

ORIENTATION OF THE CHURCHES OF HILANDARA MONASTERY

The traditional rule states that a church should be oriented "towards the east" or "towards the sunrise". The rule is generalized, without mentioning the "equinoctial east" or the "equinoctial sunrise", and can therefore be interpreted differently. In an exact sense, the phrase "towards the east" means towards any point in the eastern quadrant of the horizon (NE-SE), and "towards the sunrise" means towards any point in the sector of the rising sun at a certain geographic latitude. All churches (the catholicon and 13 chapels in function) of the Hilandar monastery fulfill the first condition, while only one chapel does not fulfill the second condition. However, it can also fulfill it if the physical horizon of Hilandar is observed instead of the mathematical one (which the generalized rule allows for). Unlike the chapels within the monastery fortification, whose orientation is dictated by the position of the objects they are located in, the orientation of the chapel outside the fortification has been analyzed in the context of the geometry of the sun. In no case was the existence of the so-called patron orientation reliably established, which is not mentioned anywhere in Orthodox liturgy.

Older churches deviate from the equinoctial direction to varying degrees because their master builders oriented them towards the rising sun. This is a popular explanation that may apply to dungarees, but the real master builders did not work that way. They certainly knew how to determine the equinox direction by the gnomonic method or with the help of a sextant, and then, without breaking the generalized rule, they rotated the orientation of the church axes to adapt to the terrain configuration, type of substrate, arrangement of surrounding objects, and the requirements of the church officials responsible for supervising the construction.

Key words: orientation, orientation of churches, Hilandar monastery, patron's orientation