, up through the first third of the sixteenth century, was largely influenced by the Italian Renaissance (among other sources). Thus, I have chosen to call this style “Muscovite Composite Style.” Although it refers to the same architectural style as Shvidkovsky’s “Post-Byzantine-Mannerism,” its significance and origins, I argue, are different from those mentioned by Shvidkovsky. See ibid., 123–81.
forms of Renaissance architecture, Muscovite Composite Style drew from a wide range of sources, because of its own eclectic architectural heritage.\(^3\)

Certain traditional forms persisted in Russian architecture simultaneously with the Muscovite Composite Style, as shall be discussed in more detail below. Not surprisingly, the more traditional forms were applied to architectural projects of a conservative nature. Other architectural projects of the period reveal the taste for the emerging Muscovite Composite Style, which built upon the innovations of the previous decades. Indeed, the innovations postdating the 1530s seem to have precipitated the further experimentation of the Muscovite Composite Style.\(^4\) Building on the interest in new church plans, new decorative motifs, and new combinations thereof, the Muscovite Composite Style is an eclectic style. Its hallmarks are an interest in centralized church plans, the use of towers and tent roofs, and an increase in exterior ornamentation. The style marks a definitive shift from the styles that prevailed in late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century Moscow. Paradoxically, the shift away from the earlier styles also involved a reinterpretation of those same styles. The historical changes in Moscow with the rise of a new ruler and a new era help to explain the changes in its architecture.

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\(^4\) For all of the Russian buildings introduced in this chapter, the architect(s) remain unknown unless otherwise noted.
Muscovite Culture after Vasily III

The Muscovite court descended into a period of instability and disorder following the 1533 death of Vasily III. At the time of Vasily’s death his heir, Ivan IV, was only three years old, which effectively put power into the hands of Vasily’s widow, Elena Glinskaya, along with her many advisors. As precarious as this arrangement was already, matters became even less stable when Glinskaya herself died in 1538. From the time of Glinskaya’s death in 1538 until Ivan’s January 1547 coronation, different branches of the royal family vied for control over the young Ivan and his advisors. By the time of Ivan’s coronation, however, Muscovy (the nascent Russian Empire) was on track to become one of the sixteenth century’s major powers.

As befits a ruler of an emerging superpower, Ivan IV was crowned tsar (Russian for “Caesar”) of Russia. He was the first of the Muscovite grand princes also to be crowned tsar, which was a symbolic move marking the beginning of a new imperialistic phase in Russian history. Ivan would rule for nearly forty years and, in spite of his reputation as a cruel, possibly insane, despot, his reign was remarkably unified in terms of ideology and culture. Ivan IV’s reign coincides with a period of striking architectural ingenuity that truly helped to define Russian architecture; during his rule and for nearly a century afterwards, Russian architecture was arguably more in tune with its own cultural identity than at any other time in Russian history, for it was during this time that Russian architecture synthesized and truly adapted foreign architectural forms into something uniquely Russian.

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Although architecture during this period did not directly involve the work of Italian architects, it is important to note that Russia was not entirely cut off from foreign cultures. Interaction with Italians had ceased and architecture was not reliant upon outside architects, but the Russians did have an active relationship with both the English and the Ottoman courts. Analysis of Russian interaction with both England and the Ottoman Empire reveals Russia’s persistent interest in and affinity for adapting foreign forms into its own cultural repertoire. Moscow’s relationship with England is of particular interest, because it indicates yet another possible source of inspiration for Muscovite architecture in the afterlife of Italo-Russian contact. English architecture, it seems, added yet another layer of complexity to the already complex world of Russian architecture in the early modern period. A similar revelation is made when examining the Ottoman-Russian relationship, in which Ottoman textiles were imported to Russia. Although the Ottoman Empire did not exert an influence on Russian architecture, understanding the ways in which Ottoman textiles were absorbed into Russian art forms is revealing of the sophistication of Russian patrons and artists alike. Moreover, as the following discussions will reveal, Russia’s relationships with England and the Ottoman Empire reveal the extent to which Russian culture was open to outside forces as well as the extent to which it could handily adopt and re-imagine foreign forms. Thus, the receptivity and creativity of the Italo-Russian period was not unique; cultural hybridity appears to have been an intrinsic part of early modern Russian culture.
Moscow and England

Moscow began a lively trade relationship with England in 1533 when the joint-stock company known as the Muscovy Company was founded as an indirect result of English exploration. The Muscovy Company brought Russia and England into contact with one another in an official capacity for the first time. The relationship thrived through the first decade of the seventeenth century, when the English began to favor trade with the Dutch over the Russians. Until recently, the Muscovy Company was understood to be little more than an interesting example of trade relations in the early modern period. Shvidkovsky, however, has analyzed a number of documents that suggest that the opening up of relations between England and Moscow through the Muscovy Company also may have brought English craftsmen to Moscow, in much the same way that Italians made their way to Moscow in the previous century.

In July of 1556, Ivan IV sent his envoy, Osip Nepeya, to England with a letter that has not survived. Although there does not appear to be any existing documentation to determine what Ivan’s goals were in sending his envoy to England, the official response to the lost letter from Ivan provides some clues. It reads:

We have received the letter [. . .] delivered to us by Osip Nepeya [. . .] and we have readily met all your expectations and requests [. . .]. It is our gracious pleasure to permit merchants and craftsmen from our realm to go to cities and settlements in your country, should any desire to do so.

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8 Quoted in Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 149. Shvidkovsky has clearly made an error in his analysis of the letter, since Mary I was queen of England by the time Nepeya travelled to England with Ivan’s letter in 1556, but Shvidkovsky credits the response to King Edward, who had died in July of 1553. Either the date of Nepeya’s trip to England was earlier than the cited date of July 1556 or it was Mary I—not Edward VI—who wrote in response to Ivan IV. Shvidkovsky does not appear to have consulted the letter, instead citing Iosef Gamel’, Anglichane v Rossii v XVI i XVII stoletiakh (St. Petersburg: Nauk, 1865) and Iuriï Tolstoï, Pervye Sorok Let
Of course, the great mystery that remains is whether or not any English subjects did, in fact, “desire to do so.” It is evident, however, that Ivan IV later specifically requested architectural specialists from England. One particularly suggestive bit of evidence comes from a letter written by Ivan IV to Queen Elizabeth I in the 1560s, in which he requests experts “in the construction of fortresses, fortified towers and palaces . . .”

He goes on to say:

We have sent you letters patent for the use of any who may wish to come to our country and to work in our service for a fixed term of years, like those who came last year [emphasis added], and also any who may wish to join our permanent service . . . we invite any of your men with skills, architects, doctors, apothecaries and others, as set out in the letters patent, to enter our service.

This piece of text reveals that Ivan IV, contrary to the popular conception of the tsar as xenophobic, followed in the footsteps of Ivan III and Vasily III in actively soliciting craftsmen from beyond his borders.

Even more, although scholars have not yet ascertained exactly which English masters came to Moscow and what they did there, the wording of Ivan’s letter unequivocally suggests that this definitely happened, since in his solicitation he refers to “those who came last year.” Moreover, historian Iosif Gamel’ proved that a group of English masters did indeed make their way to Moscow for employment under Ivan IV in late 1567.

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9 Quoted in ibid.

10 Quoted in ibid., 149.


12 Gamel’, *Anglichane v Rossii*, 77.
English masters found their way to Moscow is a surviving letter from Queen Elizabeth I to Ivan IV, dated 1571, in which she mentions “certain master craftsmen and artists, who complain that they have not been granted permission to return home . . ..” Thus, Ivan seems to have followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather even in his desire to hold his foreign workers hostage in Moscow.

While the above-cited letters do reveal an active relationship of exchange between England and Muscovy, they do little to shed light on the specific questions of who the English masters were and what they were working on for Ivan IV in Moscow. Nonetheless, Ivan’s request for builders of “fortresses, fortified towers and palaces” does reveal with what types of architecture he desired foreign assistance, and suggests that his architectural ambitions were similar to some of the defensive commissions of the Italians working in Moscow in the fifteenth century.

Careful research by Dmitry Shvidkovsky has provided possible identities for at least two of the English masters who came to Moscow at this time. The first master Shvidkovsky identifies is the stonemason Thomas Chaffin. Analysis of his will shows that he was employed in the Muscovite court during the mid-sixteenth century. His will describes him as “appointed by the Power and Authority of our Sovereign, Her Royal Majesty, and by Her Command and in Her Name was sent to serve at the Court of the Emperor of Russia in the art and science of Stone-masonry, in which he had been trained since his childhood.” Shvidkovsky also identifies an

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13 Quoted in Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 149.

14 Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to conduct extensive research on the English architects whose names are associated with the court of Ivan IV, this is an avenue of inquiry that deserves further investigation.

English engineer, Humfry Lock, as one of the masters who worked in Moscow. A third architect or engineer, John Fenton, may also have travelled to Moscow with Lock as his assistant. Further proving the presence of English masters in sixteenth-century Moscow is documentation of a fire in Moscow that killed at least twenty-five Englishmen around the year 1572. Thus, there can be little doubt that English architects contributed to the architecture of Muscovy around the middle of the sixteenth century, even if their contributions are uncertain.

When English architects went to work in Moscow, English architecture itself was in a period of transition. After more than two hundred years of Gothic architecture, there was a gradual shift in England towards a more classical style. For centuries, the architecture of England had been closely tied to the architecture of France and, in general terms, English architecture had followed a similar trajectory to that of France, albeit with a decidedly local expression of styles. The Gothic style prevailed in England from the fourteenth through the early sixteenth century, and it was during this period that the uniquely English “perpendicular style” emerged. The perpendicular style emphasized dense, linear patterning as well as a rational ordering of space and decoration. Thus, for the generation of English architects who travelled to Moscow, the perpendicular style would have been the style in which they had been trained. They also would

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16 Ibid. Also see Grigorii Aleksinskii, *Russia and Europe* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1917), 177. Aleksinskii says Lock’s assistant, John Fenton, also went with him.

17 In addition to the three known English engineers, it appears that other English craftsmen and practitioners also went to work for Ivan IV, including a doctor, an apothecary, and a goldsmith. Aleksinskii, *Russia and Europe*, 177.


19 The English architectural presence continued in Moscow into the following century, as it has been confirmed that the English architect Christopher Halloway helped build the Gothicizing upper portion of the Spasskaia Tower of the Kremlin as well as a clock for the tower in the 1620s. See Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture*, 99.

have had some knowledge of Italianate classicism. Like the Russians themselves, English architects had been shaped by a diverse range of styles that incorporated Italian classicism and local tradition rooted in the medieval world. The unique tradition of English architecture, straddling the medieval and Renaissance worlds, would have made English architects well suited to work in the architecturally diverse climate of sixteenth-century Moscow.

Although knowledge of the activity of English engineers and architects in Moscow is severely limited, the fact that Ivan IV sought foreign architects and that a significant number of Englishmen went to Moscow in the third quarter of the sixteenth century allows for a more complete picture of Muscovy’s continued relationship with the West after the end of the period of Italian contact. Not only does this information prove that Russia never became closed off from the West during this period, as so many have suggested, but it provides yet another architectural source for scholarly consideration when examining the fascinating developments taking place in Russian architecture during and after the reign of Ivan IV. In spite of the dearth of information regarding the English masters who went to Moscow, the active interaction between England and Muscovy must be considered when examining the architecture of Russia in the latter half of the sixteenth century.

**Moscow and the Ottoman Empire**

Moscow had an active trade relationship with the Ottoman court as well, one that was based on the Russian desire for Ottoman textiles and the Ottoman desire for Russian furs. The Muscovites imported textiles for use in religious and secular contexts, and while there is no evidence of any meaningful architectural exchange between these cultures, the relationship is
still important for what it tells us about Ivan IV’s Russia. With the sixteenth century, Russian textiles, and Russian culture more broadly, were influenced by a tremendous influx of Ottoman products, especially silks. Russia had a history of textile-production dating back to its Christian conversion, but it was a less expansive tradition than that of the Ottomans, and it served its own needs rather than a global market. Russia’s history of textile production was closely related to that of Byzantium. In the Byzantine world, textiles were extremely popular, but the Byzantines favored embroidery—in a liturgical context—over the woven textiles that were produced in the Ottoman world.\textsuperscript{21} Tapestries were an integral part of the Orthodox Christian Church and the court; they ornamented nearly every aspect of these worlds. Officiating clergy and court members wore sumptuous silks, church and palace walls were draped in textiles, and both liturgical and secular objects were also often decorated with textiles.\textsuperscript{22} Russian-made textiles were increasingly influenced by the influx of Ottoman silks.

By the early sixteenth century, both the Ottomans and Russians were in newly advantageous political situations that allowed for thriving trade relationships. Just as the Russians were freeing themselves from Mongol rule and consolidating their power, the Ottomans were becoming more and more powerful in their recently established capital at Istanbul. Beginning in the 1490s and flourishing well into the seventeenth century, a healthy economic relationship between Muscovy and the Ottoman Empire was established, which continued to be

\textsuperscript{21} Warren Woodfin, “Liturgical Textiles,” in Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557), ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), 295. The Ottomans also produced embroideries, but these were not as prolific and were not commercialized until the seventeenth century, at which point the Russians had already been exposed to Ottoman woven textiles for over a century. See Walter Denny, “Textiles,” in Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans: Decorative Arts from the Ottoman Empire, ed. Yanni Petsopoulos (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982), 131.

\textsuperscript{22} Nurhan Atasoy and Walter Denny, Ipek, the Crescent and the Rose: Imperial Ottoman Silks and Velvets, ed. Julian Raby and Alison Effeny (London: Azimuth Editions, 2001), 180.
profitable for both sides for some time. It reportedly gave Grand Prince Ivan III an income “of twenty thousand rubles in 1501.”

Though Ottoman exports to Muscovy consisted of anything from foodstuffs to metalwork, the most profitable and prolific product was textiles. Textiles were desirable to the Muscovites for numerous reasons. As already discussed, they were an intrinsic part of the Orthodox Christian Church and the court. They were also highly valued by the tsars who used them in their palaces and as popular gifts for visiting dignitaries or as signs of approval. These luxurious objects were more than just beautiful curios to the Russians who acquired them; rather, they were necessary objects with a utilitarian purpose in Muscovite society. It didn’t hurt that they were also extremely beautiful, luxurious imports.

Huge shipments of textiles were brought into Moscow. Careful examination of those textiles that do survive opens up a whole new world of understanding in which not only were Russia’s textiles influenced by the influx of Ottoman textiles, but their artistic taste in general seems to have been irrevocably changed as well. Ottoman textiles in their new Northern environment were used in one of three ways: for secular use in Muscovy, adopted for a Christian function, or altered with the incorporation of Christian iconography into an Ottoman design. It is those textiles that came to Moscow from the Ottoman Empire that were adapted for use in a Christian function that are the most revealing about Muscovite culture’s continued ability to adapt foreign elements into its local artistic environment.

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Russians used Ottoman textiles in the context of the Orthodox Church, which was arguably the most important part of their culture. Though the design of the textiles themselves were usually not altered (the designs still looked distinctly Ottoman), their new use lent them an entirely new meaning. They were entirely re-contextualized. Though of Ottoman origin, they were thoroughly Christianized and Russianized. Innumerable examples of this type remain. One good example is a chasuble decorated with typical Ottoman patterns, with ogival ornamentation incorporating floral design (Fig. 3.1). Since it was used as a chasuble it had to be adapted and therefore it most likely included a Russian-made collar that would have been embellished with jewels or embroidered with Christian imagery. Another example shows just how this textile was adapted to work as a garment (Fig. 3.2). The lower two-thirds of the chasuble is derived from a floral-patterned textile made in the city of Bursa. The Russians added a collar to it that prominently featured the Virgin and Child along with other saints and angels. It also appears that a cross was added to the floral grouping just below the Virgin and Child. Though the design of the textile itself was not changed, it took on a completely new meaning and appearance in its new liturgical form. The result was truly hybrid cultural artifacts.

Lest it appear that this discussion has veered off course, it should be noted that the Russian adaptation of Ottoman textiles into a new context parallels the Russian adaptation of foreign architectural forms into a new, Russian context. Furthermore, it reveals a continued interest in foreign patterns, forms, designs, and techniques among Moscow’s art patrons—and an ingenuity in both local and foreign artists working in Moscow who had the ability to re-imagine forms, creating innovative products that reflect the unique culture of Moscow. Russian textiles never directly imitated Ottoman textiles, just as Russian architecture never directly copied Italian
architectural forms; in both cases, certain elements were reconfigured and applied to a distinctly Russian dialect.

Between England and the Ottoman Empire, it is clear that while direct Russian contact with Italy had ceased, Russia’s contact with outside cultures had not. In fact, Ivan enthusiastically took advantage of what foreign cultures had to offer. Muscovite architects had already developed a robust building tradition, based largely on the innovations of Italian architects working in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, and therefore the demand for the skills of foreigners to construct his new building projects was rather diminished.

Muscovite Architecture after the Shatior Roof

As discussed in the previous chapter, two main church types had emerged as the standards in the early part of the sixteenth century: the cross-in-square “cube,” which was often decorated with Western features on the exterior, and the new centralized shatior church, which was an Italo-Russian invention. The two church types served as the basis for virtually all later religious architectural developments in the coming century, with adaptations and flourishes made to the two types of buildings. The innovative shatior church type was especially ripe for adaptation, as it was itself an adaptation of earlier Russian architectural forms. It would continue to evolve in ever more complex buildings over the coming decades, as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Still, the more simple and traditional cross-in-square church remained quite popular in Russia, especially for more conservative projects that had significant symbolic importance. Its continued popularity in Russia can be explained by the fact that this church type had become and
remained a symbol of the combined power of the Russian state and official religion. After all, it had been this same type of cross-in-square church that was built in Vladimir after that city established itself as the new seat of power in Russia in the eleventh century, and later, in Moscow in an attempt to proclaim that city as a new seat of power. The strength of the symbolism of this church type remained powerful centuries after its medieval debut.

Furthermore, the symbolism of this church type built upon itself, as in cases such as the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin, which imitated the Vladimirian prototype to borrow from its symbolic power; thus later churches built in imitation of the Cathedral of the Dormition referenced both that cathedral as well as its eleventh-century model. The symbolism was condensed, referring to several layers of Russian history in one new building.

The cross-in-square church was an ideal form for a city to declare its authority, because it was such a traditional Russian form, drawing on the very earliest Christian churches built in Russia. As has already been discussed, shortly after Christianity was adopted in Russia in the tenth century, Byzantine architects and craftsmen made their way to Kiev, the capital of Russian politics and culture at that time, and built churches to meet the demands of the newly Christianized city. The Middle Byzantine cross-in-square church type was favored by these architects and thus this style, with its rectangular plan, three apses, and four central piers, along with a proportionally larger square beneath the main dome that served as central space for worship, was widely adopted in early Christian Russia.

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25 For an extensive discussion of both the church in Moscow and the archetype in Vladimir, see Chapter One.

26 For more on this, see Chapter One.

Of course, as the centuries passed, Russian builders and patrons did not simply adopt the Byzantine prototype unchanged. Instead, different regions contributed new, local elements to the Russian architectural tradition, creating a hybridized Byzantino-Russian style. While indebted to Byzantine culture for the cross-in-square form, Russian churches were unique and innovative, filled with stylistic features distinct to the local culture. Thus, in buildings like the Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir, while there is a stylistic relationship to the Middle Byzantine church type, there is also an obvious incorporation of local elements that make the building fundamentally and undeniably Russian. The cathedral in Vladimir paid reverence to ancient Byzantino-Russian Christian tradition, while asserting the primacy of Vladimir and contemporary eleventh-century Russian culture. The adaptation of older and foreign forms into contemporary, local traditions would continue for centuries in Russia.

As was discussed in Chapter One, when Moscow built its own Cathedral of the Dormition, modeled on the Vladimir cathedral, it deliberately quoted that prototype, referring to Russian history, while also asserting the beginning of a new historical chapter in Moscow. This very layering of history and historical references would assure the continued popularity of this church type in Russia. Even more, the artistic success and extremely positive reception of Fioravanti’s church did a great deal to continue the popularity of the traditional church type. As this type continued to be built in the coming years, it was gradually and imperceptibly modernized with each subsequent iteration.

Even during the height of Italian-Russian interaction, Fioravanti’s church was already being directly quoted within the realm. One of the earliest imitative examples, the Cathedral of the Dormition in Rostov, may have been built as early as the late-fifteenth century (Fig. 3.3). Built in the place of an older twelfth-century cathedral, the building is among the first to
deliberately quote the Moscow Kremlin. William Craft Brumfield’s analysis of the building reveals that it as an excellent example of the impression the Muscovite buildings had made on Russian architecture. He describes the exterior motifs, which largely draw on Suzdalian architecture as “reinterpreted in the manner of the fifteenth century,” and points out that the centralization of the domes over the interior space was a clear quotation of the Muscovite prototype. He goes on to say that “[w]hether it occurred in the reign of Ivan III or of Vasilii III, the rebuilding of the Rostov Cathedral was unquestionably an event of much significance—a demonstration of Moscow’s dominant political position as well as its determination to maintain and enhance the ancient centers of Russian religious culture.”

This was but an early instance of the imitation of earlier Italo-Russian forms, which continued during the reign of Ivan IV.

Occurring simultaneously with the reproduction of Fioravanti-style churches was the emergence of an “Alevisian” church type. The northern Italian Alevisio Lamberti had introduced a new decorative character to the exterior of the Fioravantian church type during his Muscovite career in the early sixteenth century. Thus, as Muscovite architecture became more and more attuned to Italian culture, its own traditional churches became ever so subtly Italianized on the exterior. Rather than the stark austerity of Fioravanti’s Cathedral of the Dormition, Lamberti built churches that exhibited a more ornately rhythmic articulation of space, with simple, yet clearly Western, architectural elements (Figs. 2.14-18). As discussed in Chapter Two, the updated cross-in-square “cube,” adorned with Italian flourishes, became a quintessential Russian church by the first quarter of the sixteenth century. In the years following Moscow’s rise to power, the cross-in-square church type became especially popular in cities farther away from

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29 Ibid., 110–11.

30 See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion of Alevisian churches.
the capital. It was as if, by quoting the architecture of Russia’s revered capitals—Vladimir and Moscow—the smaller, less powerful cities could garner the authority of great metropolitan centers.

As previously discussed, Alevisio Lamberti built many cross-in-square churches around Moscow, establishing an “Alevian” cross-in-square church type. Even well after he was no longer working in Moscow—and after the last of the Italians had fled Moscow in 1539—the Alevian type, and thus a hint of the Italian architectural spirit, lived on in Russia. Well into the seventeenth century, the traditional, Italian-infused, cross-in-square cube was built all around Russia. There was an especially large number of these churches built during the reigns of Vasily III and Ivan IV in the sixteenth century, as will be discussed below.

One of the earliest examples of an Alevian-style cube-church that was not built by Lamberti is the Cathedral of the Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God, dating to the 1520s (Fig. 3.4). Built during Vasily III’s reign in the Novodevichy Convent, the church has a general plan and orderly distribution of elements that reveal the influence of Fioravanti, much like the Dormition in Rostov. Unlike that church, however, the cathedral in the Novodevichy Convent goes further than the Rostov Dormition in that it incorporates Western-style architectural motifs on its exterior, revealing the changes in local architectural taste by the 1520s. Gone are the modernized Suzdalian motifs of the Rostov cathedral in favor of the much more modern-looking, restrained, Italianate elements that were taking hold in Muscovy during Lamberti’s fruitful career. Thus, the church draws inspiration both from the traditional form made popular by Fioravanti’s church and the stylistic innovations of Lamberti. 32


32 Ibid., 111–12.
These deliberate architectural quotations continued under the reign of Ivan IV. Some of the most striking examples are the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Trinity-Sergius Monastery (Fig. 3.5), the cathedral of Saint Sophia in Vologda (Fig. 3.6), and the Church of the Trinity in Viaziomy (Fig. 3.7), all of which date to the latter half of the sixteenth century. Each of these buildings adheres to the cross-in-square tradition. As such, they refer to some of the more famous cross-in-square churches from Russian history, especially the more recent churches in the Kremlin: the Cathedral of the Dormition and the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael. In addition, these churches refer, to lesser or greater degrees, to the Italo-Russian style developed in Moscow in the early part of the sixteenth century, with their inclusion of subtle, yet distinct Western-style ornamentation on the exterior. Indeed, each of these churches imitates the ornamental style introduced to Moscow by Alevisio Lamberti in the first half of the sixteenth century in his many churches around Moscow. Careful examination of these churches reveals consistent similarities and the same references to the traditions established in the Moscow Kremlin. They are all compact rectangles (with a cubic appearance), comprised of three bays on the short side and four bays on the long side. Their roofs are crowned with five domes that are carefully and symmetrically placed over the nine interior bays, which are separated by four large central piers.

On the exterior, however, there are some conceptual differences between the churches that align them either with the Fioravantian or Alevisian camps. The Cathedral of the Dormition at the Trinity-Sergius Monastery, for example, is somewhat austere, and more in line with the Fioravantian style. Its bays are defined by lopatki that extend the full height of the buildings as

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34 See Chapter Two for a thorough discussion of the works of Alevisio Lamberti in Moscow.
well as zakomary crowning each bay. The arches of the zakomary create a rhythm similar to that of the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow. Much like that archetype, the Trinity-Sergius Dormition is also almost entirely lacking in ornament. Slender windows punctuate each bay as well as the circumference of the dome’s drums, there are blind arcades running around the lower level of the long sides of the building, and the lopatki bear only a small amount of ornament in their capitals. But, like the Moscow model, the main visual interest in this building is its compactness, its sense of harmony and rhythm, and its austere simplicity. This church is a very obvious quotation of Fioravanti’s celebrated church in the Kremlin.³⁵

The Church of Saint Sophia in Vologda, however, which is in many ways a direct quotation of the eleventh-century Church of Saint Sophia in Novgorod, reveals the influence of both Fioravanti and Lamberti.³⁶ Like Fioravanti’s cathedral of the Dormition, the Vologda Church of Saint Sophia adheres to a clear spatial order, with bays of equal size encircling the exterior of the building—four bays along the long sides and three along the short sides. Furthermore, the apse end of the church is tucked into the side of the building, allowing the building to appear essentially cubic and compact. Also like Fioravanti’s building, the Church of Saint Sophia has little exterior decoration, although this is also very much in keeping with the Novgorodian prototype; the zakomary at the roofline and the slender windows in each bay provide the main focus. Still, the elegant pilasters that connect to the banded arches within the zakomary add an understated decorative quality to the exterior of the building that lends the


church a distinct stylistic elegance; this decorative articulation follows the example set by Alevisio Lamberti in his many sixteenth-century Muscovite churches.

Finally, the Church of the Trinity in Viazomy, dating to the last decade of the sixteenth century, also follows in the footsteps of Fioravanti and Lamberti. Again, it is spatially arranged like Fioravanti’s Dormition, but it is decorated with the simple, elegant articulation introduced by Lamberti. Here, the articulation is even more detailed than the previous example, with further recesses, and ridges embedded within the basically understated articulation of the façade. Perhaps even more noteworthy is the lower-level terrace upon which this church stands. In this regard, the Church of the Trinity references the other Italian active in Vasily III’s Moscow: Pietro Annibale. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Annibale is credited with building the very important Church of the Ascension in Kolomenskoe, dating to the 1530s, Moscow’s first masonry shatior roof church. Although the church at Viazomy does not feature a shatior roof, it does bear a resemblance to the Church of the Ascension in that it was built upon an elevated terrace that can be accessed via wide arches; stairways leading up from the ground provide access to the elevated church itself.

Thus, by the end of the sixteenth century, the traditional cross-in-square church, an architectural emblem of Russian power and tradition, had continued to thrive, while adapting a variety of new features introduced by Italian architects over the course of several decades. As such, even the most traditional architectural form did not remain unaffected by the preceding decades of cultural interaction. The prevalence of the cross-in-square cube continued to be popular in the following centuries. The church of Saint Nicholas on Bersenevka (Fig. 3.8), dating from the mid-seventeenth-century, for example, follows the same general plan a full century

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after the examples cited above.\textsuperscript{38} By this late date, however, there were other, more recent stylistic forces that contributed to a more complex design with a great deal of ornamentation. These changes are the result of the influence of the Muscovite Composite Style, which emerged around the middle of the century.

The churches discussed above are merely examples of the continued popularity of the cross-in-square church type in and around Moscow. There are, however, dozens of churches built in the sixteenth century that follow the same patterns as the churches discussed above. Moreover, the popularity of the cross-in-square cube, as informed by Italian architecture, spread throughout the vast Russian territories and continues to be a common church type even up to the present day. The tradition truly lived on and was far from exceptional. Although the cross-in-square cube was often given contemporary flourishes, the traditional form persisted as a quintessentially Russian building type.\textsuperscript{39}

While the cross-in-square, traditional church continued to thrive in sixteenth-century Russia and beyond, the Muscovite Composite Style was emerging at the same time, initially taking three distinct forms. The three types of new, experimental churches built around the middle of the century, leading up to the Muscovite Composite Style were \textit{shatior} churches, in the

\textsuperscript{38} By the mid-seventeenth century, Muscovite architecture had recently overcome a developmental pause, as monumental architectural construction was halted as a result of both the Time of Troubles and the Polish-Lithuanian Intervention. It is beyond the scope of the current discussion to address the unique political situation in early-seventeenth-century Russia and how that influenced Russian architecture. It should be noted, however, that these troubles lasted for approximately twenty years, essentially freezing Russian architecture around the year 1600. Thus, when the political unrest improved by the second quarter of the seventeenth century, the architecture was of necessity retrospective. There was virtually no contemporary architecture. This phenomenon will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. For more on the effect of the “Time of Troubles” on Russian architecture, see Brumfield, \textit{A History of Russian Architecture}, 141; Hamilton, \textit{The Art and Architecture of Russia}, 209; Daniel H. Shubin, \textit{Tsars and Imposters: Russia’s Time of Troubles} (New York: Algora Pub., 2009). For more on the Church of Saint Nicholas in Bersenevka, see G. V. Alferova, “Issledovanie i restaavratsiia palat Averkiia Kirillova,” in \textit{Iz istorii restavratsii pamiatnikov kul’tury}, ed. R. E. Krupovna et al. (Moscow: Sov. Rossiia, 1974), 136–50; Brumfield, \textit{A History of Russian Architecture}, 153.

\textsuperscript{39} For an overview of Russian architecture and the many churches built in this style in Moscow and its environs, see Brumfield, \textit{A History of Russian Architecture}, 107–227; Hamilton, \textit{The Art and Architecture of Russia}, 209-25.
tradition of the Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe; pillar (stolp) churches, which are closely related to shatior churches; and corner-tower churches. The innovative experimentation with these church types brought about the new, fully-realized Muscovite Composite style. In addition to the new approach to layout, Muscovite Composite architecture also shows a heightened interest in exterior ornamentation, and a marked eclecticism. All three church types are indebted to the Italian presence in Moscow from 1472 to 1539 and provided inspiration for the mature Muscovite Composite Style.

Continuation of the Shatior Church

While Russian architects and patrons propagated the cross-in-square cube as a powerful symbol of traditional Russian culture, there were other innovations taking place in local architecture that would soon come to have a role in the development of Russia’s architecture and sense of national pride. The cross-in-square, borrowed from Byzantino-Russian and later Italo-Russian church architecture, was a conventional and conservative building standard, but for the more innovative architecture that would develop in the second half of the sixteenth century—a style that would come to redefine Russian architectural style—architects and their patrons were indebted to the innovations of Pietro Annibale and his shatior-roofed Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe dating to the 1520s (Fig. 2.30).

As discussed in detail in the preceding chapter, the Church of the Ascension is considered one of the most important pieces of early modern Russian architecture. With its striking, conical roof and compact, octagonal plan, it heralded a new moment in Muscovite architectural history. With the Ascension, Annibale broke with tradition, creating a building whose form had no
precedent in Russia’s tradition of masonry architecture; the innovation paved the way for even more experimentation with and deviation from traditional form. Indeed, the building diverged from the traditional cross-in-square cube in almost every way. Annibale abandoned that formula, instead completely reimagining the space. What resulted was an octagonal tower with a soaring conical dome. Where the building truly departs from earlier tradition, however, asserting its own, unique style, is in the presence of its conical *shatior* roof, which replaced the traditional Russian church roof that was crowned with one or multiple domes. The use of the *shatior* roof over a small, centralized space created a narrow, vertically oriented space, with almost no distinction between the church itself and the conical dome up above. The Church of the Ascension is the first known example of the *shatior* church-type in Russian architecture.\(^{40}\) Annibale’s divergence from the traditional church plan was dramatic and decisive.

The decorative elements on the building’s exterior are just as important as its unusual spatial configuration. Indeed, the exterior of the building is extensively ornamented, much more so than the traditional Byzantino-Russian church; some of its ornament borrows from Italo-Russian architecture and some from Byzantino-Russian architecture. The way it is combined is unusual, which is another way in which this building marks a new moment in Russian architectural history that would be built upon with the Muscovite Composite Style. Alevician-style Italianate ornament is combined with the quintessentially Muscovite layering of *kokoshniki* and pointed gables. The combination of decorative elements provides a lively depth to the exterior ornament that hints at the sort of decorative eclecticism of the mature Muscovite Composite Style.

\(^{40}\) It should be remembered, however, that the origins of the *shatior* roof are contentious among scholars of Russian architecture, with many claiming that the form was prevalent in wooden architecture well before its appearance in stone architecture. For more on this debate, see Chapter Two.
As a result of both the unusual form and decorative quality of this building, it has a highly sculptural quality that anticipates the sort of ornamentation that would be employed in Muscovite Composite buildings in sixteenth-century Moscow, an ornamentation indicative of “the Russian fondness for lavish decoration,” as George Heard Hamilton has put it. The decorative elements on the exterior of the church, which blend together features from Renaissance Italy and medieval Muscovy, make it one of the first examples of truly hybridized architectural ornament in early modern Russia. This unusual hybridization of exterior architectural decoration would become one of the many hallmarks of the Muscovite Composite style beginning in the sixteenth century. There can be little doubt that the Church of the Ascension served as a model for later generations of architects working in Moscow.

After the construction of the Church of the Ascension in the 1520s, many churches incorporated the soaring shatior roof into their designs. But the Russian architects building these innovative new churches did not simply ape the construction of the famed Kolomenskoe church. Instead, they continued to innovate, ushering in a new era of Russian architecture. Their buildings combined the striking shatior roof with ever more elaborate exterior ornamentation and increasingly elaborate floor plans that borrowed from a variety of foreign and local architectural sources. One common church plan that emerged in this period featured a central church “core” that was topped with a shatior roof, with several other tower-like structures abutting the church core, often at the outer corners. There were many churches of this type built in the latter two-thirds of the sixteenth century.


42 The decorative elements of the exterior of the Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe are also somewhat contentious. George Heard Hamilton argues that many of the decorative features are derived from wooden architecture and Dmitry Shvidkovsky notes a Gothic quality to some of the decoration. See Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, 200; Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 115.
One of the earliest post-1532 examples of the *shatior* roof church is Church of the Transfiguration in Ostrov (Fig. 3.9), which probably dates to the middle of the sixteenth century. Like the Church of the Ascension, the church’s core is a tall and narrow central space, topped with a *shatior* roof. Also like its ancestor, it is built upon a subtly cruciform plan that is embedded within the central-plan space. In the Transfiguration, however, there is an apse end that disrupts the pure symmetry; a tripartite apse makes up the eastern side of the church, and two shorter towers abut the central *shatior* at the outer bays of the apse.

The exterior is at once ornamental and austere. Tiers of *kokoshniki* and blind arcades are the only decoration on the exterior, but they are applied liberally and create a multi-dimensional, sculptural effect. This unusual building seems to be a descendent of the Church of the Ascension, but it seems to be moving towards something new, rather than simply imitating the earlier form. The simplicity and harmony of the Italian building were being adapted to a new style that anticipated the mature Muscovite Composite style.

Another interesting example is the bell tower of the Church of the Crucifixion in Alexandrova Sloboda dating to the 1570s (Fig. 3.10). The building was commissioned by Vasily in the second decade of the century, but was dramatically altered by Ivan IV, who surrounded the central tower with a two-story arcade and crowned it with a *shatior* roof. Like the Transfiguration in Ostrov, the Crucifixion bell tower directly quotes the Church of the Ascension with its high *shatior* roof topped with a small dome. Also like the Transfiguration, the *shatior* is decorated with layers of *kokoshniki* at its base, thus perpetuating the new architectural language initiated at Kolomenskoe. The Crucifixion bell tower is an interesting example because it is an example of the *shatior* roof’s migration away from the body of a church to the bell tower. Even

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after the use of the *shatior* over a church was abandoned in later centuries, it continued to be featured on church bell towers.\(^{44}\)

The *shatior* church continued to be popular during the sixteenth century and beyond. The Church of Saints Boris and Gleb at the compound of Borisov Gorodok near Moscow (Fig. 3.11), consecrated in 1603, reveals the lasting interest in the form.\(^{45}\) Although the building no longer stands, scholars know that it was a central-plan, *shatior*-roofed church, similar to the Church of the Transfiguration at Ostrov.\(^{46}\)

The interest in the *shatior* roof intensified in the seventeenth century, when it became an almost obligatory feature on Russian churches.\(^{47}\) A good example of this is the Church of the Intercession at Medvedkovo in Moscow (Fig. 3.12) dating to 1634-5.\(^{48}\) In this example, a conical tower in the tradition of the Church of the Ascension soars over a compact, centralized space. After the turn of the seventeenth century, *shatior*-roofed churches became ubiquitous features of the Russian landscape.\(^{49}\)


\(^{45}\) Ibid., 137–38.


\(^{47}\) As shall be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, the interest in the *shatior* roof in the seventeenth century and later is likely a result of its association with the Muscovite Composite Style and its ability to evoke a Russian “national” architecture.

\(^{48}\) Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 164.

Flourishing of Muscovite Composite Style

The truly astounding evolution of Russian architecture, marking the definitive arrival of Muscovite Composite Style, however, was in the application of the daring new shatior form to an experimental new type of church plan. This new conception of the Russian church incorporates various seemingly disparate elements of Russian architectural history within one, surprisingly unified building. As shall be explained below, the traditional cross-in-square cube coexists with the Renaissance octagon; the five-domed roofline of the Vladimirian church coexists with the soaring shatior roofs; and, as at the Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe, Renaissance-style architectural ornament is married to medieval Russian ornament in glorious hybrid style—all in one building. Given the sustained and active relationship between Italy and Moscow in the preceding decades, it is not surprising that the mature Muscovite Composite Style of the mid-sixteenth century contains a number of features that are derived from Italian Renaissance architecture. The two examples of Muscovite Composite Style in its fully realized form at the middle of the century are the Church of the Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist at Diakovo and the Church of the Intercession on the Moat in Moscow. Both of these churches, which will presently be discussed at length, reveal the way in which architectural traditions persisted in Moscow while also being thoroughly transformed. Both churches represent a thorough fusion of the various architectural forms that had been acculturated into Russia by the middle of the sixteenth century. As such, they are perfect examples of Muscovite Composite Style.
The Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist at Diakovo

One of the most important and earliest examples of the fully realized Muscovite Composite style is the Church of the Decapitation of St John the Baptist in Diakovo, which scholars date to anywhere from 1547 to 1570, although the earlier date seems most plausible (Fig. 3.13).\textsuperscript{50} Indeed, most scholars agree upon an earlier date, which makes the Decapitation one of the earliest fully realized Muscovite Composite churches. It incorporates many of the innovative, post-\textit{shatior}-roof-style elements, including tower churches, an unconventional plan, and increased ornamentation.

The circumstances of the church’s commission are unclear; however, it was undoubtedly linked to the symbolism of Ivan IV’s dynasty and coronation. Although it is generally considered as a single church, it is in fact one large church that incorporates smaller churches at its four outer corners. The large central church dedicated to the Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist, whose feast day was Ivan IV’s name day, lends the entire compound its name. The dedications of the smaller, outer churches also reference Ivan’s dynasty. They are dedicated to the Conception of Saint John the Baptist, the Conception of Saint Anne, the Twelve Apostles, and the Moscow Metropolitans Peter, Aleksei, and Jonah. The evocation of the religious events and figures to whom the churches are dedicated reinforces issues of critical importance to Ivan: the birth of an heir and the continued protection of his position by the Russian church. Thus, like the Church of

\textsuperscript{50} There is no documentation to securely date the Decapitation. Shvidkovsky suggests a date towards the end of the century, viewing the church as influenced by the new style that he argues was introduced with the Church of the Intercension by the Moat (Saint Basil the Blessed); Other scholars, however, suggest the earlier date of 1547. Brumfield, \textit{A History of Russian Architecture}, 119; Hamilton, \textit{Art and Architecture of Russia}, 201; A. Nekrasov, \textit{Ocherki po istorii drevnerusskogo zodchestva XI - XVII veka} (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Vsesoiuznoi akademii arkhitektury, 1936), 256.
the Ascension, it is likely that the Decapitation was built as a votive offering in the hopes of the birth of an heir.\footnote{Brumfield, \textit{A History of Russian Architecture}, 119–20.}

The plan and design of the church compound is almost baffling in its ability to appear at once traditional—for it does not look greatly removed from the cross-in-square cube of vaunted tradition—and innovative. On the one hand, its decorative elements and spatial conception both borrow heavily from past traditions. There is nothing shockingly foreign in its appearance. On the other hand, close inspection of the building compound reveals that its traditional forms have been reworked and made into something altogether new. As such, the Decapitation is an excellent example of the new, fully hybridized character of sixteenth-century Russian architecture.

Analysis of the many features derived from earlier architectural traditions reveals the way that the overall appearance and plan of the building were altered to create a new building type. Many traditional elements are on display in the building. Most obviously, from the exterior, the church appears to be square-shaped, with a tripartite apse. Furthermore, it resembles the pentacopular (five-domed) church type with one large central dome over the central space and four subsidiary domes around it. In the most basic ways, the church incorporates the defining features of a traditional cross-in-square church in the tradition of the Cathedral of the Dormition. Examination of the plan and special construction of the church, however, reveals that it is a great departure from the cross-in-square church and is in fact, a rather innovative building. Although its appearance is not as dramatically divergent from tradition as \textit{shatior}-roofed churches, such as the Church of the Ascension at nearby Kolomenskoe, its design is as radical a departure—if not more of one—from established Muscovite architecture as the \textit{shatior} church type.
The outside walls of the building form a rough square; however, the plan and elevation reveal that shape to be a deception (Fig. 3.14). In truth, the square plan of the building is divided into five distinct towers that consist of a centralized octagon that is abutted by four smaller octagons on the four corners of the square into which the five towers are inscribed. All five of these octagonal towers rest upon one large, square base, which contributes to the appearance of unity from the exterior. The towers are connected to one another by a surrounding gallery. As if to make the deception complete, the gallery connecting the towers swells outward at the west end to create the appearance of a semicircular apse.

The elevation also hints at the building’s deceptions. The central octagonal tower rises much higher than the other towers, creating a vertically oriented space that is much like the Church of the Ascension. The main difference from that church, however, is that the soaring tower here is cylindrical, rather than conical. It uses the pillar (stolp) form, rather than the pointed shatior tent-roof. The most noteworthy feature of this church, which marks a departure from the Church of the Ascension, and from other pre-shatior constructions, is the incorporation of corner towers that are smaller and shorter than the central tower. As a result, the five-domed construction takes on a pyramidal silhouette that is reminiscent of the Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe. The overall conception of this building, with the incorporation of five distinct towers on a square plan melded into a pyramidal, centralized composition, represents a complete departure from earlier architectural forms. Its novelty, however, is couched in familiar terms. The combination and reinterpretation of old forms is a hallmark of the mature Muscovite Composite Style.

The exterior ornamentation of the Church of the Decapitation exhibits the increasing taste for decoration that evolved over the course of the sixteenth century and is another hallmark of
the Muscovite Composite Style. Each of the church’s five towers is adorned with tiers of *kokoshniki* and the central tower has a ring of *kokoshniki*-topped *zakomary* at its base (figs. 3.15-16). The emphasis on these Russian architectural forms seems to celebrate local Russian tradition. Other decorative elements on display reveal a lasting interest in the Italo-Russian traditions from earlier in the century. The recessed panels on the wall surfaces of the exterior recall Renaissance architecture while also serving to create a rhythmic pattern across the church’s exterior (Fig. 3.17). In fact, these recessed panels quote Alevisio Lamberti’s Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, in which recessed paneling framed the slender windows of the upper story. In an example of the many cultural layers of Muscovy, however, the recessed panels also quote the Byzantino-Russian style of Kievan Rus’, as similar recessed panels were featured on the exterior of the eleventh-century Saint Sophia. In addition, the *zakomary* encircling the central octagon incorporate oculi in the tradition of the Venetian Renaissance by way of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael. Further embellishing the church exterior are the unusual, truncated engaged columns encircling the drum of the central octagonal tower (Fig. 3.18).

The incorporation of Italianate and Byzantino-Russian decorative motifs in the exterior of the building follows a long history of Muscovite architectural tradition. Although there seems to be a greater interest in eclectic decoration on this building’s exterior than on most earlier Russian churches, the building does not appear to be a radical departure from tradition when viewed from the exterior. It requires careful consideration and investigation on the part of the visitor to understand the ways in which this church truly diverged from Muscovite architectural tradition. Nonetheless, this Muscovite Composite Style building *does* mark a true departure from tradition.

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52 It should be noted that in figures 3.15-17 the Church of the Decapitation is shown as photographed at different times. In figure 3.16, the whitewashing has significantly worn off (it was later repainted), revealing the red brick beneath.
For a more overt example of the new style, we now turn to what is arguably Russia’s most iconic building: The Church of the Intercession on the Moat.

The Church of the Intercession on the Moat (Saint Basil the Blessed)

The most striking example of the innovative new Muscovite Composite Style is the Church of the Intercession on the Moat, more commonly known as the Church of Saint Basil the Blessed – or, more simply Saint Basil’s Cathedral (Fig. 3.19). Like the Church of the Decapitation, it shows the way that styles of various origins were merged into one hybridized new building. In the case of Saint Basil’s, both shatior and stolp elements are incorporated into a building whose plan simultaneously quotes the Russian church traditions of cross-in-square plan with several domes, and of centralized plan with soaring roof. As the following discussion will show, the church defies easy classification and indeed seems to be many contradictory things at once. Its fusion of so many disparate elements makes it the quintessential example of Muscovite Composite Style.

Tsar Ivan IV commissioned the Church of Saint Basil the Blessed in 1555, shortly after a 1552 military defeat of the city of Kazan on Russia’s eastern frontier. The builders, about whom we know very little, have been identified simply as Postnick and Barma, the latter architect originating from Pskov. The building also celebrates his subsequent 1554-56 defeat of the city.

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53 As shall be discussed below, what appears to be one church was actually built as a cluster of nine distinct churches. The central and most prominent of the churches was dedicated to the Intercession of the Virgin, which is the source of the official name. A chapel dedicated to Saint Basil (i.e. Vasily) was added in the seventeenth century and that name became the common name for the group.

of Astrakhan, also on Russia’s eastern frontier. Both Kazan and Astrakhan were Mongol cities, and Ivan’s victories in these two cities altered Russia’s relationship with the Mongol khanates, decisively shifting the balance of power in Russia’s favor. Furthermore, Ivan’s victories at Kazan and Astrakhan opened up new territory for Russian expansion in the east, leading Russia on a direct course toward its imperialist future. In many ways, then, the church is a symbol of the inception of the Russian Empire. Fittingly, it is one of the most innovative buildings from sixteenth-century Moscow.

The importance of Saint Basil the Blessed can hardly be overstated. That Ivan IV had such an unusual church built to commemorate such an important victory, and that this structure was built in such a prominent location, hints at the significance of this church at the middle of the century. Moreover, the prominence and symbolism of Saint Basil the Blessed assured that its design would have a lasting impact on later Russian architecture. As shall be explained, Saint Basil’s is a paragon of Muscovite Composite architecture, even more so than the Church of the Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist.

In spite of its superficial resemblances to the Church of the Decapitation, Saint Basil is composed in an entirely novel way. Like the Decapitation, there is a square at the core of the plan of Saint Basil’s (Fig. 3.20), but in this instance, the square is rotated such that each of its corners is at a cardinal point. Also like the Decapitation, there is a tower at each of the corners.

55 As William Craft Brumfield explains, the names of the builders only came to light in the nineteenth century, based on documentary research. Learning more about who these men were, or even their full names and identities, has remained a challenge. Brumfield, A History of Russian Architecture, 547 fn 42. For more on Postnick and Barma, see N. Sobolev, “Proekt rekonstruktssi pamiatnika arkhitekteury-khrama Vasiliia Blazhennogo v Moskve,” Arkhitektura SSSR 2 (1977): 42–8.


57 Brumfield points out the placement of the monument outside of the Kremlin close to the populous Kitai Gorod neighborhood, so that it would confront the citizenry more than it would were it behind the Kremlin walls. Brumfield, A History of Russian Architecture, 124.
Intersecting with the main square is another, smaller square that is turned so that the centers of its four sides match up with the corner towers of the larger square, and its own corners—which are themselves defined by shorter towers—intersect the mid-point of each of the larger square’s four sides. This complicated, interwoven geometry creates a plan that almost defies classification. At the same time, however, it creates a delightfully simple space, as the overlapping of the two squares creates a perimeter with eight distinct corners, which when connected form an octagon. Ingeniously, the building is both a centralized octagon and a traditional Russian square, thereby masterfully recalling both the tradition and conservatism of the cross-in-square cube and the modern innovation of the shatior church. It is the best of both worlds. The church’s elevation is similarly complicated and reveals a similar juxtaposition of contradictory features.

There is such variation among the towers in terms of their size, height, position, and decoration that together they create the effect of a cluster of independent buildings more than of one single church. This effect is in line with the ethos of the monument, which is in fact a conglomeration of nine distinct churches, rather than one, unified church. United together, these nine churches memorialized Ivan’s military victories and recalled his dynastic legacy. Thus, they served as a collective symbol of Muscovite authority under Ivan IV. Architecturally, they work together to memorialize Russia’s cultural past, while heralding a new, fully autonomous cultural identity.

Each of the nine distinct churches was dedicated to a different saint or religious event that in some way refers to Ivan’s dynasty or to his military victories. As mentioned above, the church plan is made up of two intersecting squares, a larger square with tower churches at the cardinal points and a smaller square with tower churches at the intermediary points. The towers of the larger square—those at the cardinal points—are all the same height. The corner towers on the
smaller square are likewise smaller and shorter, but all of the same height as each other. An imposing shatior roof defines the central octagonal space. Thus there is harmonious arrangement to the compound, with one central shatior surrounded by eight additional stolp towers of two different heights. In spite of the eclecticism of the building, there is a distinct harmony created by this arrangement, which has a rhythmic ABABABAB organization.

The dedication of the churches adds to the harmony of the composition, as their dedication so perfectly relates to the historical circumstances of Ivan IV’s Moscow. The central, shatior-roofed church is dedicated to the Intercession of the Virgin, whose feast day was one of the most important church holidays. The Intercession of the Virgin was celebrated on October 1, which was the same day that Ivan IV began his campaign against Kazan. Thus, the holiday came to be associated with Ivan’s victory. At the easternmost corner of the compound is the original church, the Church of the Trinity, dedicated to the Trinitarian mystery. At the westernmost corner of the complex, directly opposite the Church of the Trinity, is the church dedicated to the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem. As William Craft Brumfield points out, the west-to-east axis created by these three main churches creates a division of space that is similar to traditional church layout, with an entrance (the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem), church core (the Intercession), and apse (the Trinity).

The northernmost church is dedicated to Saints Cyprian and Ustinia, who were celebrated on October 2, the day Ivan successfully completed his attack against Kazan. The northwestern church is dedicated to Bishop Gregory of Armenia, whose day is September 30, a day on which two important events occurred leading up to the attack on Kazan. The northeastern church is dedicated to the Byzantine patriarchs Alexander, John, and Paul, and the southeastern church is

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58 Ibid., 126.
59 Ibid., 127.
dedicated to Saint Alexander of Svir; the feast day for all of these figures falls on August 30, which was also the date of another important Russian victory over the Mongol army. The two remaining churches, at the southwestern and southern corners, are dedicated to Saint Varlaam and to the Icon of Saint Nicholas of Velikoretsk respectively. They celebrate Ivan IV by referring to his ancestors.  

Thus the building is utterly suffused with dynastic and nationalistic significance. With each of the nine towers relating to Ivan’s power and his victorious eastern military campaigns, the building compound is part religious shrine, part war monument, and part state building. Indeed, it is one of the most symbolically rich buildings in Muscovite history. Just as the building draws on multiple sources in the dedication of its churches, so too does it draw on multiple architectural sources to proclaim and commemorate the power of Moscow and Ivan IV. Indeed, it is that very hybridity that makes Saint Basil the Blessed such an important example of Muscovite architecture. It exhibits a tension between unity and distinctness in terms of both symbolism and architectural style that is a defining feature of Muscovite Composite Style architecture.

New Jerusalem

Just as the form of Saint Basil the Blessed is obviously derived from numerous sources, its symbolism extended beyond just Ivan’s military victories. It was also an important religious symbol, hailing Moscow’s status as both protected by and protector of the true Christian faith.

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60 Saint Varlaam is the name of an important Russian saint. Ivan’s father, Vasily III, became a monk and took the name Varlaam just before his death. Thus a reference to Varlaam is also a reference to the dynasty of Ivan IV. Ibid., 128.
and much has been written about Moscow’s conception of itself as a new Jerusalem. Many scholars now see Saint Basil the Blessed to be an architectural manifestation of Moscow’s self-fashioning as a new Jerusalem.

The history of the monument supports this interpretation. Every year, to celebrate the day of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, a grand public procession took place around the Kremlin, with the tsar leading a horse, made to look like a donkey, carrying the Orthodox patriarch. The patriarch on horse/donkey-back was, of course, a theatrical reenactment of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem on a donkey before his crucifixion. It follows that the destination of this procession would be a symbolic Jerusalem. Logically then, the procession terminated in the tower-church dedicated to the Entry into Jerusalem, the westernmost of the tower-churches in the compound of Saint Basil the Blessed. Via this theatrical procession, Saint Basil the Blessed stands in for Jerusalem.

It should not be surprising that the fervently Orthodox Muscovites would revere Jerusalem and evoke its holy power in formulating its own emerging power that was based on a combination of secular and sacred forces. Furthermore, it is unsurprising that Russian rulers would use prominent architectural commissions to evoke Jerusalem. Many scholars suggest that the forms of the compound attempt to quote the city of Jerusalem itself. If the compound had been built to suggest the city of Jerusalem, that fact could explain the unusual elevation, which, before the addition of a covered exterior gallery, had the effect of a group of several distinct buildings, much like a city skyline. Further, the distinct onion domes, which were added later to

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replace the traditional hemispherical domes, may well have been designed to attempt to quote the architecture of Jerusalem’s most sacred Christian building, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (Fig. 3.21).

The domes are noteworthy, since their reconstruction in the 1580s marks the earliest known use of domes with the distinctive onion shape in Russian masonry architecture.63 Although scholars agree that the onion-shaped dome emerged in Russian architecture during the latter half of the sixteenth century, the origins of the unusual form remain contentious.64 Several scholars have indeed observed that the shape of the Russian domes resembles the dome on the interior shrine in Jerusalem’s Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The repetition of the form, then, in a cluster of buildings as at Saint Basil would have served to reinforce the sense that the church symbolized the city of Jerusalem.65 Although the Russian onion dome shares a vague resemblance with the building in Jerusalem, the similarity is not so striking as to prove that Russian architects unequivocally sought to evoke Jerusalem when employing the new onion dome.

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63 Scholars agree that the onion dome first appeared at some point in the sixteenth century, but the reasons for its emergence and the way in which it emerged remain unclear. In any case, when an onion dome is seen on a building predating the late sixteenth century, it can be assumed that it was added during later alterations. Brumfield, A History of Russian Architecture, 129; Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 124.

64 Until the end of the twentieth century, scholars of Russian architecture tended to view the onion dome as either of “eastern” origin, which could mean anything from India to China, or as an entirely Russian creation. Today, most scholars suggest that the emergence of the onion dome was at least partially owed to Russia’s political and religious ideology in the sixteenth century and Russia’s desire to remake itself as a new center of the Christian world. See A. L Batalov and Aleksei Lidov, “The Canopy over the Holy Sepulcher. On the Origin of Onion-Shaped Domes,” in Jerusalem in Russian Culture (New Rochelle, NY: A.D. Caratzas, 1994), 171–80; Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 124.

Other scholars have suggested that the dome was developed in response to the demands of the harsh, snowy climate. Hamilton, Art and Architecture of Russia, 42; A. Voyce, “National Elements in Russian Architecture,” The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 16, no. 2 (May 1957): 6.


dome on their churches. As William Craft Brumfield states, “Like other theories on the origins of the Russian onion dome . . . this one remains a matter of conjecture.” 66 Whatever the case may be, there can be no doubt that the architects working on Saint Basil the Blessed drew from a number of architectural traditions.

**Exterior Decoration**

The ornamentation of the building draws on a wide range of sources. As is so often the case with architecture from early modern Russia, significant adjustments were made to Saint Basil’s after its initial construction, dramatically altering its current exterior appearance. Thus, reference to historical drawings, along with some imagination, is required on the part of the modern art historian seeking to envision the church as it would have originally appeared. The two major adjustments made to the compound after its original construction were a complete reconstruction of the domes and the addition of a covered, surrounding gallery. An engraving from the seventeenth century (Fig. 3.22) shows the building as it looked before the gallery was added. As the drawing shows, before the addition of the gallery, the compound had a much more vertical orientation and it was also more obviously a cluster of nine distinct units.

The domes took on their distinctive Russian “onion” shape in 1586 after a fire damaged the original domes. 67 There are no recorded images of the building before the reconstruction of the domes at the end of the sixteenth century; however, experts concur that the original domes were likely monochromatic and with a shallow, hemispherical shape. It is likely that the domes

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67 Ibid., 126.
resembled those crowning the Church of the Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist at Diakovo.\textsuperscript{68} It is important to keep the subsequent alterations in mind when considering the compound’s exterior ornament and general appearance.

The exterior ornamentation of Saint Basil the Blessed is elaborate, and—along with its unusual plan—is one of its most defining characteristics. As with other innovative churches from earlier in the sixteenth century, Saint Basil is extensively ornamented in traditional Muscovite motifs, mainly in the form of dense layers of *kokoshniki* around the drums of the nine tower-churches (Fig. 3.23). The use of long, narrow windows around the drums of the domes also refers to Muscovite tradition, as they quote the windows in Vladimir’s (and Moscow’s) Cathedral of the Dormition. Its striking *shatior* roof over the central church, which defines the silhouette, refers to the Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe. In addition, the corner towers are decorated with steep, pointed blind arcades, much like those around the ground level of the Church of the Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist. Other decorative features on the exterior were derived from myriad sources, and reflect the merging of architectural traditions in early modern Muscovy.

There are also decorative elements that imitate defensive architecture, befitting a monument built in honor of a military victory. Indeed, many of the decorative details of the Kremlin fortifications are imitated in this church compound. For example, on the westernmost tower-church, the church dedicated to the Entry into Jerusalem, the transitional area between the tower itself and the drum of the dome is decorated with machicolation that mimics the machicolation used throughout the Kremlin fortifications (Fig. 3.24). Further emphasizing the Saint Basil compound’s connection to the Kremlin fortifications are its proximity to the

\textsuperscript{68} Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture*, 126. For a hypothetical reconstruction of the original church, see Sobolev, “Proekt rekonstruktsii pamiatnika arkhitektury-khrama.”
fortification—Saint Basil the Blessed was built directly next to the Kremlin—and its construction using the same distinctive red brick as the Kremlin walls. The visual connection between Saint Basil’s and the Kremlin fortifications is a reference to both Russian architecture and Russian history, for the Kremlin had become a symbol of the city, and to Italian architecture, which was so instrumental in the construction of the Kremlin walls.

The Saint Basil compound also incorporates other Italo-Russian architectural elements, especially borrowing from the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, in its use of recessed paneling, ornamented cornices, oculi within the zakomary, and pilasters (Fig. 3.25). (As shall be discussed below, there are even more references to Alevian classical forms on the building’s interior.) Interestingly, all of the Italianate features on the building’s exterior were more Italo-Russian than purely Italian; they had been filtered through decades of Russian contextualization.

Other decorative features used throughout the compound are of more obscure origin. The pointed blind gables that decorate several of the tower-churches (Fig. 3.26), which were discussed above, borrow from the Church of the Ascension, the building on which they made their initial appearance in Muscovite architecture. Their origin and rise to prominence in Russian architecture during the sixteenth century are something of a mystery. Shvidkovsky ascribes this decorative form to German Gothic architecture—a quotation of the exaggerated pointed gables around the archivolt of many German Gothic cathedrals. Indeed, the similarities between the sharp blind gables in Moscow and the pointed gables of some central-European Gothic portals is suggestive, as a comparison to Saint Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna reveals (Fig. 3.27); however, the inverted “v” form is simple enough that it does not seem require an explanation of foreign derivation. If explanation is required, it seems to make more sense to look to sources closer to home. Russian architecture had long been interested in verticality and a certain peaked quality in

69 Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 128.
its ornamentation; this is evident in Muscovite architecture from the beginning of the fifteenth century. Both the ornamental kokoshniki and the sixteenth-century “onion” domes took on more of a peaked, pointed form as the decades progressed.

The building is adorned with numerous other decorative flourishes: sculptural balls beneath the peaks of the pointed blind gables, rows of recessed circles decorating the arches of the zakomary, and cylindrical and beadlike ornamentation along the base of the exterior walls (figs. 3.28-30). Thus, the exterior of the building is every bit as complicated and detailed as the plan of the building. Indeed, the sculptural shape of the compound, with its nine interacting towers, is reinforced with detailed sculptural ornamentation on the exterior. As elsewhere in the church compound, the ornamentation of the exterior, as varied and eclectic as it is, combines elements in such a way that they work together to create a surprisingly cohesive building. Moreover, combination resulted in an entirely new type of building.

**Interior Decoration**

The ornamentation on the interior of the building is less dense than the eclectic ornamentation on the exterior; still, it exhibits the same complexity and plasticity that is on display throughout the rest of the compound. The entrances to each of the nine tower-churches are accessed from the narrow passageway that circles around the central church. There is an experiential quality involved with accessing each of the churches, since the visitor must wind through the dark, narrow passageway in order to visit them. Upon entering each of the churches, however, visitors are confronted with a soaring, airy space that is a striking contrast to
the environment from which they have just emerged. As if to reinforce the symbolism of the complex of nine churches, the experience of accessing the churches creates a revelatory reaction for the visitor as the low-roofed, dark hallway is left behind in favor of the high-roofed churches.

Much like the Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe, each of these churches is tall and narrow, with a dome that seems to billow overhead. Also like the Church of the Ascension, the interiors of each of these churches are quite stark, especially compared to the highly ornamental exterior of the compound. Some of the church interiors are today covered in fresco and panel paintings, but those were later additions.

The original unpainted architecture was undecorated, with only simple architectural elements defining the space. The architectural elements are especially striking because of their isolation from any other ornamentation. The churches dedicated to Saints Cyprian and Ustinia (Fig. 3.31), the Holy Trinity (Fig. 3.32), and the Church of the Intercession (3.33) are excellent examples of the austere, elegant quality of the compound’s interior. Engaged columns accent the corners of the octagonal walls, extending from the floor all the way to the base of the drum, simple stepped cornices separate the space below from the space of the dome, and recessed panels define the wall spaces between the engaged columns.

While the understated interior decoration that relies on the use of engaged columns relates to a variety of architectural traditions already introduced to Russia (Byzantino-Russian, Vladimirian, Lombard Romanesque, and Italian Renaissance), the architects at Saint Basil pared down those elements to their simplest forms. In this monument, a Russian-ized application of the engaged column is favored. The restrained, stark quality of Vladimirian architecture is married with specific elements of Italian Renaissance architecture.
Some of the churches, like the one dedicated to Saint Alexander (Fig. 3.34), are even more austere, with only a simple cornice separating the body of the church from the drum and another separating the drum from the dome. Thus, the interior space is divided into three vertical registers. The only decorative ornament of note is the machicolation at the level of the drum.

As simple as the interiors of all of the nine churches may appear, they are in fact powerful visual examples of a mature Italo-Russian style. Neither fully Italian, nor fully Russian, they are instead examples of the new hybrid Muscovite Composite Style of mid-sixteenth-century Russia.

In addition to the church interiors, the ornamentation of the interior gallery itself deserves consideration. There are several decorative portals within the gallery that reveal the hybridity of sixteenth-century Moscow. The most impressive of the portals in the gallery is the portal leading from the western side of the gallery into the church of the Intercession (Fig. 3.35-36). In its overall form it looks very much like a Western European portal: an ornamental, rounded arch rests atop two pilasters with capitals. The carved embellishment of this traditionally Western form, however, is not Italianate, but rather reveals the unique heritage of Russian culture. There are rows of stylized flowers where a capital would be expected, a recessed panel with diamond patterns decorates what should be either a plain or fluted pilaster, and there is an extra capital with semicircular ornamentation beneath the flowered capital. The carving in the archway over the door resembles the scallop-shell motifs that were popular in Renaissance Italy and which were brought to Moscow with Alevisio Lamberti in the early part of the century.70

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70 Coincidentally, Lamberti had been rewarded with a letter of recommendation to Ivan III based on his creation of the so-called “Iron Gate” at the Palace of Bakchisaray before his arrival in Moscow. See Nikolai L. Ernst, “Bakhchisarayskiy khanskiy dvorets i arkhtitektor velikogo knyazya Ivana III Fryazin Aleviz Novyy,” Izvestiya tavoricheskogo obschestva istorii, arkeologii i etnografii 2 (1928): 39-55.

Alevisio arrived in Moscow during the first decade of the sixteenth century and went on to exert tremendous influence on the city’s church architecture over the next two decades. There is no concrete evidence to suggest that Alevisio’s sculptural style in general or his “Iron Gate” in particular influenced the design of the portals.
Much like the austere interiors of the nine tower-churches, this portal represents the hybrid character of Russian architecture of the sixteenth century. It merges Russian ornamentation with traditionally Renaissance form. Even more, some of the ornamentation on the portal, such as the diamond pattern on the pilasters, appears to be derived from the ornamental tastes of Late Byzantine architecture. For example, diamond patterning similar to that on the pilasters of the portal can be found on the exterior of the late-thirteenth-century Church of Saint Clement in Ohrid, Macedonia (Fig. 3.37). Thus, Russian and Byzantine decorative elements are fused and adapted to a Renaissance architectural feature.

Two other portals in the gallery reveal a similarly hybrid character. One follows the same formula with an arch resting atop two decorated pilasters (Fig. 3.38), whereas another has a simpler design with engaged columns flanking a rectangular doorway, above which is a tympanum confined within an archivolt (Fig. 3.39). As with the portal discussed above, this latter portal borrows heavily from both Italian and Byzantine architecture, but in a unique way that is informed by local Russian architecture. Note that the engaged columns are not a part of any identifiable order and have unusually large, plain capitals. Like the other examples, this portal is just as much a hybrid of Italian, Byzantine, and Muscovite tradition as is the portal in the gallery of Saint Basil the Blessed. Nonetheless, it is an interesting coincidence at the very least that the complex should include Renaissance-style portals that were adapted for an “exotic” (i.e. not Italian) context, just as the “Iron Gate” had been a Renaissance-style portal that was adapted for use in an Islamic context. Moreover, the fact that these portals were built in Moscow, where Alevisio had had such a powerful role in the evolution of its architecture, is even more suggestive. The question of whether Alevisio may have made architectural drawings that were preserved for later generations of architects is worth further investigation.


71 This raises the interesting question of whether Byzantine craftsmen would have travelled between Moscow and Ohrid in the thirteenth century or after. The striking similarity between these ornamental forms suggests that there may well have been a dialogue between these two remote regions.

72 The floral fresco around this doorway was added in the seventeenth century and does not reflect the original appearance of the building interior.
ornamentation of the nine tower-churches themselves. Virtually every feature of the building, when given careful consideration, reveals the masterful blending of Italian, Russian, and Byzantine features that is characteristic of the new Muscovite Composite Style.

As a whole, the church complex is an unprecedented hybrid that fuses together distinct elements into a new cohesive architecture. At the same time, many of the distinct features that contributed to the new style on display at Saint Basil the Blessed were derived from sources that had not yet been assimilated into Russian culture. That is, there were Byzantine and Italian elements that influenced the style, not just Byzantino-Russian and Italo-Russian elements. Consideration of these truly foreign elements allows for a more complete understanding of Saint Basil the Blessed and the emergence of the Muscovite Composite Style.

Sources for Saint Basil the Blessed

The unusual, seemingly inexplicable plan of Saint Basil the Blessed can be traced back to several of the same sources that played a hand in shaping the other elements of the compound: the architecture of Byzantium, medieval Russia, and Italy. Its overlapping of geometrical forms is unusual. As such, it does not fit neatly into any architectural category seen in Russia before. Indeed, its novelty is so striking as to raise several vital questions about its appearance in Moscow. If this type of building had not been constructed in Russia before, then how did its appearance come about? What forces informed its emergence? A large part of the picture can be understood by examining contemporary trends in architecture outside of Russia.
**Byzantine Influence**

The Byzantine elements of the church complex are perhaps the least obvious of the foreign elements within the overall composition of Saint Basil the Blessed. This is partially because Byzantine architectural features had been seeping into Russian culture by this point for more than five hundred years. As already discussed, Russian architecture owed its Christian architectural origins to Byzantium, but other local traditions had merged with Byzantine architecture over the centuries to create a truly Byzantino-Russian architecture.\(^\text{73}\) Nonetheless, Byzantine culture remained a powerful force in Russian culture and the Byzantino-Russian character of this monument is noteworthy, even if it is not readily apparent.

The unusual plan of Saint Basil the Blessed relates to trends in Late Byzantine church architecture. As with Russian architecture, there was a strain of Byzantine architecture that was becoming more and more centralized and vertically-oriented.\(^\text{74}\) As Richard Krautheimer explains, “In consequence of . . . changes in function and plan, the church . . . in Paleologan times rarely is viewed as a self-contained unit. Rather, it is but the core around which are grouped the appended structures . . . all surmounted by domes and richly decorated.”\(^\text{75}\) His further discussion of Late Byzantine church architecture could just as easily be a discussion of the Muscovite Composite Style as exemplified by the compound of Saint Basil the Blessed:

\(^{73}\) For a detailed discussion of this, see pages 32-5 in Chapter One.

\(^{74}\) The atrophied Greek cross plan, in which the arms of the cross of the plan became smaller and smaller, creating what is essentially a centralized space crowned with a tall dome, developed out of the traditional Greek cross plans. Byzantine architecture also developed the domed octagonal church type, which is very similar to the interest in centralization exhibited in the Italo-Muscovite churches of the sixteenth century. For more on the atrophied Greek cross plan and the domed octagon, see Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed., The Pelican History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 337-38 and *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2008), 97-8.

. . . [Paleologan architects] accentuate the vertical axes: drums, domes, apses and interior spaces grow narrower and steeper. . . . They enrich the decorative patterns, both inside and outside. They strive for new colouristic and ornamental effects on the outer walls, through ever more complicated brick patterns, through combining brick, white and red stone, and glazed tiles into variegated designs, through alternating in the masonry brick and stone bands.”

Although Moscow was not a part of the Byzantine world by the sixteenth century, it was still linked to the architectural trends of the Late Byzantine world, as Krautheimer’s quotation makes clear.

A striking example of the similar trend in Late Byzantine architecture can be found in the fourteenth-century Serbian church at Gračanica (Fig. 3.40). Like Saint Basil the Blessed, this church is centralized and has a general pyramidal appearance, with domes at the corners resembling the tower-churches of Saint Basil the Blessed. Even more, there is a profusion of arched gables that adds to the twisting, spiraling, organic quality of the building. Although the Serbian church does not have the same striking, multi-towered silhouette as the Muscovite compound, its spatial conception is, in fact, closely related. Whether there was a means by which architects in Russia would have been aware of Late Byzantine architecture in Serbia is unclear.

Regardless of whether it is appropriate to speak of “influence” in the case of the Serbian church and Saint Basil the Blessed, the parallels between the two structures are undeniably present.

Less tangibly, there is also an organic, layered quality to Saint Basil the Blessed that is evocative of some of the Byzantine world’s most famous works of architecture, such as Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (Fig. 3.41). Like the famous Byzantine example, the multi-leveled domes of Saint Basil the Blessed cascade downward and outward away from the tall central dome.

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76 Ibid., 415-16.

77 Slobodan Ćurčić, Gračanica: King Milutin’s Church and its Place in Late Byzantine Architecture (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979); Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, 437.
closely as Russian architecture may have followed Byzantine precedent, however, the fact that Byzantine elements were fused with other disparate elements to create a new style makes them but one layer of the complex Muscovite Composite Style. The Byzantine characteristics of this compound are no more defining of its architectural character than any of the compound’s other disparate elements.

It is beyond the scope of the present investigation to determine whether the Late Byzantine elements present in Saint Basil the Blessed developed independently of and parallel to those of the Byzantine world, or whether there was an open channel of contact between the Late Byzantine world and Moscow. Regardless, the similarities are striking and deserve consideration. It can be safely assumed that Moscow’s architecture was still linked to Byzantine architecture at the middle of the sixteenth century, especially given the tremendous and lasting impact of Byzantine culture on the architecture established in Christian Rus’.

The references to Byzantine architecture and culture are pervasive in the Muscovite Composite Style. As exemplified in Saint Basil the Blessed, the Byzantine references range from Middle Byzantine to Late Byzantine styles. Thus, Dmitry Shvidkovsky’s claim that sixteenth-century Moscow was somehow “Post-Byzantine” is somewhat puzzling. Indeed, the Byzantine quality of Russian architecture continued well into the post-Italian period, even if that quality was subtle and had become acclimatized to a contemporary Russian architectural vocabulary.

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78 This is an area of research that has been explored by many art historians specializing in Byzantine and Russian art. It is an avenue that does, however, deserve updating and further inquiry.

79 Shvidkovsky claims that Byzantium had ceased to be the cultural paragon it had been in earlier Russian history. He cites several reasons for this, including the fall of the Byzantine Empire and the increasing interest in Jerusalem as a religious model. Although he raises some valid points, Shvidkovsky’s arguments are ultimately unconvincing. The Byzantine Empire fell to the Ottomans in 1453, so it does not make sense to suggest that Byzantine prestige suffered in Muscovy only a full century later. If anything, the pain of Byzantium’s collapse and Russia’s own fraught relationship with the Byzantine Church would have faded with time. Likewise, the argument that Jerusalem had supplanted Constantinople does not fully add up. Jerusalem had always been an important city for Christians. With increasing interest in Jerusalem, Russia’s view of itself as a new Constantinople would not have changed. Just as Constantinople was a capital to spread the word of the ancient city of Jerusalem, now Moscow held that important title. Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 124.
While there may be a vague Byzantine stylistic current running through the compound of Saint Basil the Blessed, the Italian-derived features of the compound are more overt. As discussed in the previous chapter, the last Italian known to have been working in Moscow fled the city in 1539.\(^80\) Thus, no Italians were directly involved in the building of the Cathedral of Saint Basil the Blessed. Nevertheless, as analysis of the compound reveals, the Italian presence lived on in sixteenth-century Moscow. It is perceptible in the overall design of the compound, in addition to the specific ornamental details discussed above. As discussed, there are Italo-Russian elements throughout the compound whose source is clearly the Italian-built churches and secular constructions in Moscow. These Italianate details enliven the compound’s overall appearance and create a steady rhythm that helps to organize the compound’s somewhat cacophonous ornamentation.

The unusual spatial conception of the compound seems to have ties to the more theoretical side of the Italian Renaissance. Indeed, a number of architectural treatises produced by Italian Renaissance architects in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries seem to foreshadow the innovative design of Saint Basil the Blessed. Although there is no surviving evidence that Italian architectural treatises ended up in Moscow, many of the Italian architects who traveled to Moscow would have had contact with some of the most important treatise-writers and their ideas before leaving Italy for Moscow; copies of these treatises or the ideas they held, could have come to Moscow with these Italian architects. Examination of some of the most important treatises produced in Renaissance Italy reveals a possible source of inspiration for Saint Basil the

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\(^80\) For a discussion of this Italian, Pietro Annibale, and the dramatic circumstances of his departure from Moscow, see Chapter Two.
Blessed, while also revealing the ways in which Italian architecture continued to influence Russian architecture even after the last Italian architect had left Moscow. The fact that such treatises may have made their way to Russia even after Italian Renaissance architectural ideas had already infiltrated Russian culture suggests that theoretical church designs may have helped to reinforce the Italianisms that had already, by the middle of the sixteenth century, become Russianisms.

**Antonio di Piero Averlino (Filarete)**

One of the treatises most likely to have influenced Russian architecture is Antonio Filarete’s *Trattato d’architettura*. As was discussed in Chapter One, Filarete published his *Trattato*, a treatise written in the tradition of Leon Battista Alberti’s *De re aedificatoria*, in 1465. In his *Trattato*, Filarete proposes utopian ideals for urban design, and includes sketches of ideal buildings and cities. Aristotele Fioravanti would surely have been aware of Filarete’s *Trattato*, and may well have taken a copy with him to Moscow in the 1470s. At the very least, it seems likely that Filarete would have exerted significant influence on Fioravanti, given their close personal relationship (see Chapter One); it follows that the ideas Fioravanti may have picked up during his time working with Filarete would have travelled with him to Moscow. Furthermore, even if an actual copy of the *Trattato* did not make its way to Moscow with

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82 Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria* (Florence: Nicolaus Laurentii, 1485).

83 Filarete, *Treatise on Architecture; Being the Treatise by Antonio di Piero Averlino, Known as Filarete* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*.

84 Indeed, Dmitry Shvidkovsky says that it is “highly probable” that there was a copy of the *Trattato* in the Kremlin library. Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 129.
Fioravanti, a copy could very well have come to Moscow in the hands of one of the later generations of northern Italian architects, since the treatise was published and circulated widely during the second half of the fifteenth century.

Although much of Filarete’s lengthy Trattato is in the form of a fictional dialogue between an architect and his wealthy patron, it includes a number of architectural sketches that are striking for their resemblance to the plan of Saint Basil the Blessed. Filarete’s plan for the ideal city of Sforzinda, named after his patron Francesco Sforza, resembles the Russian churches in both plan and elevation (Fig. 3.42). The city of Sforzinda takes the shape of an eight-pointed star, much like the eight-cornered octagon of Saint Basil’s interlocking squares. In fact, each of the eight points of the star of Sforzinda corresponds with the corners of two interlocking squares, just as at the compound of Saint Basil. Furthermore, each of the corners/points has a tower, just as with the corner towers at Saint Basil.

There are also other drawings of churches in Filarete’s Trattato that have a central octagonal core surrounded by satellite towers. His drawing of Sforzinda’s cathedral, for example, bears a strong resemblance to Saint Basil (Fig. 3.43). A large central dome dominates the building, with shorter towers at the building’s corners and four more towers still surrounding the central dome. The shapes of the domes and towers are unlike those in the Muscovite building; however, the concept is the same. Thus, the architects of Saint Basil seem to have combined the spatial layout of the city of Sforzinda with the organizational layout of its cathedral. As such, it is a merging of sacred and secular architectural design, a merging that would very much have appealed to Ivan IV.
Another architect whose ideas may well have influenced the architecture of sixteenth-century Moscow is Francesco di Giorgio Martini, whose ideas about defensive architecture were discussed in the previous chapter. With regard to the emergence of Muscovite Composite Style, Francesco di Giorgio’s architectural treatises from the last quarter of the fifteenth century are more relevant than any of his realized architectural projects. More so than other Italian Renaissance treatises published earlier in the fifteenth century, Francesco’s Trattato provided practical information in the form of drawings and church plans. It is quite possible that his didactic treatise would have made its way to Moscow by the middle of the sixteenth century. As discussed in the previous chapter, it is possible that Pietro Annibale, the Italian architect responsible for the Church of the Ascension, may have met Francesco di Giorgio while working in northern Italy. His architectural designs may have made their way to Moscow in the hands (or in the mind) of Pietro, although it is also likely that his widely circulated writings could have made their way to Moscow independently of Italian architects.

Regardless of how Francesco di Giorgio’s ideas may (or may not) have made their way to Moscow, the many church plans in his treatise are undeniably in the same family as the plan of Saint Basil the Blessed. Indeed, Francesco’s manuscripts are filled with central-plan, round churches that often feature a central core and adjacent circular spaces (figs. 3.44). In fact, in his drawing showing the ideal proportions of a church using the human body as a module, the

85 By the end of the fifteenth century, he wrote a Trattato di Architettura and later, his more famous Trattato di architettura civile e militare. Francesco di Giorgio Martini, Carlo Promis, and Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, Trattato di architettura civile e militare (Turin: Tipografia Chirio e Mina, 1841)

church plan has the same basic layout as the building compound of Saint Basil (Fig. 3.45). The drawing proposes a church with a large, circular core, surrounded by eight smaller, radiating circular elements. A circular gallery connects the central core to the radiating circular spaces around it. Only the addition of a long nave on one side of the square breaks from the total centrality of St. Basil’s.

Perhaps even more striking than the similarities between Francesco di Giorgio’s plans and that of Saint Basil, however, are the drawings that show his interest in geometry and proportions. Of particular interest is his drawing showing how to construct a church in which he inscribes one small square within another larger square that is rotated at a forty-five degree angle to the smaller square (Fig. 3.46). The resulting geometry is such that the corners of the small square intersect the midpoint of the sides of the rotated larger square, exactly as in the plan of Saint Basil the Blessed.

It should also be recalled that the Italian Pietro Annibale built the defensive walls around Kitai Gorod in the manner of Francesco di Giorgio. It is likely that Pietro was aware of Francesco’s ideas and brought them with him to Moscow. Given the striking resemblance of Saint Basil to some of Francesco di Giorgio’s drawings, it seems all the more likely that the ideas from the Italian architect’s treatise lived on in Moscow in some form. Perhaps a copy of the treatise had come to Moscow with one of the Italian architects earlier in the century. Or it is possible that other Italian architects in Moscow simply knew of Francesco di Giorgio’s ideas and passed them on in their own renderings of his ideas. At the very least, it can safely be said that Francesco di Giorgio’s architectural ideas permeated Russian culture in the sixteenth century.

87 Ibid., 11–12.

88 For a review of the parallels and contacts between Francesco di Giorgio and Pietro Annibale, see Chapter Two.
Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci owned one of Francesco di Giorgio’s manuscripts and scholars generally agree that Leonardo was influenced by the earlier architect’s work.\(^89\) Leonardo never published a treatise, but he is famous for having kept detailed manuscripts with drawings of his many ideas. A number of architectural drawings made towards the end of the fifteenth century show that Leonardo was also experimenting with—and trying to perfect—the same architectural form that so preoccupied his peers: a harmonious, proportional, central-plan church, with radiating elements. Much like Francesco di Giorgio, Leonardo drew church plans that consisted of a large central circular space surrounded by eight smaller, radiating circular spaces (Fig. 3.47). All of these elements were inscribed within a larger square. Leonardo’s manuscripts also include renderings of how the elevation of such a centralized church might look (Fig. 3.48). He renders the hypothetical church so that the central space and the eight radiating spaces are each covered with a dome. The silhouette created by the nine domes of this church has a curiously Byzantine appearance. Indeed, the multi-domed church looks more like the Basilica of San Marco in Venice than any of the churches actually constructed during the Renaissance in Italy. Moreover, and more importantly, the domes, of different sizes and heights, are reminiscent of the cluster of nine churches at Saint Basil.

The similarities between Leonardo’s drawings and Saint Basil are more puzzling than the similarities between the Muscovite building and the drawings of either Filarete or Francesco di Giorgio, because there is no evidence that his drawings could have made their way to Moscow. Aside from his travel to France towards the end of his life, Leonardo’s career was confined to

Italy. Furthermore, he did not publish a treatise that would have been widely distributed. Nonetheless, like Filarete and Francesco di Giorgio, Leonardo may have indirectly influenced Muscovite architecture by influencing some of the Italian architects who left northern Italy for Moscow. Leonardo spent much of his career working in Milan for the Sforza, with brief intervals working in Venice and Florence.\(^90\) Coincidentally, all of the Italians who immigrated to Moscow during the reigns of Ivan III and Vasily III came from these regions. It cannot be said whether any of these artists was aware of or influenced by the architectural designs of Leonardo, but it does seem plausible that they could have picked up Leonardo’s ideas in their native cities, especially given the striking resemblance of Leonardo’s drawings to Saint Basil the Blessed.

**Sebastiano Serlio**

A final Italian architect whose possible influence should be mentioned is Sebastiano Serlio, who wrote his very influential and widely disseminated treatise on architecture in 1537. It was intended to facilitate the practical application of his ideas for the benefit of builders. The aim of his treatise was to provide didactic information that could show contemporary architects how to apply ancient Vitruvian architectural principles in a modern architectural context.\(^91\) He also provided unique architectural contributions that betray his personal interest in the emerging Mannerist style. Of particular interest for the current investigation is Serlio’s discussion of temple architecture in the fifth book of his treatise, which provides guidance for builders of contemporary church architecture. Like the writers discussed above, Serlio favored small,

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central-plan churches, and his drawings of ideal churches included several octagonal, hexagonal, and circular plans in the same family as Saint Basil (figs. 3.49-51).  

In addition to the similarities between Serlio’s church plans and the plan of Saint Basil, there are also smaller details from within the Muscovite building that seem to reference Serlio’s treatise. For example, some of the engaged columns on the exterior feature an unusual rustication without precedence in Russia (Fig. 3.52). Rusticated columns were, however, common features of Italian Mannerist architecture, and they are represented in drawings from Serlio’s treatise. For example, in his drawing of a portal he features similar rusticated columns flanking the main arch (Fig. 3.53).

Serlio’s treatise stands out from earlier Renaissance architectural treatises because of its didactic function and because of its emphasis on drawings more than on text. As a result, the treatise was able to have a much wider reach than the more limited, learned audience for treatises by writers such as Alberti. Not only could Serlio’s work have influenced less educated, illiterate builders, but it could also have easily influenced foreign artists who could not read Italian. Indeed, the evidence suggests that Serlio’s treatise did reach a foreign audience. Whether or not Serlio’s treatise reached Moscow is unknown; however it is quite possible that it did, given that it was widely circulated around Europe.

Even if the treatise did not make its way to Moscow, Serlio’s ideas do seem to have traveled at least as far as Poland, which had close ties to nearby Russia in the sixteenth century. Serlio’s influence is evident in Poland in the work of Italian architect Giovanni Battista Quadro, who built the town hall in Poznań (Fig. 3.54).  His contributions to the tower of the building

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92 Sebastiano Serlio, Tutte l’opere d’architettura, et prospetiva (Venice, 1619).

93 Quadro’s life and career provide a fascinating example of multiculturalism and artistic hybridity in early modern Europe. For more on his career, see W. Maisel, “Giovanni Battista Quadro e le sue opere in Polonia,”
borrow heavily from Serlio’s treatise in its ornamentation, especially in the application of open arcades along the building’s facade.\textsuperscript{94} Serlio was also connected to Poland by virtue of his wife, Francesca Palladia, who served as a lady-in-waiting to the Italian-born Queen of Poland, Bona Sforza. Moscow was in close contact with Poland during the sixteenth century due to the ongoing conflicts between Poland and Lithuania.\textsuperscript{95} Thus, there was contact and therefore a possible channel for cultural exchange between Moscow and Poland during the sixteenth century. Serlio’s writings could have made their way from Poland to Moscow via this cultural channel.

The prevalence of architectural treatises coming out of Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries clearly suggests a possible source of continued exchange between Russia and Italy after the end of Italian-Muscovite contact in the 1530s, and it is likely that some of the most important architectural treatises and drawings from the Renaissance may have played a role in the formation of the innovative new Muscovite Composite style. Not only were there striking philosophical and decorative similarities between many of the Italian drawings and Muscovite Composite architecture, but there were many logical channels through which this information could have been transmitted. At the very least, it can be safely assumed that the ideas from the treatises of Filarete and Serlio (if not actual copies of the treatises) found their way to Moscow. Filarete’s close personal relationship with Aristotele Fioravanti and the wide circulation of Sebastiano Serlio’s treatise make the influence of both men in Moscow likely.


The drawings and writings of Francesco di Giorgio and Leonardo da Vinci have less obvious channels through which their influence could have travelled to Moscow; however, the similarities between their drawings and Muscovite Composite Style are so striking that it makes the possibility that their ideas informed Russian architecture seem plausible, if not probable. Furthermore, there were opportunities for their ideas to be passed on to Italians who came to Moscow. Although less direct, it is distinctly possible that these two important Italian Renaissance thinkers and architects also exerted an influence on Moscow and the development of the Muscovite Composite Style.

Muscovite Composite Style in the Late-Sixteenth Century and After

The compound of Saint Basil the Blessed is the quintessential example of the fully realized Muscovite Composite style; it exhibits the hybridization of the new style in virtually every facet of its construction. The fact that Saint Basil was of such tremendous symbolic importance for Moscow after Ivan IV’s victories in the east explains the appearance of such a daring construction. Other buildings from the period, as discussed earlier in this chapter, were also important exponents of the newly emerging style in post-Italian Moscow, even if they were more understated than Saint Basil. No other churches from sixteenth-century Moscow are comparable to Saint Basil in the scope of their ornamentation or in the innovative approach to fusing together distinct elements. It would not be until the following century, after decades of

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96 A distinct architectural style associated with the rule of Boris Godunov surfaced at the end of the sixteenth century. The style only flourished for a brief period before the crises associated with the “Time of Troubles”; however, it is important to note that the style is characterized by a tall, narrow, single-domed, central-plan church design with exterior ornament emphasizing a pyramidal construction. Thus, churches in the Godunov period relate to the general trends of the Muscovite Composite Style. Furthermore, and like the Muscovite Composite Style, these churches exhibit decorative features derived from Moscow’s own Italo-Russian architecture. See Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture*, 134–35; Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 150.
political upheaval, that Russian architects once again built in the exuberant, unrestrained Muscovite Composite Style, as initiated at the Saint Basil.

In the decades immediately following the construction of Saint Basil the Blessed, fewer buildings were constructed in Moscow to begin with. Simply put, architecture in late-sixteenth-century Moscow did not flourish as it had in the previous decades. It was not until the return of political and cultural stability in Moscow during the early seventeenth century that the trajectory of Russian architecture from the previous century was able to continue. In a sense, the seventeenth century picked up where things had stopped—so dramatically—with Saint Basil in the middle of the sixteenth century.

By the second decade of the seventeenth century, political security had returned to Russia when the Romanov family was established after the Time of Troubles. A thorough discussion of Russian architecture in the seventeenth century is beyond the scope of the present investigation; however, the renewed interest in Muscovite Composite architecture in this period deserves consideration. As if to recall the apogee of Muscovite power before the drawn-out period of strife that lasted into the early part of the seventeenth century, architecture unequivocally evoked the Muscovite Composite Style. This is not surprising given that Muscovite Composite Style architecture was the first really Russian national style. Even though the Muscovite Composite Style of the sixteenth century only found full expression in a few buildings in Moscow before the end of the century, its prevalence in seventeenth-century architecture shows that it had a long and lasting life in Russian culture.

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Several seventeenth-century monuments reveal the characteristics of the Muscovite Composite Style, with their combination of shatior roofs, centralized plans, satellite towers, and profuse ornamentation. Some good examples of the continuation of this tradition in the seventeenth century are the Church of the Dormition at the Alekseyev Monastery in Uglich (Fig. 3.55), the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in Putniki (Fig. 3.56), and the Church of the Trinity at Ostankino (Fig. 3.57). Each of these examples has the same striking combination of extensive decoration and unusual plan that made Saint Basil the Blessed such a remarkable structure. The celebration of thoroughly Russian architecture, in the form of the Muscovite Composite Style, continued until the reign of Peter the Great at the end of the seventeenth century, at which point it was cast aside in favor of a Europeanized architecture.

Implications and Emergence of the New Style

Although the new architecture flourished in the century after the reign of Ivan IV, the decided architectural shift had taken place at the height of his reign. Following on the heels of more than seventy years of rapidly changing architecture, the Muscovite Composite Style was a culmination of the experimentation undertaken during the reigns of Ivan III and Vasily III. The style nimbly consolidated virtually all of the many sources that informed the architecture of the preceding decades and centuries. It was an architectural style that merged the most ancient forms of Byzantium and old Rus’ with the more recent innovations of Italians in Moscow as well as architectural developments outside of Moscow, such as the emergence of Mannerism and the Late Byzantine architectural style.

99 For more on these churches see Brumfield, Landmarks of Russian Architecture, 111, 123; idem, A History of Russian Architecture, 143–83; Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, 165.
It is important to note that the new Muscovite Composite Style buildings were all constructed after the advent of the shatior-roofed church, the Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe. Its construction in 1532 sparked a new architectural era, for the innovations of later-sixteenth-century architecture are all indebted to its radical reinterpretation of Muscovite church architecture. In spite of the fact that a new architectural period began after the building of the Ascension, most scholars do not recognize this, instead simply lumping architecture from the 1530s and after in with the larger “Medieval” or “Muscovite” eras.

Dmitry Shvidkovsky is one of the only scholars to acknowledge that a new style emerged around the middle of the sixteenth century. He calls the new architectural style “Post-Byzantine ‘Mannerism.’” His appellation for the new style is appropriate in that it accurately describes Russian architecture’s shift away from the traditional Byzantino-Russian architectural forms of the previous centuries while also acknowledging a new ornamentalism and complexity of form, both of which shared qualities with Western Europe’s Mannerist architecture. Nonetheless, the term “Post-Byzantine ‘Mannerism’” is problematic for a number of reasons.

First, the title defines the architecture of Eastern Europe according to the vocabulary and history of Western Europe. Since the term “Mannerism” is generally characterized as an unconventional application of the classical forms of the Italian Renaissance, applying the term to

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100 As discussed in the previous chapter, there were many forces at work in Moscow that can be seen to have precipitated the emergence of the new shatior church type. Sources both local and distant contributed to the new form.


102 Shvidkovsky considers this phase of Russian history to be “post-Byzantine,” because Jerusalem was the new ideal for the Russian state and church, rather than Byzantium. Somewhat confusingly, however, he acknowledges the continued Byzantine character of much of the architecture built in Moscow during this period. He describes the “Post-Byzantine Mannerist” style as defined by an “absorption and forging of the most diverse components into a unified, essentially ornamental and decorative style.” Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 124–25.
a Russian phenomenon is problematic, and limits understanding of the unique forces at work in the history of Russian art and architecture. After all, there was not an Italian Renaissance in Russia, so how could there be an unconventional application of Italian Renaissance forms? Moreover, the unconventional application of traditional forms that is the hallmark of Mannerism did not occur in the same way in sixteenth-century Russia. Instead of one style simply being altered or used in untraditional ways, historical forms in Russia were derived from many different sources and applied in unpredictable ways. For example, Byzantine ornamentation might be applied to an Italianate architectural plan, or vice versa. Furthermore, because of the long process of acculturation, the merging of different styles is quite difficult to trace. Since Byzantine and Italian elements had become thoroughly Russianized after decades and centuries of use in Russian architecture, it becomes very difficult to try to extricate the Byzantine or Italian styles from their Russian context. Unlike Western Europe’s Mannerist architects, Muscovite Composite Style architects selectively drew from Russia’s architectural past and put different pieces together in unexpected ways; they did not, as in Western European Mannerism, simply borrow from one traditional stylistic tradition when reimagining the style.

Shvidkovsky was right, then, to identify the new building types that arose in Moscow after the advent of the shatior-roof church as evidence of an altogether new era in Russian architecture. That he couched that development in the language of Western architecture, however, undermines his goal. Different terminology is required that does not seek to assimilate Russian history to Western European history. The buildings examined above were not so much mannerist, in the sense of altering a standard form, as composite, that is literally composed of layers of culture and history that have been compressed into a single new substance. Mannerism

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103 By now it has been established that there were some Italian Renaissance forms in Russian architecture since the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Still, these forms had already been distilled and were applied to an architectural tradition that had emerged outside of Italy over the course of many centuries.
makes many new forms out of one established style, whereas the Composite style shapes one new form out of an array of established styles. Thus the term “Muscovite Composite Style” is more accurate and useful.

By the mid-sixteenth-century, Russian architects and patrons had clearly left behind the styles of earlier early modern Russia and began to create a novel architectural tradition that fully reflected the individuality and independence of the nation. Although the architecture created during the middle of the sixteenth century was greatly informed by its past permeation by foreigners, it was nonetheless an entirely Russo-centric moment and therefore deserves special consideration in any examination of Russian architectural history.

At the same time, there are curious parallels between the Muscovite Composite Style and the Mannerism of Western Europe that deserve consideration. The shift away from a predictable application of traditional forms, the increasing complexity of forms, the increased interest in ornament, and the blurring and softening of borders are all features that the Muscovite Composite Style shares with Western European Mannerism. Indeed, the similarity between these two simultaneously occurring artistic movements suggests that art of different cultures sometimes “evolves” in similar ways regardless of its host culture.

Even more convincingly, the similarities between Muscovite Composite Style and Mannerism suggest something crucial about sixteenth-century Europe as a whole. Not only do both styles suggest a world in flux, a world in which traditional forms were no longer an adequate means of expression, but they seem to reflect the permeability of formerly more distinct cultures at this time. Certainly Muscovite Composite Style is a reflection of Moscow’s contact

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with many different cultural sources—from Byzantium to the Italian Renaissance to Elizabethan England. A similar shift had occurred in the Europe where Mannerism flourished: political and social revolutions forced different cultures to interact with one another where they normally would not have.\footnote{Between religious and political conflicts and expanding global exploration, the world was getting smaller in the sixteenth century. Cultures that previously had no—or very little—contact with one another were suddenly brought into close contact with one another. Because of dissolving powers and shifting cultural landscapes, artists travelled widely and introduced their artistic traditions into a foreign context. See G.R. Elton, \textit{The New Cambridge Modern History} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), vol. 2.}

It would be an oversimplification to describe the changes in sixteenth-century Muscovite architecture as merely Russia’s version of Western European Mannerism, since so many different forces that were unique to early modern Russia were involved. Still, pulling back to view the architectural climate of Moscow from a global perspective shows Moscow to be part of a larger worldwide phenomenon that included the Mannerism of Italy. Muscovy was one of many cultures in the world during the sixteenth century that were undergoing a transformation as the result of increased contact with other cultures.

The contact between Latin America and Europe has been of particular interest in recent art-historical scholarship, and examination of the relationship between these cultures has helped to open up an expanded understanding of the processes of cultural exchange in the sixteenth century. For one thing, research on Colonial Latin America has conclusively shown that European culture did not “impose” itself upon the indigenous cultures in Latin America. Studies have also shown that the world in the sixteenth century had grown much smaller than it was in previous eras, and that different cultures were not only aware of one another, but were often quite open to each other. The relationship between Italy and Muscovy during the sixteenth century had similar implications for the cultures of Italy and Russia, as well as for the perception of the larger sixteenth-century world. Like Colonial Latin America, Muscovy was a singular
example of the merging together of cultures. As Gauvin Bailey says in the introduction to his groundbreaking book, *Art of Colonial Latin America*, a “blending of styles, techniques and iconographies . . . is precisely what makes Latin American art unique and fascinating, and it should serve as a warning against trying too hard to categorize on the basis of race or ancestry.”

By the middle of the sixteenth century, Russian architecture had also fused its indigenous and foreign elements into a new style; an alchemical process had taken place that encapsulated the history and ethos of Muscovy.

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CONCLUSION

Russia and the West

In the popular imagination, early modern Russia was little more than a Byzantine colony with a “backwards” medieval mindset that was closed off from the rest of the world until the westernizing reforms of Peter the Great in the late eighteenth century, at which point Russian culture and civilization “opened up” to the West. This dissertation has shown, however, that well before Peter, beginning with Ivan III in the 1470s, Russia engaged with the culture of the Italian Renaissance over the course of more than fifty years. Muscovy’s engagement with Italian architecture began with a straightforward importation of Italian forms into Moscow, followed by a fusion of Italian and Russian forms, and finally a complete merging of Italian and Russian forms to such an extent that it is difficult to determine which forms are of Italian origin and which are of Russian origin. A fully hybridized architecture had been created.

With the advent of Baroque art, Russian architecture began to let go of the forms and traditions it had developed over the course of the previous centuries that were unique to Russia. The Muscovite Composite Style, with its unique blend of native and imported traditions, was actively rejected in favor of the modern styles of Western Europe’s Baroque. Although the shift away from the style I have called Muscovite Composite is generally associated with the reign of Peter the Great, the shift had in fact already begun around the middle of the seventeenth century
with the Patriarch Nikon, who advocated for a return to the simpler, classical church architecture of the cross-in-square cube that had originated in medieval Kiev and Vladimir. The turn away from the Muscovite Composite Style was only solidified with Peter the Great and his construction of a “European” capital at St. Petersburg.

**Transculturation**

The architecture of sixteenth-century Moscow was indebted to the many cultural forces that had interacted with the local architectural tradition over the course of the previous decades and centuries, especially the Italian forms imported starting in the 1470s. Still, what I have called Muscovite Composite Style was altogether new, and while careful analysis can reveal the origins of certain features of the style, the style overall and its general features cannot be easily separated. It is a fully amalgamated style that was unique to Muscovy in the sixteenth century. Although it includes elements borrowed from Vladimir, Kiev, Venice, Bologna, Milan, and the broader Byzantine world, it would be inaccurate to try to lump the Muscovite Composite Style in with the styles of any of these regions.

The synthesis of various architectural traditions into one new style represents what Fernando Ortiz has termed “transculturation.” As Ortiz writes in *Cuban Counterpoint*, his important book about the variegated culture and complex history of Cuba, “*Acculturation* is used to describe the process of transition from one culture to another, and its manifold social repercussions. But *transculturation* is a more fitting term.”

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describes “the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place [t]here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk.”

Understanding the development of Russian architecture in the sixteenth century likewise requires an understanding of “the extremely complex transmutations of culture” that took place in and around Moscow.

As with Ortiz’s examination of Cuban culture, my examination of early modern Russia understands cultural interaction to be a more nuanced process than the word “acculturation” implies. This attitude is in contrast to the view of many scholars who study the interaction of Russia and the West, who suggest that without the acculturation of foreign forms into the local architecture, no real transformation can be said to have taken place. For example, in his otherwise illuminating book, Court, Cloister, and City, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann writes regretfully about “the extreme limits to the appearance of Renaissance forms in Russia,” without acknowledging that a transformation occurred even though there was not a systematic, long-term assimilation of Renaissance forms. Other common terms, such as “influence,” are inadequate and also problematic for what they suggest about the role of the culture that is “influenced.” Essentially, “influence” suggests passive reception, and the Muscovites were anything but passive in their absorption of foreign forms.

Ortiz’s term “transculturation” is more useful and descriptive, because it suggests an interaction between cultures that was complex, conscious, and ultimately transformative. The

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3 Ibid.

4 I would qualify the comparison to Ortiz’s study of Cuba by saying that, unlike Ortiz’s study, this dissertation does not attempt to make statements about Russian culture in general, but is rather focused on the very specific cultural expression of its architecture.

distinction is crucial for providing an understanding of Russia's architectural history, since foreign forms were not simply acculturated into their Russian context. They were first steeped in their Russian context and transformed before being fully adopted into the local lexicon. With the exception of the first, introductory examples, foreign forms were not simply applied to Muscovite buildings unadulterated. Certain Italianate forms were applied onto local Russian forms, and by the early part of the sixteenth century those Italianate forms had been a part of Russian architecture for long enough that they had lost their foreign appearance. They had come to feel Russian. Moreover, many Italianate forms were modified, even if just slightly, so that they were not fully Italianate. Often capitals of pilasters, for example, were simplified and stripped of their blatantly Italian appearance. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that rather than Venetian forms finding their way into the fully-formed Muscovite Composite Style, it was Veneto-Russian forms that contributed to the Muscovite Composite Style; rather than Lombard forms entering the Muscovite Composite Style, Lombardo-Russian forms contributed, and so on. To be sure, there was a period of acculturation during the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, when Italian architects first introduced new forms into Muscovite architecture. Ultimately, however, as exemplified by the Muscovite Composite Style, there was an interaction between forms, wherein both native and foreign forms were altered by their contact with one another. New forms were born.
Lasting Impact of Cultural Interaction

In addition to describing the ways in which Italian architecture was involved in the formation of a national Russian style, this dissertation has also refuted the commonly held notion that the early contact between Italians and Russians was of little consequence in terms of a broader history of Russian art and culture. As an example of that position, in her essay “Between Italy and Moscow,” art historian Evelyn Welch states that the interactions between Italy and Moscow in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries “were submerged by the emergent Russian Empire of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.” Her opinion is standard among those few scholars who give the interaction between Italy and Russia consideration.

As was described in the previous chapter, however, the interaction between Italy and Russia was crucial in contributing to the unique hybrid style of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russia. Indeed, it is the architecture of these periods, the Muscovite Composite Style, that has so captured the public imagination. While the Muscovite Composite Style was eventually cast aside, it remains the quintessential Russian architectural style to the present day; it is an architectural symbol of Russian culture. As such, the Muscovite Composite Style is quoted in later architecture as a means of referencing the foundations of Russian history. Quoting the Muscovite Composite Style is a way of referencing Russianness itself.

The Muscovite Composite Style also managed to live on during the classicizing period of Peter the Great—the period during which it was officially cast aside—albeit in diminished and subtle ways. To be sure, the decorative framework of most eighteenth-century Russian buildings is classicizing, following the traditions of Western Europe, but the innovative handling of space

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that originated in sixteenth century Muscovy continued. Two useful examples that are representative of eighteenth-century church architecture in Russia are the Gate Church of the Tikhvin Mother of God at the Donskoi Monastery in Moscow (Fig. 4.1) and the Cathedral of the Resurrection at Smolnyi Convent in Saint Petersburg (Fig. 4.2). In terms of decorative motifs, these two churches are products of a culture interested in the classical forms of Western Europe, yet the spatial construction of these buildings suggests a more nebulous origin. Both buildings, with their tall and narrow central space, are indebted to the shatior roof which in turn was indebted to the Italian presence in Moscow. Moreover, the four tall, narrow towers rising around the central dome of the Cathedral of the Resurrection are reminiscent of the clustered towers that were a typical feature of Muscovite Composite Style churches such as the Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist at Diakovo (Fig. 3.13).

The continued presence of Italian architects via the Muscovite Composite Style can also be felt in the historical revivals of the late-nineteenth century, in which the Muscovite Composite Style was once again embraced as a symbol of Russian culture. One of the best examples of the revivalist architecture of late-nineteenth-century Russian architecture is the State Historical Museum (Fig. 4.3), which was built adjacent to the Kremlin. Its exterior immediately evokes the late-fifteenth century architecture of the Kremlin. It is built in the same red brick as the Kremlin fortifications and prominently features towers, crenellation, and machicolation in the fortress-style tradition of the Kremlin walls and towers. In other ways, however, the building references the decoration and effects of Muscovite Composite style architecture. Even though the

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7 In a significant repetition of the earlier pattern traced here, the Cathedral of the Resurrection was built by an Italian: Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli, who had a successful and prolific career in Saint Petersburg. He was part of yet another influx of Italian architects in eighteenth-century Saint Petersburg to help build the new capital in a Western European style. For more on this, see Iu. Osiannikov, Franchesko Bartolomeo Rastrelli, Seriia “Zhizn’ v iskusstve” (Leningrad: “Isskustvo,” Leningradskoe otd-nie, 1982); Dmitry Shvidkovsky, Russian Architecture and the West, trans. Antony Wood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 183–227.
building does not take the form of a central-plan church, it alludes to such typical Muscovite Composite Style buildings by means of its decoration. Decorative towers and small-scale shatior roofs ornament rooflines at differing heights, creating a cascading effect similar to that of Moscow’s famed sixteenth-century churches, The Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Basil the Blessed. Furthermore, there is a wealth of ornamentation derived from myriad sources, just as in the Muscovite Composite Style: fortress-style decoration is fused with layers of kokoshniki and zakomary, western-style engaged columns, and pointed blind gables. Thus, as late as the late-nineteenth century, the Muscovite Composite Style, and thereby the lingering presence of Italian architects in Moscow, continued to reverberate in several different periods of Russian architecture. The Muscovite Composite Style continued to serve as a leitmotif of Russian architecture.

The link between Muscovite Composite Style architecture and the Italian connection to Moscow should be reiterated, lest it be forgotten how very significant Italian architects were in constructing the style that came to be associated with “Russianness” in architecture. Even though the Muscovite Composite Style was eclectic, drawing inspiration from many sources, Italian architects had a unique role in contributing to the flourishing of Russian architecture; their presence was tied to the beginning of the late-fifteenth-century building campaign in which Muscovite rulers sought to find a new means of expressing the power of their capital. The activity of Italian architects in Moscow encouraged the emergence of a number of architectural forms that were crucial to the evolution of the Muscovite Composite Style, including central-plan church design as well as the extremely important shatior roof. One is left to wonder if the
building campaigns of late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century Moscow would have had the same vigor and cohesiveness had they not involved the use of celebrated foreign architects.\(^8\)

**Broadening Study of the Renaissance**

In addition to revealing more about the role of Italian architecture in the evolution of Russian architecture, the research involved in this dissertation has sought to expand understanding of the early modern period and its many renascences beyond the privileged centers of "The Renaissance."\(^9\) More importantly, it has shown that Moscow’s keen awareness of Italy, as well as of other cultures including Byzantium, hints that the sophistication and interconnectedness of the early modern world included Eastern Europe, a region that is largely neglected by art history.

While this dissertation has successfully shown that Italian-Russian interaction was fundamental to the formation of a national architectural style, it has also shown that the narrow view of the so-called Renaissance exclusively as a rebirth of the forms of classical antiquity is limiting and shortsighted. Indeed, as stated in the introduction to this dissertation, one of its goals has been to illustrate the inadequacy of the term "Renaissance," as it is traditionally interpreted. Although literally meaning "rebirth," the term specifically refers to the rebirth of Greco-Roman traditions in Western Europe. This is especially problematic given that scholars frequently use

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\(^8\) It is not my intention to suggest that Italian architects were in some way more capable of bringing forth the changes in Russian architecture than architects of other cultural origins. Ostensibly, Russian architects could have effected the development as well. The fact remains, however, that the deliberate importation of Italian architects coincides with a very considered and sustained building campaign. It seems that the focus on building was strengthened because of the presence of foreigners with a particular expertise in architecture and engineering. Their recruitment to Moscow reflects a level of seriousness on the part of Russia’s rulers to begin with.

\(^9\) Erwin Panofsky famously discussed other revivals preceding “The Renaissance” in his *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (London: Paladin, 1970). This dissertation is indebted to Panofsky’s attempt to broaden the study of Renaissance art; however, the renascences of concern in this study are those outside of Italy that occurred simultaneously with “The Renaissance.”
the term “Renaissance” to refer to the period of time that corresponds with the revival of Greco-Roman traditions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By joining together time with style in the word “Renaissance,” use of that term automatically limits study of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to Western Europe. Since the Renaissance is synonymous with the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as well as with a revival of Classical culture, anything that does not fit into both categories is automatically marginalized. Renaissance art history, then, excludes any cultures that were not involved in a revival of Classical antiquity during that time; perpetuation of the term “Renaissance” in the study of the early modern period automatically excludes the majority of the world.

By examining the ways in which Russian architecture went through a renascence of its own—a renascence that was not focused on a revival of Greco-Roman forms—as well as by examining the long-term implications of its renascence, this dissertation broadens the view of “Renaissance” Europe. More specifically, examination of Muscovy’s renascence and the implications thereof, helps to bring Muscovy into the same early modern world in which Renaissance art history is studied. In short, this research reveals the many ways in which the term Renaissance is insufficient.\(^{10}\) Thus, the preferred term for the period as a whole is “early modern,” which is more of a description of time than of style, and which avoids the myriad attendant complications of classical bias.\(^{11}\)

\(^{10}\) For a review of the problems inherent in the study of Renaissance art, refer to the Introduction, pages 1-16.

\(^{11}\) Many scholars have wrestled with the problems inherent in the term “Renaissance” and have likewise suggested that “early modern period” is a less problematic term. In the introduction to the recent *A Companion to Renaissance and Baroque Art*, for example, Babette Bohn and James M. Saslow agree that “early modern” is preferable to Renaissance, but concede that the term “Renaissance” retains its usefulness, because “early modern” can be misunderstood as referring to the period beginning in the eighteenth century. Babette Bohn and James M. Saslow, “Introduction,” in *A Companion to Renaissance and Baroque Art* ed. Babette Bohn and James M. Saslow (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 2. For another useful text that addresses the problems inherent in the term “Renaissance,” see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 190-93.
By acknowledging that Moscow—and by extension other capitals outside of Western Europe—was a part of the broader world that coexisted with the Renaissance, this dissertation also reveals the breadth and reach of the Italian Renaissance. Indeed, while in recent years, scholars have examined the spread of Italian Renaissance artists and forms to distant points on the globe, from Latin America to Africa to Asia, Russia has generally been excluded from the discussion about the reach of the Renaissance world, with very few exceptions. At the same time that Italian missionaries were travelling to Lima and the Portuguese were colonizing Goa, Italian architects were making a new home in Moscow. To be sure, there is an important distinction between the European relationship with Lima and Goa, since the Italian presence in Moscow was not a part of an official Italian campaign of conversion or imperialism. In fact, the lack of any desire on the part of the Italians to change or control the Russians makes this particular case study an even more useful tool for understanding the breadth of the Italian Renaissance and its unique role in a commercial market. In any case, the relationship between Italy and Russia reflects yet another offshoot of the Italian Renaissance, and allows for a more complete picture of both Renaissance Italy and the early modern world.

Knowledge of the interaction between Italy and Russia in the early modern period is perhaps most useful for what it tells us about the Italian Renaissance. In recent years, scholars have done much to expand the world of the Renaissance; even though Renaissance art history was, from its inception, both Florentine- and Classical-centric, contemporary scholarship has

12 For some of the scholarship that has contributed to a broader view of the Renaissance and its interaction with other regions of the globe, see Gauvin A. Bailey, Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773 (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1999); C. Farago, ed., Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450-1650 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Toward a Geography of Art; Jay A. Levenson and National Gallery of Art (U.S.), Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration (Washington, National Gallery of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). Of these examples, only Kaufmann’s book gives any consideration to Eastern Europe, and his analysis only barely touches upon the particularities of Russia and its relationship with Italy.
attempted to bring marginalized parts of Italy and artworks that do not show an interest in classical revival into the discourse of Renaissance art history.\footnote{Significant strides in appreciating the non-classicizing aspect of early modern Italy have been made, especially in the study of Venetian art. See Patricia Fortini Brown, \textit{Art and Life in Renaissance Venice}, Perspectives (New York: Prentice Hall/H.N. Abrams, 1997); Deborah Howard, \textit{Venice and the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture, 1100-1500} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Rosamond E. Mack, \textit{Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).} In spite of their best efforts, however, the notion still remains, generally speaking, that the Renaissance is still synonymous with the classicizing art of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Florence and Rome.

Studying the interaction between Italy and Russia in the early modern period brings the unique architecture of northern Italy into sharper focus. By examining the oeuvres of the many significant architects, engineers, and stonemasons of northern Italy who travelled to Moscow, this research has shown both the prominence and ubiquity of non-classicizing styles in Renaissance Italy and beyond its borders. Although these styles were fading from the mainstream in fifteenth-century Italy, they persevered in their new Russian context in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries. Thus, as classical forms became the favored mode of architectural expression in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, the wide-ranging styles from early-fifteenth-century northern Italy were able to live on. By expanding understanding of the reach of early modern Italian art, this project has helped to create a more nuanced picture of early modern art history and even of “The Renaissance” itself.

\textbf{Renascences}

As suggested above, this dissertation draws attention to the fact that renascences—as distinct from the limiting definition of “The Renaissance”—can involve any culture or historical period. This awareness not only broadens our understanding of what regions can be involved in a
renascence, but also of what subjects can be revivified by such a renascence. A renascence most certainly took place in late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth-century Moscow. During the period under investigation in this dissertation, Muscovite architecture exhibited an interest in reviving both the glory of medieval Russia and the spiritual power of Byzantium; consequently it referenced the architecture associated with these cultures. Muscovite architecture also was interested in reviving—or *keeping alive*—European styles that were associated with authority and prestige. Thus, styles that were beginning to die out in fifteenth-century Italy and the regions that were formerly a part of the Byzantine Empire—both the late-medieval styles of northern Italy and the Late Byzantine style of Constantinople—were given a new life in a new Russian context. In stark contrast to the Western European Renaissance, Muscovy’s renascence drew selectively from a wide range of cultures and times in its unique architectural revival.

In mainstream art history, there still remains the vague feeling that the vaunted art of the Italian Renaissance is somehow “better” than the art that was created in other locations at the same time. With the exception of those scholars who examine the art produced outside of Italy, the outdated, almost spiritual reverence for the “genius” of the Renaissance and the accompanying cult of personality still prevails. Introductory art history textbooks teach the art of the Italian Renaissance and the art of the “Northern” Renaissance, with almost no forays into art outside of Western Europe. The limited scope of survey textbooks is forgivable, since students new to the field must be given a foundation upon which to build their knowledge, but even more elevated scholarship often remains quite Italo-centric. For example, scholars researching the art of any marginalized culture are often expected to situate their scholarship with respect to Italian Renaissance art. In short, early modern scholarship still revolves around the nexus of Italy. For example, the fact that in this study it is necessary to stipulate that Russia brought about a
renascence that did not involve a revival of classical antiquity indicates the degree to which Eurocentrism pervades the study of the early modern period.

Hopefully, as formerly marginalized regions come more and more to the fore in the study of early modern art, the privileged status of the Italian Renaissance will diminish. The architecture of Muscovy, like the early modern art of so many other non-Italian cultures, was working within a cultural context with an entirely different set of variables from that of the Italians. Therefore, viewing non-Italian art in the early modern period as somehow “inferior” is not only outdated, but also limiting. After all, what is the basis for determining quality? The Italians and the Russians had very different goals in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but both cultures achieved their goals with tremendous success. The same can be said of art and architecture produced the world over.

Considering the similar cultural and art-historical phenomena that took place in Italy and Muscovy, it becomes clear that it is useful to ignore geographical boundaries to a large extent, when considering a historical period. After all, geographical boundaries as they are defined today were not in place in the early modern world; moreover, the differences between cultures on either side of a border are often minimal. Consider, for example, northern Italy versus southern Switzerland. As Claire Farago argues in Reframing the Renaissance, the best approach is to “reconceptualize the Renaissance and other historical periods as the international, multicultural phenomena they were.” Farago argues for an art history in which scholars recognize that boundaries are fluid; cultures are neither isolated nor easily compartmentalized. Moreover, the

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14 This is not intended as an attack on the Italian Renaissance or a suggestion that it does not deserve serious art-historical study. My suggestion is only that its privileging over nearly all other cultures is not helpful to the field as a whole; it hinders our ability to understand the art-historical period and the many unique, interrelated cultures of the world.

15 Farago, Reframing the Renaissance, 87.
civilizations of the early modern world were not closed-off, impregnable entities; they lacked distinct boundaries as well as distinct centers. Therefore, any valid study must address outside influences and cultural interaction. Moreover, Italy can no longer be understood as the iconic center against which all other early modern forms of artistic expression must be judged. Muscovite architecture, for example, is not interesting only because of its relationship to the Italian Renaissance. The culture and art history of Muscovy is worthy of study based on its own merits.

Limitations

As much as this dissertation hopes to engage an early-modern art history that has moved beyond Euro- and Italo-centrism, it still inevitably relies upon the models established for the study of Italian Renaissance art. This weakness is nearly unavoidable in the context of the present study, because this research involves Russia’s relationship with Italy, and while examining the consequences of more than half a century of interaction between Italy and Russia, avoiding the trappings of Italo-centric art history is difficult.

In addition, there are also certain limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from this research. As with much of the early modern period, but even more so, early modern Russia has very few surviving documents that record the wishes of Russian patrons or the inspiration of its architects. There are a few documents, including the Russian chronicles, that provide the most basic historical facts, but beyond that there is very little historical information from which scholars can glean more nuanced information. As a result, it is left to the art historian to analyze the art-historical products—in this case the architecture—in their historical context, to fill in the
pieces of information that are lacking. Although this process can be done with some measure of confidence, there is always the possibility of alternative interpretations. Thus, another scholar’s interpretation of the information under investigation in this dissertation could differ from the interpretation presented in the preceding chapters. On the other hand, the dearth of surviving documentation allows the visual subjects of this study to be its true focus, thereby allowing the Russian architecture to speak for itself to the extent possible.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Finally, the present study would not be complete without acknowledging the number of questions it has raised and the opportunities for further research. Unfortunately, many of the questions raised are too large to be addressed in the context of this dissertation. Two of the most obvious areas of research that deserve further investigation involve the interaction between Muscovy and outside cultures that are known to have, or are suspected to have, played a role in shaping the architecture of early modern Moscow. The two cultures in question are England and the Balkans. As discussed in the previous chapter, Dmitry Shvidkovsky, building on the scholarship of nineteenth-century Russian scholar Iosef Gamel’, has conducted preliminary research regarding the presence of English masters in sixteenth-century Moscow. Further research in the English archives could allow for a more complete understanding of the role of English architects in Moscow, their background in England, and their identities.\(^\text{16}\) Shvidkovsky


\(^\text{17}\) There are a number of Russian sources that address the influx of English masters in the sixteenth century, and Shvidkovsky draws from them. For more, see Iosef Gamel’, *Anglichane v Rossii v XVI i XVII stoletiakh*, (St. Petersburg: Tipografi Imperatorskoj Akademii nauk, 1865)
and Gamel’ have uncovered the names of a handful of English architects who worked in Moscow, including Thomas Chaffin and Humfry Locke. Learning more about these two men could prove useful in learning more about their careers in Moscow, and perhaps even about the careers of other still-unnamed English architects.

Although there is less concrete information to suggest a connection between Moscow and the Balkans, it would also be useful to explore the possibility of a connection between these two regions. The geography and the similarities between the Late Byzantine architecture of the Balkans and the Muscovite Composite Style are provocative. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is a striking similarity between the layout and design of the Cathedral of Saint Basil the Blessed and the fourteenth-century Serbian church at Gračanica (Fig. 3.40). Stylistic similarities are, of course, insufficient to prove a connection, but these similarities, combined with the fact that the Balkan region was one of the areas in which the Late Byzantine architectural style flourished, suggest that there may have been some level of interaction that shaped either one or both cultures.

The most pressing question, however, the answer to which could fully flesh out the lengthy chronology of Italo-Russian relations, is to what extent, if any, Muscovite architecture influenced the art of Italy and other Western European regions. Answering this question involves delving into a wide range of architectural histories and case studies, and is far from straightforward. Thus, the present investigation cannot accommodate a full investigation of the possibility of a reverse transmission of architectural traditions, from Muscovy to the West. Still, the historical and visual evidence suggests the possibility of reverse transmission. At the very least, it seems highly likely that a common source inspired the architecture of Muscovy and the architecture of many Central and Western European regions in the latter half of the sixteenth
century and after. Based on stylistic grounds and the presence of Italians throughout Central Europe after 1539, it seems quite plausible that Muscovite style could have been transmitted back towards the West.

By the early seventeenth century, the classicizing Baroque style took over in Italy. This is the architecture epitomized by Gianlorenzo Bernini and Carlo Maderno, both of whom were famous for their contributions to Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome (Fig. 4.4). In Russia, a taste for the classicizing forms of Western Europe emerged towards the end of the seventeenth century and flourished in the following century. In both Italy and Russia, however, a non-classicizing trend persisted. In Italy, the style is epitomized by the work of architects like Francesco Borromini and Guarino Guarini, whose masterful buildings competed with the more popular classicizing style. Working about a generation apart, both Borromini and Guarini represent a decidedly untraditional, non-classical architectural style. The works of these architects, with their curvilinear plans, soaring narrow spaces, and curiously ornate architectural decoration, bear a strong conceptual resemblance to the architectural innovations of the Muscovite Composite Style and its descendents. Of particular interest are Borromini’s Sant’Ivo alla Sapienza in Rome (Fig. 4.5) and Guarini’s San Lorenzo in Turin (Fig. 4.6). There is a curious similarity between these Italian Baroque churches and some of Russia’s most quintessentially Russian buildings, such as The Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe (Fig. 2.30) and the Church of Saint Basil the Blessed (Fig. 3.19). All of these buildings have an acutely centralized focus, with a narrow tall space defining the overall layout (or multiple such spaces, as with Saint Basil). They are all capped with imposing domes that are constructed in such a way as to seem an intrinsic part of the
space of the church below it. Often, as with Guarini’s Sindone Chapel in the Turin Cathedral, these domes are quite reminiscent of the Russian *shatior* (Fig. 4.7). 18

Furthermore, even the exteriors of the Italian Baroque examples exhibit decorative features curiously similar to those on the sixteenth-century Russian buildings. For example, the series of windows circling around the base of the dome of San Lorenzo look very much like the *kokoshniki* around the base of the domes of the Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist (Fig. 3.15) and of Saint Basil the Blessed (Fig. 3.23-25). Likewise, the highly sculptural layering of windows on the exterior of the Santissima Sindone dome is reminiscent of the layering of *kokoshniki* on the central tower of the Saint Basil compound (Fig. 3.19). The descendents of the Muscovite Composite Style in the eighteenth century, such as the Gate Church of the Tikhvin Mother of God and the Cathedral of the Resurrection, discussed above, bear an even more striking resemblance to the Italian examples. This is partially because both Russian examples were built during the Baroque era, as were the Italian examples. As such, they share certain stylistic, decorative elements especially the profusion of Classical elements, such as pilasters, engaged columns, and cornices.

I would not go so far as to suggest that Russian architecture directly influenced the design of the two famous Italian buildings cited above. I would, however, suggest that the resemblance is such that it warrants further investigation. The emergence of the unusual centralized tent- or tower-roofed constructions of Muscovy has been examined in this study and in many other studies; the origins of the unusual designs of Italian architects such as Borromini and Guarini,

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18 Not only do the visual similarities between Guarini’s peaked domes and the Russian *shatior* suggest a possible sharing of ideas, but so does Guarini’s biography. He is thought to have travelled to Spain and Portugal, and Guarini specialists use this ostensible travel as a springboard to discuss his interest in and receptivity to the Muslim styles he would have encountered there. He is also thought to have worked in Prague, which is even more suggestive for the current study, given its proximity to Poland, where it has already been confirmed that there were Italian architects. The combination of stylistic similarities with Guarini’s known travels and receptivity to new forms suggests that his biography deserves further investigation. Harold Alan Meek, *Guarino Guarini and His Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 12-18.
however, remain somewhat murky. The similarities between the Italian and Russian buildings potentially could be explained by delving further into the origins of the non-classicizing Italian Baroque church form.

The sudden appearance of these innovative buildings in Baroque Italy, where the prevailing taste was for classical forms, is curious. It is highly doubtful that Russian architects were involved in the construction of these buildings, but it seems more than likely that some of the same forces that brought the same architectural forms into being in Moscow were involved in bringing them into the architecture of Italy. It is possible that the similar developments in Italy simply reflect a shared interest with Muscovy in centrality and verticality, or an interest in Byzantine architecture; perhaps both cultures were shaped by their shared awareness of the many Italian Renaissance architectural treatises and their focus on idealized forms. In any case, a better understanding of how these forms emerged in Italy might help to give a more complete sense of the relationship between different regions during the Baroque period. For example, the commonly held belief that Borromini and Guarini exerted an influence on the architecture of later-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century architecture in Central Europe would be turned on its head were Eastern Europe proven to have in fact exerted its influence westward. The similarities between Central European and Italian architecture would be understood to have arisen independently of and simultaneously with the innovations of the Italian Baroque.

There are a number of buildings throughout Central Europe built in the seventeenth century that also exhibit curious similarities to the Muscovite Composite Style. It is known that a number of Italians were active in Central Europe in the seventeenth century and before, which supports the notion that Russian architecture could have affected the architecture of the West;

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communities of Italians in Central Europe could have both attracted Italians from Russia and taken Eastern and Central European architectural features back into Western Europe with them. Add to this the fact that the fate of most of the Italians who had travelled to Moscow in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is unknown, and it becomes quite plausible that Italian architects travelling between Western, Central, and Eastern Europe could have transmitted many of the stylistic features that eventually became universal features of the widespread European Baroque. The architectural innovations of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Muscovy could have seeped back over the borders into Central Europe by the seventeenth century, when the Baroque was flourishing.

One suggestive example of these possibilities is in Poland, where many buildings share certain curious features with both western European Baroque and the Muscovite Composite Style. One example is the tower of the Sigismund Chapel (Fig. 4.8) added to the medieval Wawel Cathedral in Krakow in the early sixteenth century. The tower is credited to the Florentine Bartolommeo Berrecci and is celebrated as an example of the reach of the Renaissance into Poland. Certain features, however, recall the architecture of Muscovy: the elongated octagonal drum on which the dome rests and the cluster of smaller domes around the central dome.

On account of both its geographic vicinity to and ongoing war with Russia, Poland would have had easy and frequent contact with Russia. Moreover, many Italians are known to have worked in Poland beginning as early as the early sixteenth century and well into the seventeenth. The fact that there was such a robust community of Italian architects in Poland means that it could have served as something of a haven for Italians travelling in and through Central Europe.

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The expatriate community would have been the closest major center of Italians to Moscow. Although the fate of most of the Italians in Moscow remains unknown, it is known that at least one of the Italian architects, Alevisio Carcano, died in Lublin, Poland in 1512, a fact that lends strength to the hypothesis that there was a reverse transmission of architectural forms from Moscow to the West.\(^{21}\)

Lithuania would also have come into close contact with Russia because it was also involved in the ongoing strife between Russia and Poland. Moreover, they were geographically close. As with Poland, a number of Italians are known to have worked in Lithuania, including the sculptor and architect Bernardino Zanobi, who worked as assistant to Bartolommeo Berrecci in Krakow. Zanobi is also known to have worked in Lithuania with the Italian Giovanni Cini; they worked together on the construction of the Cathedral of Vilnius in the 1530s (Fig. 4.9).\(^{22}\)

Although the cathedral is very classicizing and does not suggest the spread of Muscovite style architecture, it should be noted that the Muscovites sacked Vilnius in 1655, destroying much of its architecture.\(^{23}\) One is left to wonder whether there were once examples of buildings in Vilnius that revealed the spread of the Muscovite Composite Style into Lithuania. Finally, it should also be recalled that one important Italian who had worked in Moscow, Pietro Annibale, fled Moscow for Livonia, which bordered Lithuania to the north. If Annibale remained in Livonia after his

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\(^{21}\) Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, 92. That Carcano travelled to and died in Lublin suggests that other of the Italians in Moscow could feasibly have made a similar journey. Moreover, it is possible that Carcano transmitted some of the architectural innovations he had picked up during his time in Moscow to the local architects in Lublin before his death.


1539 arrest, he could have transmitted the architectural styles emerging in Moscow to Livonia and its neighbors in Lithuania.\textsuperscript{24}

It seems highly probable that some reverse transmission did take place in at least these two regions, based on historical circumstances and a few stylistic suggestions. Still, more research is required in order to say with any certainty whether reverse transmission occurred. While a good deal of research exists on the presence of Italian architects in Poland and on the influence of Italian architecture on Polish architecture, there is far less research that explores the possible transmission of Muscovite styles into Poland and the complex cross-pollinations that could have resulted across Europe as a result.\textsuperscript{25} An examination of the possibility of reverse influence from Russia into any part of Western or Central Europe would be beneficial for the study of early modern art and architecture and for creating a more global view of the early modern period.

In spite of the questions that remain, this analysis of the more than fifty years of Italian-Russian interaction has sharpened our understanding of many crucial elements of early modern art history. The conclusions drawn from the present study provide a more complete sense of the lives and careers of Italian Renaissance architects beyond the borders of Italy as well as of how unprecedented architectural forms came into being in Moscow. The examination of Russia’s involvement with Western Europe from 1472 to 1539 brings a fuller general history to light. As a result of knowing more about the stylistic and historical events of Muscovite Russia in the context of early modern Europe, “The Renaissance” slips a little bit farther from its position of

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\textsuperscript{24} Pietro Annibale’s dramatic departure from Moscow was discussed in detail in Chapter Two. See pages 127-32. For more on Pietro Annibale see Jyri Kivimae, “Peter Frjazin or Peter Hannibal? An Italian Architect in Late Medieval Russia and Livonia,” \textit{Settentrione: Rivista di studi italo-finlandesi} 5 (1993): 60-68.

\textsuperscript{25} To my knowledge the only text to seriously tackle the question of Russian influence on the art of the West is the dated and ideologically-charged book by Mikhail Alpatov, \textit{Russian Impact on Art}, ed. M.L. Wolf, trans. I. Litvinov (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950).
privilege, becoming just one of many stylistic and ideological trends occurring around the globe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Correspondingly, other “peripheral” cultures like Russia are able to share in the history of early modern art, rather than being studied in isolation, removed from any larger global context. A study of “Russian art,” after all, is no more useful than a study of “European art,” since in both instances a chronological framework and contextualization is necessary. Scholars of the early modern period are gradually moving the spotlight away from Italy and Western Europe, favoring instead a broad and balanced examination of the plurality of vibrant cultures that shared the world’s stage. Early modern Muscovy is at once unique and typical; it is unique with regard to the specific cultural forces that came together there to create one of the world’s most distinctive architectural traditions, yet it is typical of almost any other early modern nation in that it was a microcosm of many different peoples and traditions. The combination thereof is what defines any region, era, or style.
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