



Summary :

The palace of Boukoleon was composed of two buildings and was lying on the seashore of the Sea of Marmara. Its erection is connected with Theodosios II (408-450), without though any archaeological remains of that period being preserved. Thereafter, its rebuilding was undertaken by Theophilos (829-842) and Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969). This particular palace functioned as mansion and only the upper floor was habitable, while the lower part was used as barracks or encampment for sailors.

Date

During the reign of Theophilos (829-842)

Geographical Location

Constantinople

Names

Topographical Location

South of the Great Palace, east of the church of Saints Sergios and Bakchos at Constantinople. Today few of its archaeological remains are still preserved.

1. Introduction

1.1. Location and etymology of the name of the palace of Boukoleon

The palace of Boukoleon was lying at Constantinople, on the seashore of the Sea of [Marmara](#), south of the [Great Palace](#), east of the church of [Saints Sergios and Bakchos](#)¹ ([fig. 1, 11](#)).² Later, under [Nikephoros II Phokas](#) (963-969), the palace of Boukoleon incorporated a part of the Great Palace.³ Its name is connected with a marble stone composition that was situated on the dock of the [harbor](#) and depicted an ox (=gr. bous) and a lion (=gr. leon).⁴

1.2. History of the research

The first foundations of a systematic research for this monument were laid during the last decades of the 19th century. Paspates, within the framework of a research of Constantinople's topography and especially of the palaces, he was referred to the palace of Boukoleon.⁵ Later, Millingen studied the palace by combining the written sources with the observations of previous scholars.⁶ In 1934 followed the study of Mamboury and Wiegand that was based on surviving archaeological remains and produced a great number of ground-plans, photographs as well as hypothetical reconstructions.⁷ Afterwards, Guillard published a series of articles based mainly on the sources⁸, while Müller–Wiener speaking about the topography of Constantinople made more mention of the history of the monument.⁹ Finally Mango tried to locate the boundaries of the palace through the archaeological remains.¹⁰

1.3. Sources

It is not until 800 that the name Boukoleon was attested in the written sources for the first time (ἐ π ἰ τὸ ν Βουκολέοντα καὶ τὴ ν Σιδηρᾶ ν διαβιβᾶσας).¹¹ Kinnamos¹² and Leo Grammatikos¹³ report that its western part functioned as prison while Patria of Constantinople designate the location of the palace and discern it from the palace of Hormisdas.¹⁴ The texts of the 9th and the 10th century are referring to the shore and the harbor under this name, while occasionally to the balcony of the palace as well, looking out to the harbor.¹⁵ Finally, Anna Komnene in Alexiad identifies the name of Boukoleon with the palace lying above (τὸ ὑ περκείμενον παλάτιον).¹⁶

2. Architectural phases of the palace

From the present form of the imperial complex few parts of its internal areas are preserved, thus making difficult the reconstruction of its ground-plan. More precisely, above the foundations and within the remains was opened a railway (1871) connecting Constantinople with Europe ([fig. 2](#)).¹⁷ In a parallel manner, its seaward side was raised to the ground and now a road of wide circulation that runs around the whole seawall of the Sea of Marmara, crosses through. Nevertheless, Guillard believes that only the upper store of the palace was habitable and functioned as a mansion, while the lower part was used as barracks or encampment for sailors.¹⁸

The first building phase of the complex is attributed to the emperor Theodosios II (408-450)¹⁹ and someone must look for it all along the walls of the shore of Marmara, from the gate of lions (Catladikap) until the place where [Nca Ekklesia](#) was erected.²⁰ The fragmentary archaeological remains, however, can not be of any help to this identification.²¹

A first rebuilding of the palace took place during the reign of [Theophilos](#) (829-843). Later, the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) planned the erection of new walls. This contributed to the destruction of many buildings, to the transformation of the Great Palace to a fortress-citadel, as well as to the integration of a part of the Great Palace within the palace of Boukoleon.²² This conclusion is based on the text of Nikolaos Mesarites as well as on archaeological evidence such as the preservation of the walls on the location Καρι ağası camii²³ and on the western perimeter of the palace²⁴ ([fig. 3-4](#)).²⁵

During the late Byzantine period, the palace was abandoned by the [Palatologoi](#) and was turned into prison. Later, in the first ottoman centuries in this place was built a [quarter](#).²⁶

Based on archaeological remains and the drawings we can partly reconstruct the façade of the palace. More precisely, the upper part of the façade of the west side, until the year 1871, according to the drawings of Choiseul Gouffier, was ornated with a blind arcade, at the edge of which there were marble lions²⁷ [9th century- [fig. 5](#)]. The lions are now kept in the Archaeological Museum of Constantinople.²⁸ A little further to the east there was a small gateway that secured the access to the palace ([fig. 6](#)).²⁹ On the eastern side of the imperial staircase for disembarking, beneath the palace of Boukoleon, a trapezoid [cistern](#) was found with six columns³⁰ ([fig. 7](#)). Finally, its eastern wing was constituted by continuous halls overlooking the sea and lighted by wide windows with marble window-frames, whereas there were balconies rested on [consoles](#). Inside the palace were preserved in fragments the [cross-vaults](#).³¹ ([fig. 8](#))

3. Sculptured decoration

The only sculptured decoration still preserved is that of the [column capitals](#) of the cistern. These column capitals are of the ionic order with [dossieret](#) and have upon their narrow side the symbol of the cross ([fig. 7](#)). They are dated to the 6th century.³²

1. Γούναρης, Γ., *Εισαγωγή στην Παλαιохριστιανική Αρχαιολογία* (Thessaloniki 1999), p. 187.

2. Müller-Wiener, W., *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen 1977), p. 226, fig. 258.

3. Mango, C., "The Palace of the Boukoleon," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 45 (1997), p. 42.

4. Kazhdan, A., "Boukoleon", *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 1, Kazhdan, A. (ed.) (Oxford - New York 1991), p. 317.

5. Πασπάτης, Α., *Τα Βυζαντινά Ανάκτορα και τα περίξ αυτών Ιόρμματα. Μεθ ενός γάρτου τοπογραφικού* (Athens 1885), pp. 301-305.

6. Van Millingen, A., *Byzantine Constantinople. The Walls of the City and the Adjoining Historical Sites* (London 1899), pp. 278-287.

7. Mamboury, E., Wiegand, T., *Die Kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel zwischen Hippodrom und Marmara-meer* (Berlin - Leipzig 1934), pp. 1-25.

8. Guillard, R., "Constantinople byzantine : le Boucoléon, la plage du Boucoléon", *Byzantinoslavica* 10 (1949), pp. 16-27; Guillard, R., "Le Palais du Boukoléon," *Byzantinoslavica* 11 (1950) pp. 61-71; *ibid.*, "Le Port palatin du Boukoléon," *Byzantinoslavica* 11 (1950), pp. 187-206; *ibid.*, "Le palais d'Hormisdas" *Byzantinoslavica* 12 (1951), pp. 210-237; *ibid.*, "Le palais du Boukoléon. L'assassinat de Nicéphore II Phokas", *Byzantinoslavica* 13 (1952), pp. 101-136.

9. Müller-Wiener, W., *Bildlexikon Zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen 1977), pp. 225-228.



10. Mango, C., "The Palace of the Boukoleon," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 45 (1997), pp. 41-50.
11. Halkin, F., *Euphémie de Chalcedoine: legendes byzantins* (Subsidia hagiographica 41, Bruxelles 1965), p. 89.
12. Ιωάννης Κίνναμος, *Επιτομή*, Meineke, A. (ed.), *Ioannis Cinnami epitomae rerum ad Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum* (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, Bonnae 1836), p. 233.20-22.
13. Λέων Γραμματικός, *Χρονογραφία*, Bekker, I. (ed.), *Leonis Grammatici Chronographia* (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, Bonnae 1842), p. 227.20-23.
14. Πάτρια Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, *Περί κτισμάτων*, Preger, Th. (ed.), *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum* (Lipsiae 1907), p. 256, ch. 126.
15. Mango, C., "The Palace of the Boukoleon," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 45 (1997), p. 41.
16. Άννα Κομνηνή, *Αλέξιάς*, Reinsch, D. and Kambylis, A. (eds.), *Annae Comnenae, Alexias* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 40, 1, Berlin 2001), p. 89.65-68.
17. Mamboury, E., Wiengand, T., *Die Kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel zwischen Hippodrom und Marmara-meer* (Berlin - Leipzig 1934), pl. 40.
18. Guiland, R., "Le Palais du Boukoléon," *Byzantinoslavica* 11 (1950), p. 65.
19. Müller-Wiener, W., *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen 1977), p. 225.
20. Guiland, R., "Le Palais du Boukoléon," *Byzantinoslavica* 11 (1950), p. 62.
21. Γούναρης, Γ., *Εισαγωγή στην Παλαιохριστιανική Αρχαιολογία* (Thessaloniki 1999), p. 188.
22. Mango, C., "The Palace of the Boukoleon," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 45 (1997), p. 42.
23. Ottoman building erected on the area of the Great Palace.
24. Mango, C., "The Palace of the Boukoleon," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 45 (1997), pp. 43-45. The buildings that are included in the palace of Boukoleon according to Mango were the tower Kentenarian, the gate Skyla, Chrysotriklinos, Mouchroutas, the chapels of Theotokos and of the prophet Elijah as well as Manuelites.
25. Mango, C., "The Palace of the Boukoleon," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 45 (1997), p. 42, fig. 2 and p. 45, fig. 5 respectively.
26. Müller-Wiener, W., *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen 1977), p. 227.
27. Mamboury, E., Wiengand, T., *Die Kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel zwischen Hippodrom und Marmara-meer* (Berlin - Leipzig 1934), p. 4, pl. 11.
28. Mango, C., "Constantinopolitana," *Studies on Constantinople* (London 1993), pp. 318-319.
29. Mamboury, E., Wiengand, T., *Die Kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel zwischen Hippodrom und Marmara-meer* (Berlin - Leipzig 1934), p. 6, pl. 15.
30. Mamboury, E., Wiengand, T., *Die Kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel zwischen Hippodrom und Marmara-meer* (Berlin - Leipzig 1934), p. 15, pl. 25.
31. Mamboury, E., Wiengand, T., *Die Kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel zwischen Hippodrom und Marmara-meer* (Berlin - Leipzig 1934), pp. 13-14, pl. 29.
32. Kautzsch, R., *Kapitelstudien* (Berlin - Leipzig 1934) p. 175.

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Glossary :

	capital
The uppermost part of a column or pillar crowning the shaft and supporting the entablature. The decoration of the capital characterizes the ancient greek orders of architecture. In Doric order the capitals are decorated with abacus and echinus, in Ionic with spiral scrolls (volutes), while the corinthian capitals are composed of small corner volutes and a basket-shaped body decorated with rows of acanthus leaves.	
	cistern
A receptacle for holding rainwater, but also water transported from elsewhere, in order to keep it stored. The cisterns were either covered eiter open, and they could have more than one compartements.	
	console
An ornamental bracket, usually formed with scrolls and spirals.	
	cross- (groin-) vault
A vault formed over square or rectangular spaces by the interpenetration of two barrel-vaults of equal high and diameter. The lines of the intersection form a diagonal cross.	
	dossieret
Architectural member of marble with the form of inverted truncated pyramid, that was placed between the capital and arc.	



Quotations

The construction of the palace by Theodosios II (408-450)

Τα δὲ παλάτια τοῦ Βουκολέοντος ἐπάνω τοῦ τείχους παρεξέβηλεν ὁ μικρὸς Θεοδοσίος, ὁ δὲ Μαρκιανὸς ἐποίησεν τὸν τρίκλινον, καὶ οὗτος καλεῖται χρυσοτρίκλινος.

Πατρια Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, *Περὶ κτισμάτων*, Preger, T. (ed.), *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum* (Lipsiae 1907), p. 256, §126.