

Dear prof. Moldovan,

The journal *Boletín Académico*, which the School of Architecture of the University of A Coruña publishes from 1985, begins a new stage. The progressive implementation of the systems of evaluation of quality that has come to be produced in Spanish universities in recent years forces us to spread the architectural research across a few normalised courses. In this context arose the transformation of our journal.

*Boletín Académico. Revista de investigación y arquitectura contemporánea* (Journal of research and contemporary architecture) wants to be a scientific, digital and annual publication that follows the procedure of peer-review, fulfilling all the criteria Latindex for electronic magazines ([http://resh.cindoc.csic.es/criterios\\_latindex\\_electronicas.php](http://resh.cindoc.csic.es/criterios_latindex_electronicas.php)). It will be edited by the Open Journal System normalized format (OJS) and will work with the horizon of a near indexation.

The journal will gather in every issue original, unpublished and specialized articles of research dedicated to contemporary architecture, being able to rely eventually on special collaborations, according to the criterion of the Editorial Board. Obviously, the participation in the magazine is free and it is opened to all the experts in contemporary architecture, without restrictions that defined by his subject matter and his format.

The subject matter includes all the areas of knowledge that are present in the Spanish Schools of Architecture, though the published articles will have to index the theoretical contributions to examples of contemporary architecture, affecting in a special way in those aspects that have supposed research, technological development and innovation.

As for the format, every text will be published in its original language (Spanish, Galician or English) and will be able to be downloaded free from the internet ([www.boletinacademico.es](http://www.boletinacademico.es)) in PDF format. The original articles will be received during October and the journal will be edited during February. In any case, in the attached file you can find the detailed procedure of publication that will apply for the authors.

We wait for your participation, as well as the diffusion of this call of papers between your contacts.

Yours sincerely,

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Director of the Boletín Académico

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THE GENESYS OF SYNAGOGUE AS ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION OF MONOTHEISM

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**Keywords:** Architecture, Monotheisms, Synagogue, Church, Mosque.  
Arquitectura, monoteísmos, la Mezquita, Sinagoga, Iglesia.

**ABSTRACT** The argumentation that we developed enunciates an architectural expression of monotheism. It has been noted that monotheisms cannot remain isolated, because of the influences and communications that take place. All antique religions before the concretization of the Architectural expression of Monotheism in the

synagogue, have some common characteristics: they are polytheists, anthropomorphic and they dissociate the inside cult of the clerks and initiates to the outside believers. Also, they present the statue of divinity and the altar. Periodically, all three monotheisms manifest fundamentalist traits, the cleansing of proud ulterior features and the nostalgic return to the typology of initial settlement.

La argumentación que hemos desarrollado enuncia una expresión arquitectónica del monoteísmo. Se ha observado que los monoteísmos no puede permanecer aislada, debido a las influencias y las comunicaciones que tienen lugar. Todas las religiones antiguas antes de la concreción de la expresión arquitectónica del monoteísmo en la sinagoga, tienen algunas características comunes: son politeístas, antropomorfas y se disocian el culto en el interior de los empleados y se inicia a los creyentes fuera. Además, presentan la estatua de la divinidad y el altar. Periódicamente, los tres monoteísmos manifiestan rasgos fundamentalistas, la limpieza de los orgullosos características ulteriores y el regreso nostálgico a la tipología de asentamiento inicial.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The common origin of the synagogue, the paleo-christian church discovered at Duras Europos and the house of the Prophet of Medina (the prototype of later mosques) is very visible. Periodically, all three monotheisms manifest fundamentalist traits, the cleansing of proud ulterior features and the nostalgic return to the typology of initial settlement.

#### **RESEARCH PROGRAM**

According to the methodology of history of Arts and Architecture and of Comparative Architecture we were able to note the next facts and connections:

All antique religions before the concretization of the Architectural expression of Monotheism in the synagogue, have some common characteristics: they are polytheists, anthropomorphic and they dissociate the inside cult of the clerks and initiates to the outside believers. Also, they present the statue of divinity and the altar.

"The Mesopotamian temple had to be the place for developing a ritual with prayer, bringing of offerings and divine practices"<sup>1</sup>. These corresponded to adequate areas: the dwelling of gods and the places for rituals and offerings and functional annexes for these, belonging to the priests. A zonal particularity comes from the

orientation of the corners not the sides to cardinal points (perpetuated until the pre-Islamic Kaaba) and the balance between the options of practicing the access into it on the long side or on the short side. The typology of Mesopotamian temples knew: the high temple with the filiations in ziggurat; the inside yard temple, accessible for believers; Assyrian temple - organized on a longitudinal axis, in the end with cella. (Fig 1)

Egyptian religious ritual was centered around its statue (the representations of the god, sometimes combining anthropomorphic with zoomorphic elements), in daily and annual cycles, that involved offerings, purifications, recitals, and processions. As a consequence, the divine cult temple had an anterior part, accessible to the public according to the degree of initiation and the main dwelling of the divinity (accessible only for clerk), containing: cella, places for offerings and ritual accessories, secondary chapels in conformity to the pantheon from the époque. The volumetric composition (with recedings on the horizontal and vertical, corresponding to persons filtration), has some architectural innovations: the basilical section which allows the lightening of the central hypostyle halls area, axial developments rithmated by combinations -less or more complex: pylon-yard with colonnade with statues, chapels, secondary altaries-pilon-hipostyle hall-temple-sanctuary. This formula was formed during the New Empire because of the preeminence of the funerary programme from the early époques, but also knows revivals from the Old Empire period- the solar temple without sanctuary because of the direct communication with the celestial vault and the accommodations of terrain- the rupestral temple. (Fig. 2)

The Greek temple was also a symbolical dwelling of the god but at the same time it was coming from the prehelenical dwelling- the megaron, and magistrates assumed the religious function. The rest of the citizens weren't allowed in the inside and the rite was prescribing processions, which surrounded the edifice, the motive of uniting the front parts in the pteroma.

The Italic temple was a earthly projection of divinity, many times grouped in triades, and a place of divination, practiced by haruspices, and that's why it was uncovered. Even from the etrusque period, the sacred space (pars antica for divination and magic, practiced in front of the assistance and capturing attention) was combined with the dwelling of gods (pars postica- a cella or three in the case of the triads) in a bipartite composition which, even though

was using the Architectural orders and was keeping the mass of believers outside, was different from the Greek temple because the ritual becomes static and the expressiveness is concentrated in frontality. (Fig. 3)

If this is the antique context, the local context associates Palestine's Architecture with the one of Fenicia, even through the assistance given to the realization of Solomon's temple by the legendary king of Tyr, Hiram. (Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 6)

Because of all this, the mutation realized by the synagogue becomes evident. The community is permitted in the interior and this is where the ceremony takes place, the facades go through an „eclipse“ and will become very important much later; according to some authors the altar is replaced with an artifact-the ark of sacred writings (in our opinion, this replaces the statue of the god-let us remember how this absence shocked the romans when they conquered the temple of Jerusalem) and soon the place of spreading the divine word would become the bimah. In this vision, we can understand and appreciate the discourse of Bruno Zevi when he talks about space as a protagonist of architecture and Rudolf Arnheim when he reproduces the materialization of the interior space of St. Sophia and we can perceive the input brought by the Jewish civilization and modern architecture, after their emancipation.

The synagogue, as an institution, constitutes a „revolutionary innovation“<sup>2</sup> even if historical research regarding its genesis don't come to a consensus. Regarding the mosaic origin, attributed to the rabinic tradition, according to authorised jewish scientific sources, the arguments associated with Josas' reform from the exilic period are much more convincing. Today, the majority considers the idea that a profound restructuring of religion made by the pharisee elite, in the Hellenistic period had as a result the substitution of sacrifice in the temple with prayer and as a major architectural result the spatial interiorization. According to Hayoun and Jarrase<sup>7</sup>, although even before the days of fasting ended in solemn gatherings in which prayers were pronounced, the babylonian exile registered the beginning of regulated religious gatherings in the jewish community and a certain distancing from the cult of sacrifice (reference to Psalm 137;1)<sup>3</sup> and after the return to Jerusalem these „religious practices“ coexisted with the sacrifices. Discrimination regarding the unique sanctuary in Jerusalem was what permitted the realization of a new type of space that was meant for prayer and that was also a hall with multiple functions. Later, the Talmud stipulated

two principles: the reciting of prayers towards Jerusalem and the placement in the highest point of the locality. We'll see how the orientation problem will define the evolution of the other two monotheisms (the West-East succession in case of Christianity and Jerusalem-Mecca in the case of Islam). The common origin is also visible at the palaeochristian synagogue and church discovered at Dura Europos as in the Medina Prophets' house (the prototype of the later mosques). Periodically, all three monotheisms display fundamentalist inclinations and the nostalgic return to the typology of initial settlement. Affecting is the fact that voluntarily or involuntarily, when in 1938 Emil Steffan sketched a church for the Diaspora, it had this ancestral configuration: interior yard, hall disposed on breadth not in depth, tamely aspect. (Fig. 7)

After Sed-Rajna, for starters, the synagogue would have evolved through the three main types in the Holy land: Galilee and the Golan Heights in the second and third century with a basilica plan, colonnade on three sides of the hall, the forth wall oriented towards Jerusalem and with the entrance practiced in Judea in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century with development on breadth and arrangement of an exact place for Torah' rolls and the entrance on the opposite short sides. This classification is somewhat ideal-the sistematization towards the wealth and diversity of realisations (like the classification of greek temples by the pteroma), the new discoveries fom Massada and Herodion being relvent. Anyhow, the liberty from the era seems to have been very great if we take into consideration the exuberance of the remaining figurative decorations.

The antique synagogues from Diaspora are scattered on large territories, from Euphrates to North Africa and Rome. The almost 1140 documents discourage any kind of enumeration of this type: Delos, Priene, Sardis, Apamea, Millet, Ostia, Strobi, Dura Europos, Naro etc.

In the middle Ages, the synagogue was denominated by the three activities it was gathering: prayer, the public instruction and the communitarian reunion. An exuberant differentiation is created, according to the importance and resources of the respective community, the political context of the era and the cultural and artistic climate of the area. "The basic principles inherited from Antiquity (orientation, liturgical exigencies, the secondary and complementary vocations of synagogue) are realized in the shrine-bimah axis orientated to Jerusalem"<sup>4</sup>. The bifocality arch /shrine-estrade/bimah, remains a constant into a huge, spatial and formally

decorative planimetric diversity. A separate space for women was arranged relatively late, when in Christianity and Islam it wasn't of strict actuality, because of the known evolutions. Apart from a certain homogeneity and the introverted character, the diversity comes from the Jewish opening towards the tastes and styles that dominated the ambient medium in the era. (Fig. 8)

The inexistence of the own state affects the possible identification of some ancestral architectural elements. In France, because of recent discoveries (beginning with 1976), there have been identified, in the North, buildings founded around the year 1100: for the South- they were mentioned from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. There is proof from the 18<sup>th</sup> century about the arrangement of separated places, at the superior level-for women. Characteristically for Germany, there are two types of halls: a unique-centered hall and a separate hall with a double nave, denoting affinities with the Christian monastic capitulary halls. German typology is the one that migrated east: Czech, Austria, Hungary and Transylvania. Spain remains "The Lost Paradise" for Judaism and for Islam. Between the 119 synagogues mentioned once, another 10 can be studied, with changes obtained from arrangements practiced during time. The Iberian, as the Maghrebine or oriental examples, have the problem of formal common origin, of filiations and mutual emulation of communicating from monotheism/monotheisms, of the articulation made in the Close Orient. Italy shows us the special quality of art furniture: shrine at one side and the Estrada at the other side above the entrance, the emitting of center, and the placement of woman at tribune-balcony. The Down Countries associate the basilica plan with three naves and superposed galleries over collaterals with formal expression. The similarities between synagogue-type constructions and the ordinance of Protestant temples are obvious and Judaism in Northern Europe will be developed in this direction. Poland and Russia had something specific, which generated a rich architecture from the vernacular of wood architecture to the Polish „fortress" configuration. Synagogical art from the Islamic world is a large domain of big sensibility and diversity. As something that comes from a global civilization, the Judaic architectural expression has in American and Asian regions a very exotic wealth.

"Romania is situated at the crossing of central-European German expression with the East Polish and the South one from the Islamic-Sefaradic territories"<sup>5</sup>. The Ashkenazi, Sefard, Hasidic examples as the ones coming from the Orthodox, Neological and status quo ante

rituals, combined with each other, giving richness and diversity to an apparently reduced territory. (Fig. 9)

The 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century are specially rich for synagogue art and architecture because of the evolvement of Jews, of their search for a cultural and artistic identity and the contribution they brought to art and modern research. (Fig. 10)

#### **BIBLICAL ARCHEOLOGY**

Biblical Archeology has a big contribution in this domain.

The Historical and Mystical content of these texts together with the repercussions on the evolution of the three big Monotheisms and culture, including their Art and Architecture, caused the appearance of a new discipline: Biblical Archeology.

The actual definition of Biblical Archeology sounds like this: "a theological discipline which exposes in a scientific way the natural, religious, social, economical and cultural situation of the Jewish people since origins till the year 70 A.C. (the destruction of the political Judicial state) in base of the biblical evidences and dates offered by profane History and archeological researches"<sup>6</sup>.

If Biblical Archeology is useful to theologians, Culture History, Art and Architecture History have the same benefit from it. The unwritten Archeological proofs are combined with sacral texts.

Since the beginning of the 19th century, diggings are made in the Holy Country and, in the second part of the century; there are many Biblical institutes and societies established. So, step-by-step, a Hagiographical map was remade.

Other Archeological discoveries were made in Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia, Syria, Fenicia, Arabia.

Usually, Biblical Archeology notes: geographical dates; climate, flora and fauna, territorial-administrative division; inhabitants; social institutes of state; administration and organization forms; mosaic and penal law; cult and cult places. Testimonies about synagogues are presented in: Egyptian papyruses about praying places since the 3rd century B.C.

#### **THE PERCEPTION OF SYNAGOGUES' GENESYS IN CONTEMPORARY JEWISH SOURCES.**

If we come back to the origin of the synagogue, we have to take into account the Judaic perception, in conformity to this, the synagogue would have an Architecture but especially a soul.

Historical dates shows that, if Jerusalem's' temple edification was realized with the price of destroying the other old Jewish sanctuary, the appearance of the synagogue (Psalms 51; 19)<sup>3</sup> is made

in conditions of coexistence, another period of time of sacrificial cult with the synagogue one and the fact that Jewish prayer combined the religious passion with studying.

Initially, synagogues would have been buildings with an extreme simplicity, their only piece of furniture being the cupboard where Torah' rolls were stored- Sifre Torah (some sources affirm that this one was mobile, being placed on a carrier). Soon, the synagogue was supplemented with preachers' tribune, the bimah or the almenor.

The minian, necessary for praying, was composed of a quorum of ten Jews over 13 years old, which were gathering on Saturday and in celebrating days.

After returning from the exile, even the sacrificial cult would be interrupted in the morning for a moment of praying. At the beginning, the Leviti Ma'madot delegates to Jerusalem, for the sacrificial cult, were taking part in four daily divine services, which were combining recitals of pray with the reading of passages from the Book. Later, two of them combined and remained: Shaharit (in the morning), Minha (at lunch) and Musaf (at the closing of temples' gates). Finally, two moments were fixed: the morning before leaving to work and the afternoon before the sunset; Monday and Thursday (days of market) became days when Torah was read. Hayoun and Jarasse considers that the imposing of daily prayer as an institution, was a <struggle> which ended in the 2nd century of the Christian era.

The liturgy would have been structured around the pray <Shema' Israel>, formed from three Biblical<sup>3</sup> passages: Deuteronom 6; 4-9, Deuteronom 11; 13-21 and Numerii 15; 37-41, framed by hymns in honor of the miracle of creation. The second part formed in the 18 blessings (17 are the origins and 19 in reality) birkat kohanim- Numerii 6; 24-26 and quedusha-Isaia 6; 3. The third part is tahanum. The morning prayer had three parts and the evening prayer only the Shema, initially with no tefilla.

A civilization as strong as the Judaic one could only mark (consciously or subconsciously) the cultural matrix of those involved. Our research in the domain of art history seems to argue undoubtedly that the association of progressive abstractization of plastic art from the last two centuries is influenced by the evolution of the Jewish people. Maybe to a part of the Jewish world the relevance of architecture is hard to accept (perhaps in the absence of canonic materials such as the one elaborated recently in Israel about diverse domains of modern life) in order to not disturb the uniqueness of „the book“. On the other hand, the pleasure of



architectural creation is so great that the Jewish world has dedicated itself to it in moments of peace and prosperity, and numerous Jewish architects have already taken their place in the history of architecture, so that eventual modifications depend only on the settlement of international circumstances.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The argumentation that we developed enunciates an architectural expression of monotheism. The genesis of this wasn't instantaneous or synchronized, it was a configuration that took place in time and this is why it is highlighted in the synagogue (and not in the first settlements like the tabernacle in the desert or the successive temples in Jerusalem) and in the correspondence of the three great monotheisms of today. It has been noted that monotheisms cannot remain isolated, because of the influences and communications that take place. This can be seen at the prestigious BIENNIAL<sup>8</sup> exposition in Venice in 1992-1993 ARCHITETTURA E SPAZIO SACRO NELLA MODERNITA. The return to origins has proved on many occasions in the course of art and architecture to be a valid way of architectural regeneration. A Jewish presence results from the factual assertion sustained: cultural Anthropology will be the future.

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- Committee for nomination for an international architectural award; International Planning History Society 2008.
- National Committee for Artistic and Architectural Jewish Patrimony; „ARS TRANSILVANIAE” - ROMÂNIA
- Committee for Ph.D. and academic degrees in History, History of Arts and Architecture;
- Board of experts for evaluation of National Council of Scientific Research of Ministry of National Education and of National Committee for Evaluation of titles, diplomas and certificates, evaluator CEEEX 2005 MCT;
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## Images

The following images are from the Internet (This images are in the public domain)

Fig. 1 Mesopotamian temple

Fig. 2 Egyptian and Greek temples

Fig. 3 Roman temple

Fig. 4 Tabernacle and Solom's temple

Fig. 5 Herod's temple and synagogue

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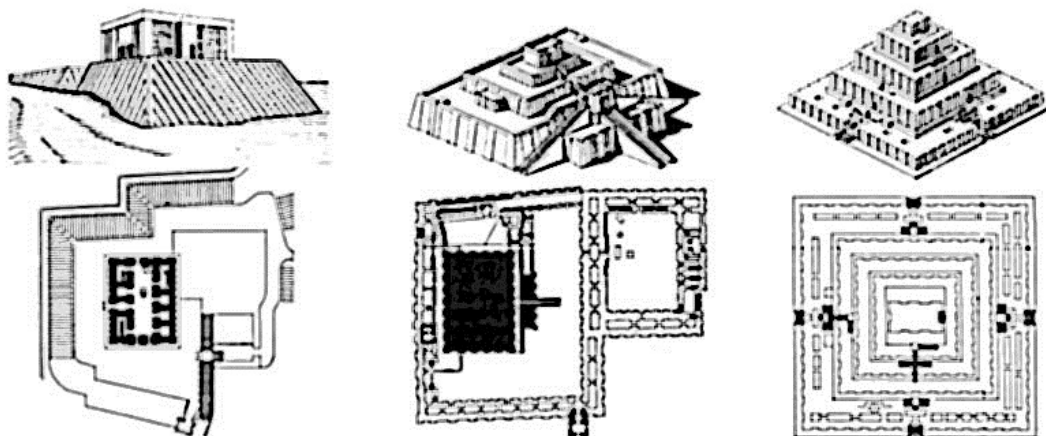


Fig. 1 Mesopotamian temple

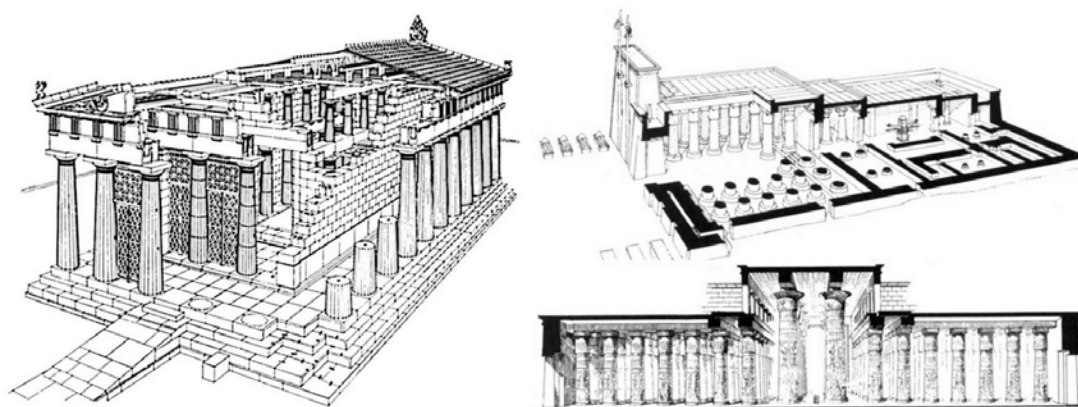


Fig. 2 Egyptian and Greek temples



Fig. 3 Roman temple

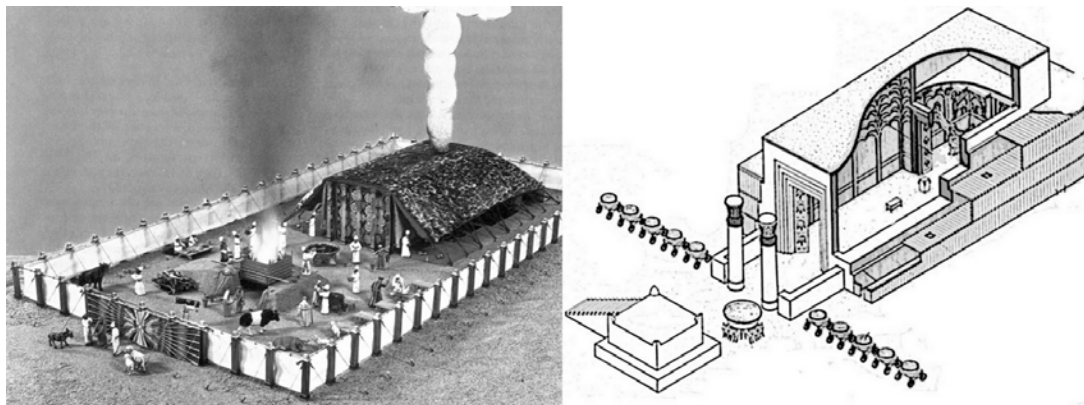


Fig. 4 Tabernacle and Solom's temple

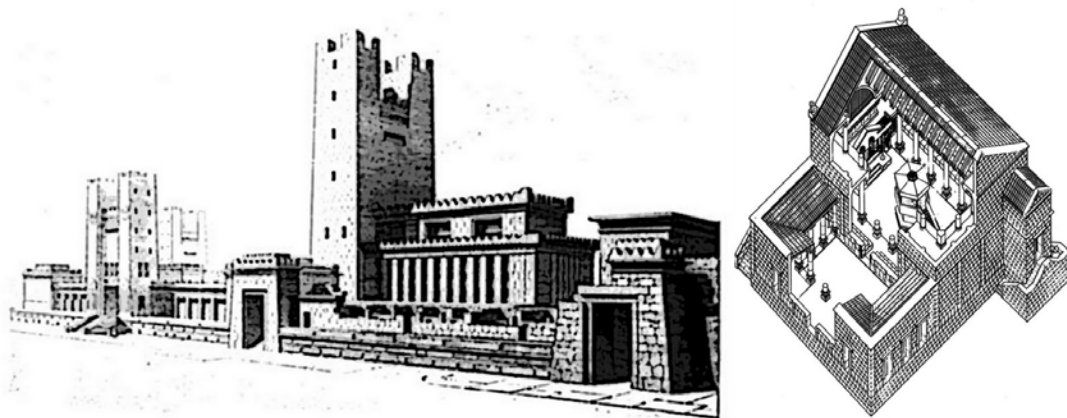


Fig. 5 Herod's temple and synagogue

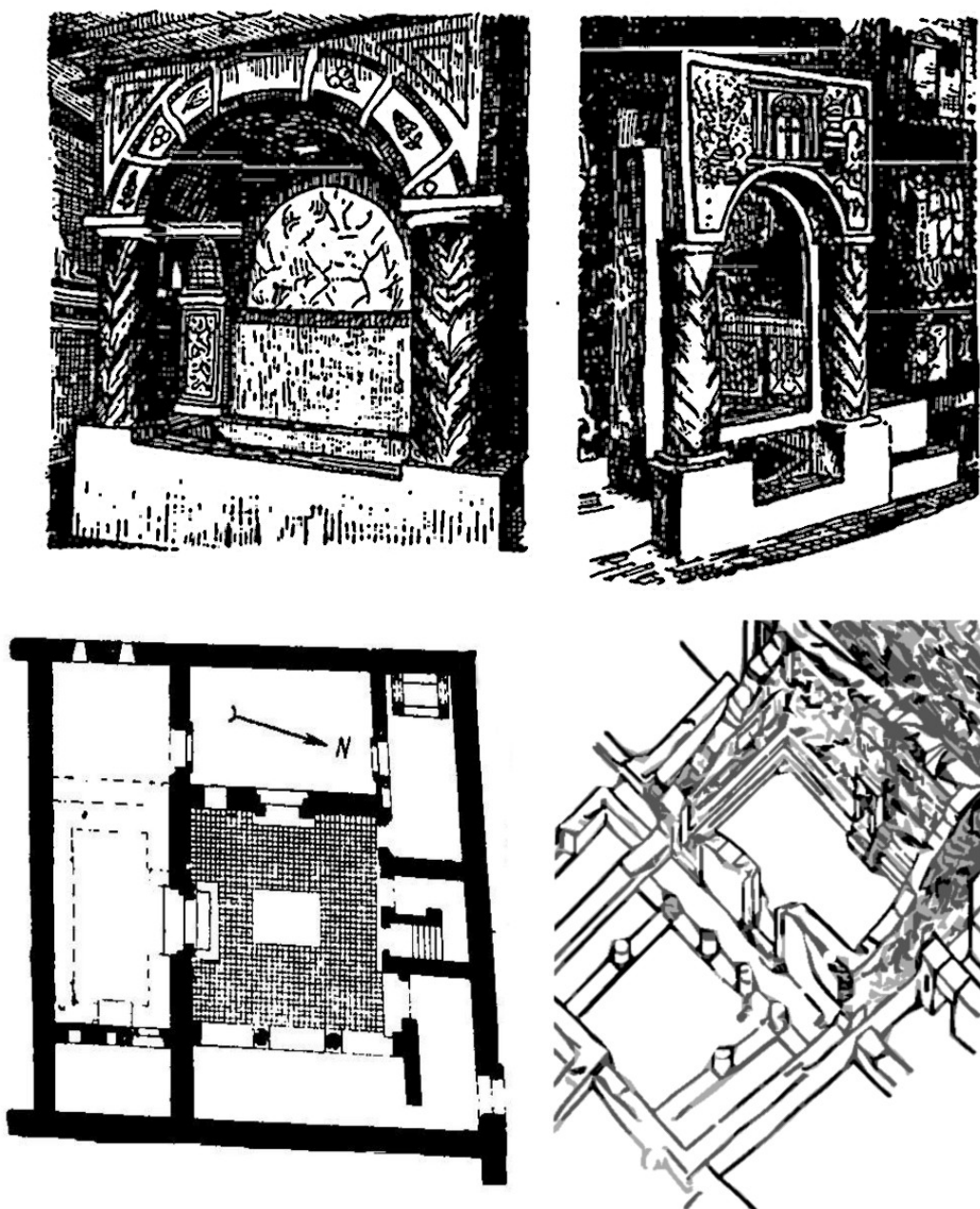


Fig. 6 Dura Europos

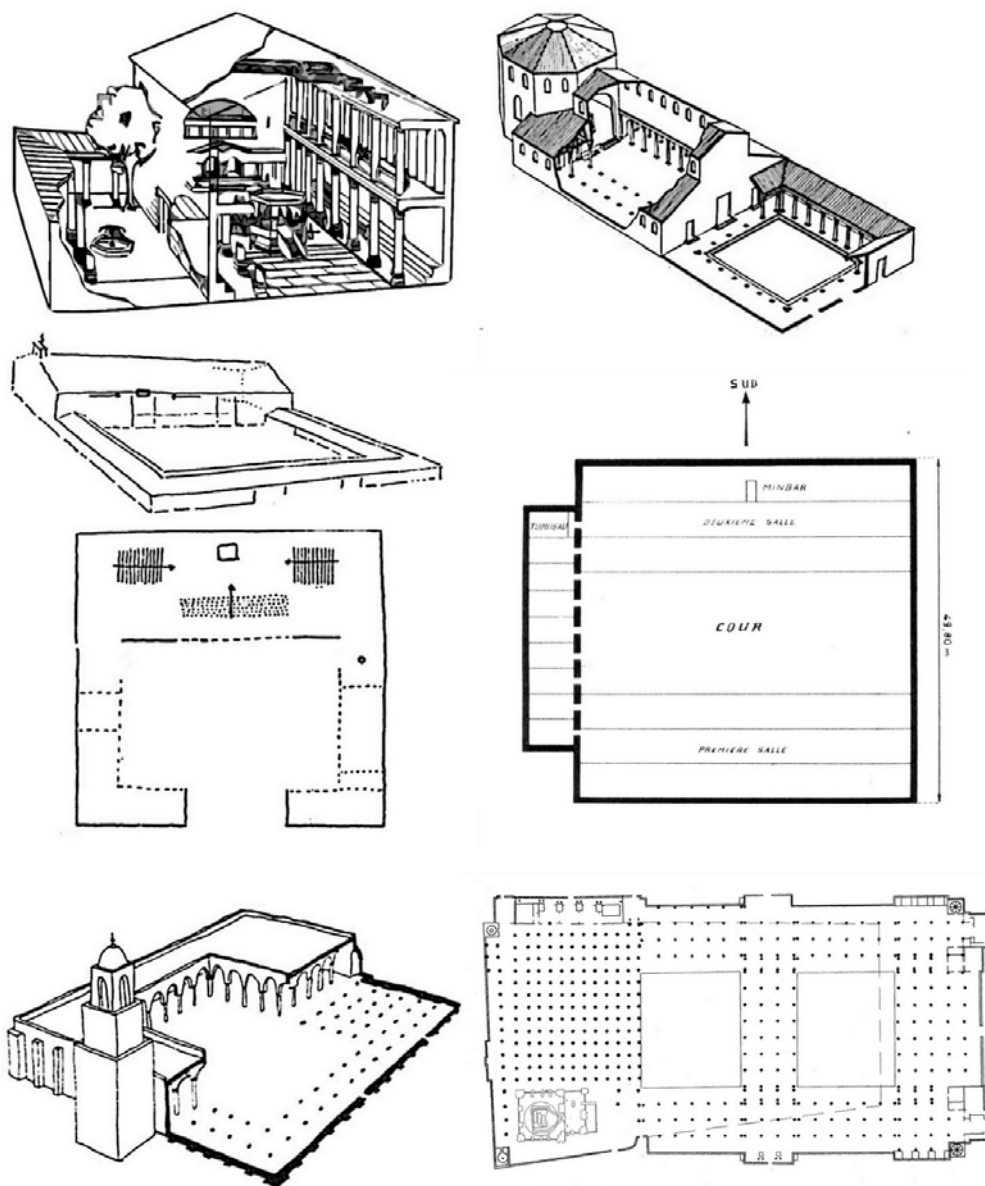


Fig. 7 Synagogue, Paleochristine church, Diaspora, Mosque





Fig. 8 Medieval synagogues in the diaspora



Fig. 9 Synagogues from Romania

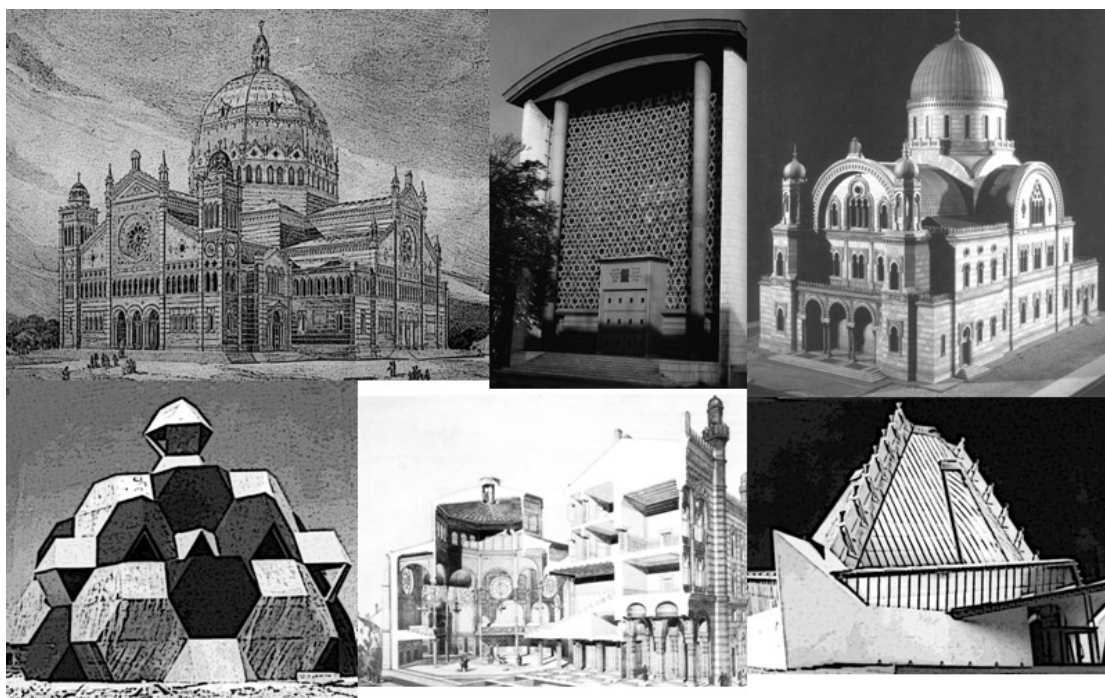


Fig. 10 Synagogues and temples from the 19th and 20th century in the international context