



Baths of Zeuxippos

Summary :

The Baths of Zeuxippos were located by the northeastern corner of the Hippodrome and close to the Augusteion and the Great Palace. Septimius Severus is credited with their construction. The baths were enlarged by Constantine I in the 4th century. They were decorated with numerous statues of gods, mythological heroes, and portraits of famous Greeks and Romans. Destroyed in the 6th century, the Baths of Zeuxippos were rebuilt by Justinian I. Parts of the complex were subsequently converted into a prison; another section functioned as a silk workshop.

Date

late 2nd - 9th (?) c.

Geographical Location

Constantinople, Istanbul

1. History

The Baths of Zeuxippos were located by the northeastern corner of the [Hippodrome](#) and close to the [Augustaion](#) and the [Great Palace](#). Byzantine sources attribute their construction to [Septemius Severus](#) (end of the 2nd century AD). [Constantine I](#) enlarged and redecored the complex. The baths were destroyed by fire in 532 and were subsequently rebuilt by [Justinian](#). They might have been functioning up to the 9th century. Thereafter, parts of the building became a prison, known under the name Noumera, while another part was converted to a silk workshop.

The Baths of Zeuxippos have all but disappeared today. Parts of the bath proper along with parts of a large peristyle that flanked it to the east, probably of Justinianic date, were unearthed in 1927 and 1928.¹ During these excavations three statue bases (two bearing inscriptions with the names of the [statues](#) they originally supported) and a much-mutilated fragment of a colossal female head were uncovered. In the excavations of the Baths was first identified a [type](#) of Byzantine [glazed](#) pottery which was named [Zeuxippos Ware](#) and was often considered as [Constantinopolitan production](#).²

2. The sculpture collection

The baths were famous for being decorated with an impressive [collection of statues](#), some of which are described in an [ekphrasis](#) written by the poet Christodoros of Koptos at the end of the 5th century.³ The ekphrasis indicates that there were three types of statues: images of gods or demigods (Dionysos, Hermes, Aphrodite), portraits of famous Greeks and Romans (Demosthenes, Virgil), along with mythological figures, primarily inspired by the [Trojan war](#) (Achilles, Odysseus). Several of the statues were bronze while certainly the majority was made of marble. Their date and [provenance](#) varied. Stupperich argued that the statuary was assembled with the intent to describe Constantinople as the New Troy,⁴ whereas Bassett sees the choice and arrangement of the statues as an effort to link Constantinople with the universal cultural tradition of Greece and Rome.⁵

1. Casson, S., Talbot Rice, D. and Hudson, D.F., *Preliminary Report upon the Excavations Carried Out in and near the Hippodrome of Constantinople in 1927* (London 1928); Casson, S., Talbot Rice, D., and Hudson, D.F., *Second Report upon the Excavations Carried Out in and near the Hippodrome of Constantinople in 1928* (London 1929); Casson, S., "Les fouilles de l'Hippodrome de Constantinople," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 30 (1930), pp. 213-242.

2. Megaw, A. H. S., "Zeuxippos Ware", *Annual of the British School of Athens*, 63, 1968, p. 67-88; Dark K.R., *Byzantine Pottery*, Stroud 2001; G. Berti & S. Gelichi, "Zeuxippos Ware in Italy", *Materials Analysis of Byzantine Pottery*, ed. H.Maguire, Washington, 85-104

3. Beckby, H. (ed.), *Anthologia Graeca* 1 (2nd ed., Munich 1965), pp. 168-193; engl. translation by Paton, W.R., *The Greek Anthology* 1 (London 1916), pp. 59-91.

4. Stupperich, R., "Das Statuenprogramm in den Zeuxippos-Thermen," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 32 (1982), pp. 210-235.

5. Guberti Bassett, S., "Historiae custos: Sculpture and Tradition in the Baths of Zeuxippos," *American Journal of Archaeology* 100 (1996), pp. 491-506.

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	Basset S., <i>The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople</i> , Cambridge 2004
	Guberti Basset S., "Historiae Custos: Sculpture and Tradition in the Baths of Zeuxippos", <i>American Journal of Archaeology</i> , 100, 1996, 491-506
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	Guilland R., "Les thermes de Zeuxippe", <i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i> , 15, 1966, 261-271
	Megaw A.H.S., "Zeuxippus Ware", <i>BSA</i> , 63, 1968, 67-88
	Dark K.R., <i>Byzantine Pottery</i> , Stroud 2001

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	JSTOR - Historiae custos: Sculpture and Tradition in the Baths of Zeuxippos http://www.jstor.org/pss/507026
	Materials analysis of Byzantine pottery - Βιβλία Google http://books.google.com/books?id=maDaZnVTS6EC&pg=PA85&dq=Zeuxippus+Ware&hl=el&ei=pAWKTY3VOIPVsga58oGoDa&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Zeuxippus%20Ware&f=false

Glossary :

	ekphrasis An encomiastic and rhetoric description of a monument, or a city, often lengthy and written in verse.
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Glazed Pottery

Glaze: vitreous material applied to vessel or tile prior to firing in a kiln, in order to give a glossy surface after firing.

Zeuxippus ware

Vessels of fine hard fabric with decoration cut into the slip and shiny colourless or coloured glaze. The main shape is a bowl with a ring foot. The incised decoration of floral motifs or figurative themes was usually arranged in a central basal metallion. The high quality of this ware and the great quantities that were found during the excavations at the Baths of Zeuxippos in Constantinople encouraged a strictly constantinopolitan attribution of the production; however, ample distribution of such ware from Egypt to the Black Sea region and Bulgarian territory contradict such an attribution.

Sources

Christodoros of Koptos, *Ekphrasis of the statues in the public gymnasium called Zeuxippos*, in Beckby, H. (ed.), *Anthologia Graeca* 1 (2nd ed., Munich 1965), pp. 168-193; engl. translation by Paton, W.R., *The Greek Anthology* 1 (London 1916), pp. 59-91.

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Hesychios, *Patria Constantinopoleos*, ed. T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* 1 (Leipzig 1901; repr. 1975), p. 16.

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Pseudo-Codinos, *Patria Constantinopoleos*, ed. T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* 2 (Leipzig 1907; repr. 1975), pp. 136, 168.

Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, *Theophanis chronographia* 1 (Leipzig 1883; repr. Hildesheim 1963), p. 383.

Quotations

The building of the Baths by Septimus Severus according to the *Patria of Constantinople*

a. Παυσαμένου δὲ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ Σεβήρου αὐθις εἰς μεῖζονα κόσμον ἐπανήλθον λουτρὸν μὲν αὐτοῖς μέγιστον κατὰ τὸν τοῦ Διὸς Ἰππίου βωμόν, ἧτοι τὸ Ἡρακλέους ἄλλος καλούμενον (ἐνθα τὰς Διομήδους αὐτὸν φασὶ δαμάσαντα ἵππους Ζεῦξιππον τὸν τόπον ὀνομάσαι), πολυτελῶς ἐγείραντος...

Hesychios, *Patria Constantinopoleos*, ed. T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* 1 (Leipzig 1901; repr. 1975), p. 16.

b. Τότε ὁ Σεῦρος πρὸς θεραπείαν τοῦ συμπενεθεροῦ αὐτοῦ Νιγέρου ἐκτίσεν δύο βαλανεῖα, ἔσωθεν μὲν τῆς πόλεως καὶ πλησίον τοῦ παλατίου τὸ καλούμενον Ζεῦξιππον, ἔξωθεν δὲ τῆς πόλεως τὰ νῦν καλούμενα Καμίνια, λουτρὸν εὐμέγεθες καὶ ἀξιοθαύμαστον.

Pseudo-Codinos, *Patria Constantinopoleos*, ed. T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* 2 (Leipzig 1907; repr. 1975), p. 135.

The Baths of Zeuxippos still in use in 713.

Τούτῳ τῷ ἔτει ἐπεστράτευσεν Ἄβας τὴν Ῥωμανίαν καὶ παρέλαβεν Ἀντιόχειαν Πισιδίαν μετὰ πολλῆς αἰχμαλωσίας, καὶ ὑπέστρεψεν. ἐγένετο δὲ σεισμός μέγας κατὰ τὴν Συρίαν μηνὶ Περίτῳ κη΄. διειτοῦς δὲ χρόνου τῆς βασιλείας Φιλίππου ἐν τούτοις παραδραμόντος, καὶ τοῦ γενεθλίου ἱππικοῦ ἐπιτελουμένου, Πρασίμων νικησάντων, ἔδοξε τῷ βασιλεὶ τῷ σαββάτῳ τῆς πενηκοστῆς καβαλλάρων μετὰ δοχῆς καὶ ὀργάνων εἰσελθεῖν καὶ λούσασθαι εἰς τὸ δημόσιον λουτρὸν τοῦ Ζεῦξιππου καὶ μετὰ πολιτῶν ἀρχαιογενῶν ἀριστήσαι.

Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, *Theophanis chronographia* 1 (Leipzig 1883; repr. Hildesheim 1963), p. 383.