ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

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Great Palace in Constantinople

Περίληψη :

The Great Palace of the byzantine emperors was the first imperial palace in Constantinople. It was founded as such, supposedly by Constantine the Great, in his newly founded capital. It remained the primary imperial palace in Constantinople up to and beyond the reign of emperor Constantine VII (913-959), in whose *Book of Ceremonies* its halls are named.

Χρονολόγηση

4th-10th c.

Γεωγραφικός εντοπισμός

Constantinople, Istanbul

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1. Introduction

The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors in Constantinople was the ceremonial heart of the Byzantine Empire for a millennium, and occupied a site that is now recognized as a World Heritage precinct [Fig. 1].[1] The Great Palace has a high cultural and historical significance, exerting a significant influence on both Western European and Levantine palatine architecture, and forming a link between Imperial Roman and medieval palaces. It is, nonetheless, only partially understood. Its remains are largely buried under later structures, notably the Sultan Ahmet Mosque, and can only be interpreted through texts and old representations.

2. The Upper Palace, including the Daphne Palace

The oldest portion of the Great Palace, the Palace of Daphne, built by Constantine the Great and his successors in the 4th and 5th centuries, was a complex that is thought to have occupied the site upon which the Sultan Ahmet, or Blue, Mosque now stands. Its immediate context comprised: the Hippodrome and adjacent palaces; the Baths of Zeuxippos; the Imperial forum or Augustaion, where Justinian I erected his equestrian statue on a monumental column in the 6th century; the churches of St. Sophia, St. Eirene, and later St. John Diippion to the north-east and Sts. Sergios and Bakchos to the south-east; the Mese, or middle road, along which the *Adventus* and, later, important civic and religious processions would proceed; the library and peristyle courtyard called the 'Basilica', and the fora of Constantine and Theodosius. Further to the east, descending to the sea walls, the topography for this period is unclear in the absence of evidence, but may have comprised imperial gardens and other aristocratic villas.[2] There is a clear precedent for such imperial gardens in the layout of Roman aristocratic villas, such as that of Hadrian in Tivoli, and the Flavian palace in Rome, as well as being evidenced by the typology of the late-antique porticoed villa.[3] To the south were several other palaces, including that of Hormisdas, occupying an uncertain extent but, according to Bolognesi, extending into the area of the lower, or Sacred Palace.[4]

3. The Lower, or 'Sacred' Palace

The Great Palace was further extended, primarily to the east and south, by later emperors. It is thought to have retained a primarily ceremonial purpose in later centuries (for example at the time of writing of *De Ceremoniis* in the 10th century- see below), while the original functions of its constituent buildings were appropriated by new buildings. Thus, for example, the Chrysotriklinos, the late 6th century Throne Room of emperor Justin II, which was located in the area of the Lower Palace to the south of the Daphne, appears to have appropriated the state ceremonial functions that were previously met by certain rooms of the Daphne Palace complex- the Augustaion, possibly the first throne room from the reign of Constantine I,[5] and the Consistorion, an imperial audience chamber. It would appear that parts of the complex of the Daphne Palace, such as the Chapel of St. Stephen, the Augustaion and the Consistorion, were still in use for special ceremonial occasions during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus (r. 913 – 959), although most of the ceremonial life at that time would appear to have centred on the Chrysotriklinos, the Triklinos of Justinian, and the churches of the Theotokos of the Pharos and the Nea. However, when the emperor Nikephoros Phokas fortified the Great Palace in 969, the structures of the Daphne complex were excluded from its boundaries. They had, it would appear, by this date

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ceased to have any more than an occasional ceremonial function.[6]

4. The Palace in the Middle and Late Byzantine Periods

The Daphne Palace would seem to have thereafter fallen into gradual ruin, exacerbated by pillaging and spoliation during the period of the Latin Empire (1204 - 1261). As previously stated, by the Middle Byzantine period the imperial ceremonial had largely been displaced to the Lower (or 'Sacred') Palace. Nonetheless, in the 10th century, as attested by the ceremonies identified with the Macedonian dynasty, the Great Palace remained a site of considerable ritual significance- thus for example on his death in 959, emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus was carried on a litter to certain specific halls within the palace: Kaballarios, Dekanneakkoubita, Chalke, where his body was viewed. In the Middle Byzantine period, and notably during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118), there was a shift in significance to the Blachernae Palace, in the north-west part of the city, close by the Golden Horn, as the primary imperial residence.[7] And yet, significant new or renovated structures were constructed in the Great Palace grounds as late as the 12th century, notably the Mouchroutas, a pleasure pavilion in Arabic or Persian style, possibly with a *muqarnas* (conical) vault,[8] and thought to have been located in the south-west area of the palace. Great damage is recorded as having been inflicted on the area during the sack by the IV Crusade in 1204, and subsequent Latin occupation.[9]

5. The Palace Site in the Ottoman Period

By the time of the fall of the city to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, after the ramparts adjacent to the Blachernae gate had been breached by 'modern' cannon fire, all but a few structures of the Great Palace had become uninhabited ruins. The site later became appropriated for the construction of a number of Ottoman mansions, which themselves often fell victim to the periodic fires that plagued this region of Constantinople. However the major transformation of the area occurred with the construction of the Sultan Ahmet Mosque [10] between 1609 and 1616 during the reign of the eponymous sultan. The mosque and its dependent buildings were built over the remains of the Upper Palace, and their heritage and cultural and religious significance has ensured that no comprehensive archaeological survey of this site has been possible. Furthermore, it is probable that the Sultan Ahmet complex was constructed using the bricks stones and columns of the Great Palace and adjacent Senate house, thus for the most part removing the portion of the structures above ground level.

6. The Palace Site in the Modern Period

A major fire in the early 20th century cleared much of the mosque's adjacent district to the south and east of its houses, and permitted the only major archaeological survey to take place, resulting in the excavation of the Mosaic Peristyle, to the south-east of Sultan Ahmet Camii. However, no definitive conclusion has been reached as to the identity and interrelationship of these finds to the larger palace complex. More recent, but largely unpublished, excavations have been carried out by Turkish archaeologists since the 1950s,[11] the most recent having possibly identified the site of the late Roman senate house and the *Pittakia*, a building complex used variously as an administrative complex and prison.[12]

7. Scholarship on the Great Palace

Philological and archaeological research into the Great Palace began in the early 19th century with the rigorous translation and historical analysis of surviving manuscripts. Mango (1959) has cited the monograph by Jules Labarte of 1861 as the first systematic attempt to reconstruct the topography of the palace on the basis of the Book of Ceremonies.[13] [Fig. 2] Among the numerous subsequent attempts, the reconstruction by Jean Ebersolt, of 1910, in collaboration with the architect A.D. Thiers [Fig. 3] was informed both by knowledge of Byzantine architecture, and his study of the Palace of Diocletian at Split.[14] Ebersolt's layout was further revised by Albert Vogt in 1935.[15] [Fig. 4] Vogt included a revised plan (signed by 'Archte D.P.L.G.') to accompany his partial translation of *De Ceremoniis*. (1934, see below) Rodolphe Guilland (1969)[16] published a highly significant revision of Ebersolt's topographical study that took into account more recent archaeological evidence, without however attempting his own

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reconstruction of the complex, instead including a plan by Miranda. [Fig. 6] Raymond Janin (1964)[17] produced a major topographical work on the topography of Byzantine Constantinople. The architect Miranda published various speculative plans [1955, 1973, 1983] that attempted to reconcile recorded accounts of the Palace with archaeological remains (1965, 1973).[18] His attempts were summarily rejected by Mango.[19] However recent topographical studies by Müller-Wiener (1977), Mango (1959, 1990, 1995, 1997, 2000), Kosteneç (1998, 1999 & 2004), Bolognesi and Bardill have provided additional evidence to the architectural research, to be undertaken into the layout of the Palace.[20]

8. The Book of Ceremonies

The most important textual source for the Great Palace is the *Book of Ceremonies* compiled by, or for, the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus in the mid-10th century. It is a compilation of archaic and contemporary court ceremonial.[21] Explication of the date and provenance of its itineraries provides the most direct evidence for the spatial and functional relationship of the various palace buildings, and was used by Ebersolt, Vogt, Guilland, and current scholars to devise their topographies. Dr. J.M. Featherstone has written several papers on the provenance and dating of the various sections of the book.[22] These important studies offer the potential for various hypotheses on the palace layout to be spatially tested. This is relevant in the context of current proposals to create an archaeological park tracing the site of the Palace.[23]

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1. The site comprises roughly the area of modern-day Sultanahmet on the European side of Istanbul.

2. E. Bolognesi makes reference to the incorporation, by Justinian II of the Palace of Marina, the unmarried daughter of emperor Arcadius (r. 395-408), a complex erected in the early 5th c., and the site which was to become the Tzykanisterion at the end of the 7th or early 8th century. The Palace housed the marriage of the daughter of emperor Phokas to one of his generals, Priscus, in circa 605. Bolognesi, E., "Il Gran Palazzo," in *Bizantinistica: Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi, Serie Seconda Anno II* (2000), p. 223. See also Magdalino, P., "The Bath of Leo the Wise," in Moffatt A. (ed.), *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning* (Canberra 1984), pp. 225-40; Magdalino, P., "The Bath of Leo the Wise and the 'Macedonian Renaissance' Revisited: Topography, Iconography, Ceremonial, Ideology," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 42* (1988), pp. 97-118; and Mango, C., "The Palace of Marina, the Poet Palladas and the Bath of Leo VI," in *Ευφρόσυνον: Αφιέρωμα στον Μανώλη Χατζηδάκη* 1, (Αθήνα 1991), pp. 321-30. For textual evidence for construction of imperial villas designed to provide a landscape prospect, see the reference to a villa and garden owned by the Emperor Julian in Maguire, H., "Gardens and Parks in Constantinople," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 54* (2000), p. 262.

3. See for example villas cited by Swoboda, K.M., *Römische und Romanische Paläste* (Vienna 1919), pp. 48-52.

4. Bolognesi, E., *Il Gran Palazzo degli Imperatori di Bisanzio*, Associazione Palatina Istanbul (Istanbul 2000), pp. 221-222.

5. The argument for the Augusteum having performed this role derives from the typological tradition of the major apsidal reception hall having been located symmetrically at the head of a symmetrical configuration of palace structures. This can be seen clearly in the example of the aristocratic late-antique villa at Piazza Armerina, but also in the Flavian Palace, where the *aula regia* is similarly configured as the central room in the public facade of the palace.

6. Featherstone, J.M.-Bolognesi, E., "The Boundaries of the Palace: *De Ceremoniis* II, 13," *Travaux et Mémoires 14 [=Mélanges Gilbert Dagron]* (2002), pp. 37-46.

7. Magdalino, P., «Medieval Constantinople: Built Environment and Urban Development», στο Laiou, A.E. (ed.), *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century* 2(Dumbarton Oaks Studies 39, Wasington D.C. 2002), p. 533.

8. Nikolaos Mesarites described the building as being the work of a 'Persian hand': "The Mouchroutas is an enormous building adjacent to the Chrysotriklinos, lying as it does on the west side of the latter. … This building is the work … of a Persian hand, by virtue of which it contains images of Persians in their different costumes. The canopy of the roof, consisting of hemispheres joined to the heaven-like ceiling, offers a variegated spectacle; closely packed angles project inward and outward; the beauty of the carving is extraordinary, and wonderful is the appearance of the cavities which, overlaid with gold, produce the effect of a rainbow more colorful than the one in the clouds. There is insatiable enjoyment here—*not hidden, but on*

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the surface [emphasis added]. Not only those who direct their gaze to these things for the first time, but those who have often done so are struck with wonder and astonishment.".See A. Heisenberg (ed.), *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, (Würzburg 1907), 44-5; trans. Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312 – 1453: Sources and Documents*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1972), 228-9. On the Arabic and Persian models for such a structure, see Grabar, O., "From Dome of Heaven to Pleasure Dome," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 49/1 (1990), pp. 15-21.

9. See Choniates, 'Description of the sack of Constantinople,' in Magoulias H.J. (transl.), *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit 1984).

10. Sultan Ahmet Mosque is commonly known as the 'Blue Mosque.'

11. For a survey of excavations carried out in 1999 to the south-east of Haghia Sophia, see Pasinli, A., "Pittakia' ve 'Magnum Palatum – Büyük Saray' Bölgesinde 1999 Yılı Çalışmaları (Eski Sultanahmet Cazaevi Bahçesi)" *11. Müze Çalışmaları Ve Kurtama Kazıları Sempozyumu* (2001), pp. 41-62.

12. Pasinli, A., "La Zona Settentrionale del Gran Palazzo: Interventi di Scavo il Giardino della Vecchia Prigione di Sultanahmet," in Bolognesi, E. (ed.), *Il Gran Palazzo degli Imperatori di Bisanzio*, Associazione Palatina Istanbul (Istanbul 2000). See also by the same author, «Pittakia' ve 'Magnum Palatum – Büyük Saray' Bölgesinde 1999 Yılı Çalışmaları (Eski Sultanahmet Cazaevi Bahçesi),» *11. Müze Çalışmaları Ve Kurtama Kazıları Sempozyumu* (2001), pp. 41-62.

13. Labarte, J., *Le Palais imperial de Constantinople et ses abords au dixième siécle* (Paris, 1861), cited by Mango, C., *The Brazen House* (Copenhagen1959), p. 14 and ff.

14. Ebersolt, J., *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des Cérémonies* (Paris 1910).

15. Ebersolt, J., *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des Cérémonies* (Paris 1910).

16. Guilland, R., *Études topographiques de Constantinople byzantine* 1-2, (Berlin - Amsterdam 1969).

17. Janin, R., *Constantinople byzantine. Développement urbain et répertoire topographique* (Paris 1964).

18. Miranda, S., *Le palais des empereurs byzantins* (Mexico City 1965).

19. Mango, C., *The Brazen House* (Kopenhagen 1959), p. 17: "A popular book on the Palace of Constantinople lately published in Mexico need not detain us."

20. (Correspondence of Professor Mango with author, 1999.)

21. The principal translations of the Book of Ceremonies are Reiske, *De Ceremoniis Aulae Byzantinae*, (Bonn 1829, 1830) (translated into Latin) and Vogt, *Le Livre des Cérémonies* (Paris 1939) (translated into French). For current scholarship. See also Featherstone, J.M., 'Further Remarks on the *De Cerimoniis*,' *Byzantinische Zeitschrift 97 (*2004), pp. 113-121, for an analysis of the composition and formation of *De Ceremoniis*. Dr. Ann Moffatt, of the Australian National University, is currently completing an annotated English translation of the two surviving manuscripts of this work.

22. Feathersone J. M., «The Great Palace as Reflected in the *De Ceremoniis*,» in Bauer, F.A. (ed.), *Visualidierungen von Herrschaft: Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen- Gestalt und Zeremoniell* (BYZAS 5, Istanbul 2006), pp. 47-61.

23. The proposal is stated to be a collaboration between the Associazione Palatina, Istanbul, the University of Istanbul, the Technical University of Yildiz in Istanbul, and the University of Bologna. The publication was produced in association with the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul. Bolognesi,E., *Il Gran Palazzo degli Imperatori di Bisanzio,* Associazione Palatina Istanbul (Istanbul 2000), p. 102.

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Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/arthistory/faculty/Klein/Sacred-Relics-and-Imperial-Ceremonies.pdf

Γλωσσάριο :

portico

A porch or a structure consisting of a roof supported by columns or pillars, leading to the entrance of a building.

Συγγραφή : Westbrook Nigel (21/12/2007)
Για παραπομπή : Westbrook Nigel , "Great Palace in Constantinople", 2007, Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Μείζονος Ελληνισμού, Κωνσταντινούπολη
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Παραθέματα

The Great Palace mosaics

The Great Palace Museum gives us a glimpse of the sheer sumptuousness lavished on the imperial palace. Thanks to its superior artistic quality and rich imagery, the mosaic [with mythological, hunting and circus scenes] unearthed at Sultanahmet surely ranks among the most spectacular archaeological finds of the century. Spreading over 1872 m^2, the Palace mosaic was the largest and most beautiful landscape mosaic in Antiquity, its size and artistic quality comparable to the wall mosaic of the Ommayad Mosque in Damascus. Nowhere in the world of Late Antiquity can we find a building with a tesselated pavement of similar size and perfection of workmanship.
[...] A masterpiece of secular decorative art in Late Antique Constantinople, it adorned one of the main wings of the imperial Palace in the vicinity of the Chtysotriclinium.
The ornamental pavement, laid in Justinian's day, suffered severe damage from the many structural changes made to the Palace building over the centuries. Excavations in our century discovered just 250 m^2 of the pavement in the SW, NW and NE halls of the peristylar court underneath a marble floor added at a later date. The mosaic was brought to light only in fragments and sections, which together make up about $1/7^{th}$ or $1/8^{th}$ of the original expanse, but these suffice to convince us that it is one of the most magnificent compositions known to us from antique mosaic art. In spite of its incomplete state, the visible area gives visitors an idea of the grandiose design of this masterpiece of early Byzantine palace decoration. The continuous section in the north-eastern hall,

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back on display *in situ* after its successful restoration, provides an excellent perception of the technical, artistic and iconographical details of the tesselated pavement, even though it is not sufficient to allow reconstructing the entire composition.
The SW and NW halls of the peristylar court yielded only fragments and small connecting sections of some 70 m^2 in size, but at the NE hall (today a modern excavation museum) the British scientists discovered a damaged but basically continuous section of 170 to 180 m^2.

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