ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

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# Boğdan Sarayı

## Summary :

Bogdan Sarayı is located in the northwestern part of Constantinople and its Byzantine name is uknown. Today in ruinous condition, it was originally a small, two-storied, single-apse building of the Palaiologan era, evidently part of a larger foundation. The lower story would have been used for burials. In the early 15th century, Bogdan Sarayı became the private chapel of the Moldavian embassy to the Sublime Port.

## Date

late 13th - early 14th c. (?)

## Geographical Location

Constantinople, Istanbul

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### 1. Introduction

Boğdan Sarayı is located in the northwestern part of the city, in proximity to a series of other Byzantine monuments such as the monastery of Chora, Odalar Camii, and Kefeli Mescidi. The building has almost disappeared today and our knowledge of it comes from earlier, unfortunately incomplete studies.

### 2. Architecture and History

The most complete survey was conducted by Van Millingen, who visited the site when the chapel was still relatively intact.[1] Boğdan Sarayı was a small, two-storied, single-apse building, measuring 8.80 x 3.70 m. Van Millingen reported at least four layers of fresco decoration in the interior. The shallow dome evident in Paspates' lithograph and in early photographs was clearly a post-Byzantine alteration. A timber roof might have originally covered the building.

An unpublished German excavation conducted in the lower story during World War I uncovered three sarcophagi and an inscription.[2] These finds (which were never recorded) indicate that Boğdan Sarayı was originally a funerary chapel. However, the structure's original context remains unknown.

Eyice dated the building to the Palaiologan period.[3] This dating is corroborated by the masonry, which consisted of alternating bands of ashlar and bricks, typical of Palaiologan construction. Similarly characteristic of this era was the multifaceted articulation of the building's spacious singular apse.

Mordtmann has identified Boğdan Sarayı as belonging to the monastery of St. John the Baptist in Petra,[4] an opinion shared by Van Millingen. This identification, however, was rejected by Janin.[5] The current name derives from the fact that in the early 16th century the chapel was part of the Moldavian (Turk. Boğdan) embassy to the Sublime Port and was dedicated to St. Nicholas.[6] Van Millingen found evidence in the southeastern wall of the building that the chapel was originally attached to the main embassy house. The latter was destroyed in the catastrophic fire of 1784.

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1. Van Millingen, A., *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople* (London 1912), pp. 280-287.

2. Papadopulos, M., "Note sur quelques découvertes récentes faites à Constantinople," *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Comptes rendus* (1920), p. 63.

3. Eyice S., *Son Devir Bizans Mimarisi* Eyice (Istanbul 1963), pp. 32-34.

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4. Mordtmann, A.J., *Esquisse topographique de Constantinople* (Lille 1892), p. 7.

5. Janin, R., *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin, I: Le siège Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique, 3: Les églises et les monastères* (Paris $^{2}$1969), p. 371.

6. Janin, R., *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin, I: Le siège Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique, 3: Les églises et les monastères* (Paris $^{2}$1969), p. 371.

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## Glossary :

- **apse**

An arched srtucture or a semi-circular end of a wall. In byzantine architecture it means the semicircular, usually barrel-vaulted, niche at the east end of a basilica. The side aisles of a basilica may also end in an apse, but it is always in the central apse where the altar is placed. It was separated from the main church by a barrier, the templon, or the iconostasis. Its ground plan on the external side could be semicircular, rectangular or polygonal.

- **dome**

A characteristic element of Byzantine architecture. The dome is a hemispherical vault on a circular wall (drum) usually pierced by windows. The domed church emerges in the Early Byzantine years and its various types gradually prevail, while they are expanded in the Balkans and in Russia.