ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

**Συγγραφή :** Bogdanović Jelena (3/9/2008)

**Για παραπομπή :** Bogdanović Jelena , "Chalke Gate (Entrance of Great Palace)", 2008, Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Μείζονος Ελληνισμού, Κωνσταντινούπολη
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=12432>

# Chalke Gate (Entrance of Great Palace)

## Περίληψη :

Chalke (Bronze) Gate, rendered from Greek “Brazen House”, was the main vestibule of the Great Palace, so named either for bronze tiles of its roof or for its bronze doors. A famous icon of Christ was placed over the doors. Now lost, this imperial Gate originally facing the Augustaion, south of Hagia Sophia, was one of the most important architectural symbols of Constantinople.

## Χρονολόγηση

early 6th c. - 19th c.

## Γεωγραφικός εντοπισμός

Constantinople

## Τοπογραφικός εντοπισμός

Great Palace, south of Hagia Sophia, facing Augustaion

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### 1. History

Chalke Gate, literary meaning Copper or Bronze Gate and elegantly rendered from Greek “Brazen House”, was the main entrance vestibule of the Great Palace of Constantinople.[1] The Chalke got its descriptive name most likely either for gilded bronze tiles of its roof or for its bronze door valves.[2] The Chalke was one of the most important architectural and symbolic imperial structures around the Augustaion, the main public space in medieval Constantinople.[3] Now lost, a portico connected the Chalke with the Holy Well, a dependence of Hagia Sophia (Fig. 1).

Turbulent history of the ceremonial Chalke Gate, with a famous image of Christ over its doors, known as icon of Christ Chalkites, entails imperial politics. The Chalke not only symbolized but was also the actual place of important events in Byzantine history, such as the declarations of war on the enemy, imperial triumphal processions after military victories, the solemn procession of emperors’ remains during ceremonial burial cortege, the public proskynesis in front of the icon of Christ Chalkites before the Emperor entered the Sacred Palace, as well as the removals and re-installations of the very same icon and declarations of imperial Iconoclasm or resturation of Orthodoxy.[4]

Architect Aitherios built the first main entrance to the imperial palace under the rule of Emperor Anastasios I (r. 491-518).[5] Burnt down during the Nika riot in 532, the imperial vestibule was rebuilt by Emperor Justinian I (r. 527-565).[6] By the 7th and 8th centuries, the Chalke or its dependences became a prison.[7] Emperor Basil I (r. 867-886) repaired the building and turned it into law court.[8] A small toponymous chapel dedicated to Christ Chalkites was attached to the Chalke by Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920-944). When Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r.963-969) enclosed the Great Palace by less extensive walls, the Chalke Gate lost its importance as a main entrance. In ca. 972, Emperor John I Tzimiskes (r. 969-976) reconstructed the chapel of Christ Chalkites on a larger scale, endowed it with important relics and was buried there himself.[9] The two-storey, centrally planned chapel of Christ Chalkites, situated on the elevated platform, was built in accordance with ancient building tradition of imperial mausolea.[10] The Chalke itself was stripped of its bronze doors by Isaac II Angelos during his first tenure (r. 1185-1195, 1203-1204) and was not mentioned as such in Byzantine sources after the 1200s.[11] Yet, meticulous Russian pilgrims of the 14th and 15th centuries did mention the Chalke Gate of the Imperial Palace across the Augustaion plaza.[12] By that time known as Arslanhane, the ruins of the chapel, later serving as a menagerie, are recorded several times, until its final destruction in the 19th century.[13] The 18th-century drawings, etchings and plans show the building some 100 m south of Hagia Sophia. However, the exact spatial relation between the church of Christ Chalkites and the Chalke, remains unclear and unverified.[14]

### 2. Appearance of the monument

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Though today lost, the Chalke Gate has been vividly described by Procopios, as it was built by Justinian; this description reveals its importance for understanding 6th-c. monumental architecture in Constantinople.[15] Justinian reconstructed the Chalke Gate as a free-standing building, rectangular in ground plan, with four engaged piers supporting the central dome (Fig. 2). The building was crowned by a dome on pendentives, that rested on the arches of four shallow barrel vaults. To the east and west, these arches sprang from piers projecting inward; to the north and south, from the backs of lower, narrow barrel vaults which linked the sides of the piers to the outer walls. As such, the Chalke essentially evolved from a domed cross unit and formed a domical square bay, which became a recognizable modular unit, standardized in Justinian's architecture.[16]

Little is known about the exterior of the Chalke under Justinian, but his official historian Procopios offers an account of its monumental decoration.[17] Up to the cornice level, the interior was reveted in multicolored marble and from the cornice level up, all curved surfaces were covered in mosaics. The mosaics represented Justinian's victories over the Goths and Vandals, a theme of imperial victory associated with triumphal arches from the Roman Imperial tradition. Centrally represented, Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora were surrounded by military dignitaries and senators. Belisarius, a general who actually led and won these victories over the Goths and Vandals, was shown leading his army, in a gesture of offering Justinian conquered kingdoms and war spoils.

### 3. The Christ Chalkites icon

As the Byzantines closely associated imperial triumphs with the triumph of Orthodoxy, the central theme on the exterior of the Chalke was the image of the Lord. The famous icon of Christ of the Chalke was set above the main doors (cf. Fig. 3).[18] The origins of the icon are obscure, since Procopios does not speak of it, and yet it must have been on the façade by the time of Emperor Maurice (r. 582-602).[19] Its removal by Emperor Leo III sometime during his reign, between 726 and 730, was the first public act of imperial Iconoclasm.[20] The icon was restored by Empress Eirene in ca. 787, but was once again removed by another Iconoclast emperor, Leo V (r. 813-820) and replaced by a cross.[21] At the time certain pious women died while trying to protect the icon of Christ from the Chalke.[22] The incident was later conflated with the martyrdoms of a certain patrician Mary and of the legendary saint, nun Theodosia of Constantinople, who is depicted in the famous image of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, with the icon of Christ Chalkites, here showing Christ in bust (Fig. 4).[23] Soon after the final triumph of Orthodoxy in 843, the iconodule painter, monk Lazaros, whose hands were mutilated after being tortured during iconoclastic persecutions in Constantinople, set up again the icon on the Chalke.[24] However, this new image of full-length Christ Chalkites standing was this time set in mosaic in contrast to the previous detachable ones (cf. Fig. 3).[25] The history of the image of Christ Chalkites reveals not only the iconophile attitudes in Constantinople, but also the symbolism of the publicly displayed icon of Christ above imperial gates for the Christian Orthodox beliefs.

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3. Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), ch.1; Janin, R., *Constantinople byzantine. Développement urbain et répertoire topographique* (Paris $^{2}$1964), pp. 110-111, 328, with references to primary sources.

4. Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), p. 21 with references to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. J. J. Reiske (CSHB, Bonn 1829-40), p. 276, 458 and Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker (CSHB, Bonn 1838), p. 467.

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6. Procopios, *Persian War* I. xxiv. 47, trans. H.B. Dewing, *Procopios, vol. 1* (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass. 1968) ; Procopios, *Buildings* I. x, trans. H.B. Dewing, *Procopios, vol. 7* (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass. 1979).

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8. Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), p. 34 with references to Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. I Bekker (CSHB, Bonn 1838), pp. 259-60; George Cedrenos, *Compendium Historiarum* 2, ed. I. Bekker (CSHB, Bonn 1838), p. 204.

9. Janin, R., *La géographie écclesiastique de l'Empire byzantin* I: *Le siège de Constantinople et le Patriarchat Oecuménique*, iii: *Les églises et les monastères* (Paris $^{2}$1969), pp. 529-530; Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), ch. V. Recently Vassilaki, M., "Bleeding Icon", in Eastmond, A.–James, L. (ed.), *Icon and Word, The Power of Images in Byzantium* (Aldershot 2003) p. 125, with reference to a bleeding icon among the relics in the chapel.

10. On the possibility that the church was a tetraconch see Mathews, T.F. and Mango, C., "Observations on the Church of Panagia Kamariotissa on Heybeliada (Chalke), Istanbul with a Note on Panagia Kamariotissa and Some Imperial Foundations of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries at Constantinople," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973), p. 132.

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12. Majeska, G., "Russian Pilgrims in Constantinople," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002), pp. 93-108.

13. C. Mango summarizes the most important references for the chapel of Christ Chalkites in *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), pp. 149ff. An old engraving of the chapel was published by Eyice, S., " 'Arslanhane' ve çevresinin arkeolojisi," *İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri Yzlliği*, 11/12 (1964), pl. VII.

14. See Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), p. 154, who proposes that the church was left to the Chalke, though a possibility that the chapel topped the Chalke has been also suggested.

15. Procopios, *Buildings*, I.x.12-15, trans. H.B. Dewing, *Procopios, vol. 7* (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass. 1979).

16. Krautheimer, R., (with S. Ćurčić), *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (New Haven – London $^{4}$1986), pp. 238-242.

17. Procopius, *Buildings*, I.x.15-25, trans. H.B. Dewing, *Procopios, vol. 7* (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass. 1979). Other sources provide references to sculptures representing gorgon heads and horses brought from Ephesus, and to a sculpture of a Hellenistic ruler, gilded in bronze. Their number, meaning and arrangement within the Chalke is rather uncertain. More in Basset, S., *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge 2004), p. 186, with references to Cameron, A. – Herrin, J. (eds), *Constantinople in the early eighth century: the Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai* (Leiden 1984), 44a, 78 and Pseudo-Codinos, *Patria Constantinopoleos*, ed. T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* 2 (Leipzig 1907; repr. 1975), pp. 164-166.

18. The iconography of Christ Chalkites, inscribed as such in a number of Byzantine medals, seals, coins, as well in the Deësis mosaic in the inner narthex of the Chora and in heavily damaged fresco from the Boyana church, Bulgaria, all dated from the 11$^{th}$ to the 14$^{th}$ c., is consistent in representing a bearded Christ standing tall on a footstool. More in Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), pp. 135-142.

19. Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959) pp. 108-112, with references to Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. I Bekker (CSHB, Bonn 1838), p. 285, and later authors.

20. Mango, C., "Historical Introduction" in Bryer, A. and Herrin, J. (eds), *Iconoclasm*. Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine

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21. Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), pp. 84, 122, with reference to Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker (CSHB, Bonn 1838), pp. 18-21 and other authors who describe how on the first day of his reign in 813, Leo V, before he entered the Great Palace, kneeled on the porphyry omphalos in front of the gates and the icon of Christ Chalkites. This proskynesis may have been an established part of the imperial ceremonial, especially considering that the very same emperor re-launched Iconoclasm two years later.

22. Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), p. 115.

23. On the image of Christ Chalkites and its significance for pre-Iconoclastic imagery of Christ see: Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), pp. 112-125; Cormack, R. and Hawkins, E. J. W., "The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul: The Rooms above the Southwest Vestibule and Ramp," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977), p. 208; Breckenridge, J.D., "The Iconoclasts' Image of Christ," *Gesta* 11.2 (1972), pp. 3-8; Buchsel, M., "Das Christusportrat am Scheideweg des Ikonoklastenstreits im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 25 (1998), pp. 7-52. Some scholars suggest that the image of Christ in the lunette of the tetrapylon structure on the so-called Trier ivory, also refer to Christ Chalkites: Spain, S., "The Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977), pp. 279-304; Holum, K.G. and Vikan, G., "The Trier Ivory, 'Adventus' Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979), pp. 113-133.

24. Mango, C., *The Brazen House; a study of the vestibule of the imperial palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), pp. 125-126, with references and further discussion on the role of monk Lazarus, whose hands were burnt with red-hot iron during torture, and thus presumably preventing him from making images, but whom Byzantine sources praised for painting miraculous icons and completing the mosaics of the Virgin and Child, and two archangels in the apse of Haghia Sophia.

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## Δικτυογραφία :

Chalke (Gate of the Great Palace)

http://www.byzantium1200.com/chalke.html

## Γλωσσάριο :

**barrel-vault**

vaulted, semi-cylindrical construction used often as roof.

**Christ Chalkites**

Iconographic type of Christ, named after the icon allegedly placed over the doors of the Chalke Gate of the Great Palace in Constantinople. Christ is depicted frontal, with the facial traits of a Pantocrator, standing on a footstool. By the 13$^{th}$-14$^{th}$ centuries, any representation of Christ standing must have been called Christ Chalkites.

**pendentive dome**

A circular small dome without a drum on pendentives, which is used to cover small compartments in Byzantine architecture. When lowered the small dome is called also callote.

**triumphal arch**

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(Rom.:) A structure in the shape of a monumental archway, built to celebrate the victory of a Roman general or Emperor.
(Byz. Archit.) The arch formed above the Horaia Pyle (Royal Door), which frames the curve of the conch of the apse and separates the bema from the nave.

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## Παραθέματα

Anastasios' epigram on the first monumental Chalke Gate

Οἶκος Ἀναστασίοιο τυραννοφόνου βασιλῆος
μοῦνος ὑπερτέλλω πανυπείροχος ἄστεσι γαίης,
θαῦμα φέρων πάντεσσιν, ἐπεὶ κοσμήτορες ἔργων,
ὕψος ὁμοῦ μῆκός τε καὶ ἄπλετον εὖρος ἰδόντες,
ἀσκεπὲς ἐφράσσαντο πελώριον ἔργον ἐᾶσαι·
ἀλλὰ πολυκμήτοιο λαχὼν πρεσβήια τέχνης
Αἰθέριος πολύιδρις ἐμὴν τεχνήσατο μορφήν,
ἀχράντῳ βασιλῆι φέρων πρωτάγρια μόχθων.
ἔνθεν ἀπειρέσιον μέγεθος περὶ παντὶ τιταίνων
Αὐσονίης νίκησα βοώμενα θαύματα γαίης.
εἶξον ἀρειοτέροισι, χάρις Καπετωλίδος αὐλῆς,
εἰ καὶ χαλκείων ὀρόφων ἀμαρύγματα πέμπεις·
κρύψον ἀμετρήτων μεγάρων στεινούμενον αὐλαῖς,
Πέργαμε, φαιδρὸν ἄγαλμα τεόν, Ῥουφίνιον ἄλσος·
μηδὲ τανυπλεύροισιν ἀρηρότα, Κύζικε, πέτροις

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Ἀδριανοῦ βασιλῆος ἀμεμφέα νηὸν ἀείσεις.
οὔ μοι Πυραμίδων ἰκέλη κρίσις οὐδὲ Κολοσσοῦ
οὐδὲ Φάρου· μεγάλην μοῦνος δ' ὑπερέδραμον αἴγλην.
αὐτὸς ἐμὸς σκηπτοῦχος Ἰσαυροφόνον μετὰ νίκην
χρυσοφαές με τέλεσσεν ἐδέθλιον Ἠριγενείης
πάντῃ τετραπόρων ἀνέμων πεπετασμένον αὔραις.

*Anthologia graeca*, 3, ed. H. Beckby (Munich $^{2}$1968), 9:656.

Restoration of the Chalke by Justinian I

τοσοῦτον δὲ μόνον ἔν γε τῷ παρόντι γεγράψεται, ὡς τῶν βασιλείων τά τε προπύλαια καὶ ἡ καλουμένη Χαλκῆ μέχρι ἐς τὸν Ἄρεως καλούμενον οἶκον [...] τούτου δὴ ἔργα τοῦ βασιλέως τυγχάνει ὄντα.

Prokopios, *Buildings*, I. 10.3, trans. H.B. Dewing, *Procopius*, *vol. 7: Buildings*, (Loeb Classical Libraby, Cambridge, Mass. and London 1979).