Architecture of Traces and Ascriptions: Interpreting the Vanished Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors in Constantinople

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_Beneath history, memory and oblivion._
_Beneath memory and oblivion: life._
_But the writing of life is another history._
_Incompleteness._
—Paul Ricoeur

This paper was prompted by the 2000 proposal to develop the site of the vanished Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors, comprising the territory of Eminönü (Istanbul, Turkey) from the Byzantine sea walls on the Sea of Marmara to the littoral at the north-east of Hagia Sophia, as an open-air museum. Despite their great historical, archaeological, and cultural significance, the remains of the Palace are largely inaccessible to public scrutiny, buried beneath layers of the Ottoman city that are, in turn, equally significant in these respects, the proposed museum site thus constituting a sustained process of spoliation, reconstruction and re-use. I will propose, here, that the Great Palace, arguably the most influential model for mediaeval Western European imperial architecture, had a second existence, after its destruction, as a literary _topos_, accorded new meaning as the symbolic centre of a lost Greek homeland. Despite its physical inaccessibility, the symbolic structure, topography and ritual life of the Palace may be partially understood today through its layers of literary ‘ascriptions’. I will concentrate on a more prosaic meaning of this term, namely the attribution of significance to certain architectural forms, maintained through ritual practice. I use ascription to convey the sense of those qualities, symbolism and significance conferred upon, imputed to or derived from the Great Palace, and propose that it was subject to a similar process _during_ its above-ground existence through a process of formal, symbolic and ritual spoliation.

We find a precedent for this phenomenon in the period of the so-called Macedonian Renaissance (867-1081), when attempts were made to link the Dynasty, and Byzantine culture, back to the perceived golden age of Justinian the Great (r 527-565). Two members of this Dynasty, Leo VI ‘The Wise’ and Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus authorized new palace structures adorned with spoliated classical sculptures, and commissioned or wrote literary works that recalled and revived palace ritual of the Justinianic period.² These texts
included, as I will discuss, the *Book of Ceremonies* of Constantine VII, *De Ceremoniis Aulae Byzantinae*.\(^3\)

From Edmund Gibbon until recent times, historians have commonly depicted Byzantium as a static, backward-looking, decadent and orientalized culture, unable to adapt to historical change in order to ensure its survival.\(^4\) However, more recent scholarship by Mango and others emphasizes the substantial transformation that occurred over the duration of its history.\(^5\) Constantinople’s physical fabric evolved from a late Roman structure of public streets and squares, civic buildings and statuary to something more closely resembling a medieval city. Its heart, from foundation as the Second Rome (324) until the tenth century, was the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors. However, by 1453 the Palace had fallen into a state of moldering ruin, stripped of its gilt bronze roofs and architectural ornaments. Gazing upon its remains, the Ottoman conqueror Mehmet II was drawn to muse upon the fate of imperial vanity.

This paper argues that the traditional conception of Byzantine culture, and specifically of its architecture, as static and anachronistic is undermined by the complex mechanism of recollection within its history, and by its enduring influence upon medieval architecture in western Europe. Spoliative and ascriptive processes underlay the construction and development of St Mark’s Cathedral in Venice, for instance, and the Papal Lateran Palace in Rome, through the appropriation of Byzantine Imperial motifs. The operation of these same processes in the Great Palace itself deserves some attention.

The Site as Literary Topos

Over the long history of Constantinople, geographical markers and monuments were constantly supplanted by new constructions imposed by a succession of conquerors. The Great Palace, a veritable city of ceremonies, was buried beneath a succession of later structures, the Ottomans spoliating its elements, or using them as foundations to form new monuments. In time, over several iterations of this process, the Byzantine Palace became completely detached from a physical topography, while its ceremonies were echoed in Orthodox religious ritual, and in the secular music and poetry of Greece.

The Palace, as a literary *topos* embedded in the tenth century *Book of Ceremonies*, became identified with the imperial institution, and was to persist as the nostalgic centre of a Greek homeland for centuries after the 1453 fall of Constantinople. Long after its physical disappearance, the Great Palace continued to exist, but as a locus of culturally circumscribed aspirations; with the great church Hagia Sophia, it was the symbolic heart of a mythical Constantinople, the desired site of nostos or homecoming. It endured thus even after the reinvention, first by Western neo-classical architects in the nineteenth century, and then by the Greeks themselves, of the village of Athens as the “timeless classical” site of a national capital. Athens, re-planned as a neoclassical city, was now centred on the symbolic structures of a classical “golden age”, the Agora and Acropolis, pieced together from stones which had been used and reused for millennia, rather than on its humble and more recent
Byzantine and Ottoman monuments. This “new” classical site was to form the second topos of a reinvented Greek nationalist ideology, both expansionist and revanchist, from the Treaty of Constantinople (July 1832) until the disastrous Greco-Turkish war of 1920-22, which put paid to the old Megalo Idea, the dream of an expanded Greece with its capital restored to Constantinople. This failure, and the subsequent displacement of Anatolian Greeks, led to Athens supplanting Constantinople as the topos of homecoming.

The Great Palace has only recently returned to notice with a major archaeological survey undertaken to the east of Hagia Sophia, with several restoration projects currently transforming its fragments into tourist sites (Fig. 1), and with a proposal presented in 2000, by Eugenia Bolognesi and the Associazione Palatina Istanbul, to create an outdoor museum on the original site of the Palace (Fig. 2). According to the proposal, visitors would follow paths loosely tracing the itineraries of ancient imperial ceremonies described in De Ceremoniis Aulae Byzantinae by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII (r 913-959). And yet, despite this evident interest on the part of archaeologists and Turkish authorities, the vast bulk of the Great Palace’s remains, barring a natural calamity, will remain hidden from sight. Its potential as a museum is thus limited by the paucity of visible remains (Fig. 3), by the dense layering of Ottoman and Turkish urban fabric, and by the secular and religious ceremonies, and patterns of everyday life that characterize contemporary Istanbul. The Palace is still, in large part, a literary topos.
The *Book of Ceremonies*

The duration of the site’s significance is indebted, in part, to the formalisation of 600 years of court ritual in *De Ceremoniis Aulae Byzantinae*, the so-called *Book of Ceremonies*, either written by or for Constantine VII. Constantine himself confirmed that one of the primary roles of Palace ceremonial was to impress the majesty of the imperial office upon the Emperor’s subjects and foreign dignitaries alike. The Palace and its ceremonial life was a symbolic representation of the divinely sanctioned order instituted and preserved by the Byzantine Empire. The *Book* reflects this in the itineraries it describes for imperial weddings and funerals, receptions of ambassadors and others, for acclamations by guilds and associations, promotion of officials, religious festivals and so on.

It provides an intriguing, if partial, window into the ritual life of the Palace, especially valuable in the absence of the ekphrastic literature through which we know about ecclesiastical buildings like Hagia Sophia. Yet the diverse and distant sources compiled in the *Book* have resulted in a spatial and temporal palimpsest. It combines itineraries for rituals in use during the tenth century with others that had taken place in structures that, by the time of Constantine VII, had either vanished or been assigned new functions. Thus the text of the *Book of Ceremonies* bears a difficult relation to the Palace in its historical evolution, and must be interpreted with care if it is to provide evidence of the spatial layout within which the ceremonial was performed, tradition upheld. Interpretations of this nature have been central to the study of the Great Palace since the mid nineteenth century and form the basis of several recent studies.

It would appear that, in Court life of the tenth century and later, many older rituals that had formerly possessed practical religious or diplomatic functions were retained as anachronistic and esoteric practices, divorced from their original meaning, presumably for the purpose of emphasizing the continuity of imperial rule and its foundation in the christianized Roman Empire of Constantine I. Magdalino has noted that various later emperors were keen to project themselves as ‘New Constantines’, worthy successors of the first Christian Emperor. Their rhetoric of personal representation paralleled the mimetic appropriation of ceremonies and building forms, of which the imitators had very little historical knowledge.

The text of the *Book of Ceremonies* thus bears a supplementary relation to the historical Palace, and can provide evidence for the reconstruction of the Palace's topography. The *Book's* descriptions of sequences of ceremonial events, taking place in specifically named locations, may be compared with each other, and analysed with respect to the historical period in which they took place to yield information on the palace layout of that time. This task will be facilitated by the imminent publication of two new translations of the entire text.

The *Book* also ascribes individual elements a metonymic function with respect to the building and imperial institution. Thus the portico of two columns, the *Dikionion*, ‘where the Empress would stand to bless the assembled Imperial
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guard’, and the *Chrysocheir*, or ‘Portico of the Golden Hand’, in which the Emperor or Empress would wait behind curtains embroidered with doves before emerging beneath the golden icon of a hand of benediction, were significant sites of appearance and transcendence. Building, spatial setting, and the recitative, prescribed in the *Book*, combined to re-enact a ritualized relationship between God, the Emperor and his subjects. The appearance of monarchs in the *Dikionion* and *Chrysocheir*, at the threshold between sacred palace and city, may be understood as symbols of the larger relation of monarchs, sanctioned by God, to their Empire. A comparable representation appears in the mosaic of Theoderic’s palace in Sant’Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna.

Figure 6: Mosaic depiction of Theodoric’s Palace, Sant’Appolonare Nuovo, Ravenna

The palace ceremonies had the effect of ascribing to building spaces and elements such as fountains or columns symbolic meanings pertaining to an immaterial, and yet immanent significance, akin to magic. For example, a ‘sacred phiale’, or fountain structure, was located between the palatine chapel of St Stephen and the room of the Octagon, a significant space of acclamation and ritual within the original Palace, where the Emperor and Empress would robe and disrobe. The Emperor, as God’s Vice-Regent, would bless the water in the phiale, which was then purified and suitable for such ceremonies as those attending to the coronation of an empress.
Spoliation within the Palace

The combination of apparently anachronistic rituals in the *Book of Ceremonies* may be said to parallel the practice of spoliation within the Palace building itself. In each case, fragments from the past were synchronically juxtaposed with contemporary rituals or structures, tending (as a process) to efface the perception of historic change. The motivations underlying these acts are complex. Nonetheless, there would seem to have been a symbolic intent.

The significant use of spolia (the re-use of fragments from earlier Palatine or other structures) parallels the learned use of ancient quotations by Byzantine scholars, or even the falsification of history by including edifying insertions from ancient, or certainly older texts, or, for example, by including references in the *Book of Ceremonies* to buildings or ceremonies supposedly long disappeared by the time of writing. Thus, during the period of the “Macedonian Renaissance”, from Basil I (r 867-886) to Constantine VII, an antiquarian interest led both to the retrieval and collection of ancient texts, and to the reuse of antique building ornaments for the embellishment of new Palace structures.  

Cyril Mango has noted different usages of spolia in successive stages of the Palace. Initially exploited as a source of building material, they were increasingly valued for their ornamental qualities. New structures and spaces were ‘designed to display specimens *priscae artis* and even to combine them into a kind of “collage”’. This practice has been discussed by Brenk, who argues that spolia from palaces in Rome were transferred to Ravenna by Theoderic (r 493-526), King of Central and Northern Italy, to be incorporated in his palace. Charlemagne brought columns and marbles from Theoderic’s palace to his own palace in Ingelheim in the early nineth century. After the 1204 sack of Constantinople, the Venetians continued this practice, incorporating ornamented piers from the church of St Polyeuktos (524-527), as well as the famous Quadriga horses, imperial lions, and the relief statues of the Tetrarchs from the Philadelphion monument in Constantinople, into the facade of the Cathedral of St Mark (Fig. 6). This practice surely exceeded a simple bower bird-like fascination for novelties. In Gentile Bellini’s painting *Procession in St Mark’s Square* (1496) (Fig. 7), the relics of St Mark are paraded in a procession that emerges from the Cathedral adjacent to the column and statues. The spolia are clearly integral to civic ritual by this time.

A second form of spoliation may be defined as the appropriation and re-use, or ‘quotation’, of certain building types associated with specific ceremonies or institutions. Thus the *Chrysothriklinos*, the throne room constructed by Justin II in the late sixth century, may be paradigmatic in this regard, conflating some of the functional types of the fourth century Constantinian palace: the Octagon, the *Augusteus*, or throne room, and the *Consistorium*, an audience room in which officials, patricians and supplicants would remain standing in the presence of the Emperor. In each instance, the spatial form would be focused, through an apsidal layout, or a centring canopy, upon the figure of the Emperor.
Within the Chrysotriklinos, the Emperor was enthroned in front of an apse and semi-dome, upon which the icon of Christ expressed the Emperor's role as Vice-Regent, his authority derived from divine sanction. The use of such devices, through physical and symbolic spoliation, amount to another form of ascription. By linking 'this' with 'that', the quotation imputes virtues in the work or event proper to the fragment's origin.

Ritual and Ascription

In characterizing the transformation of the physical Palace into a site of ascriptions, a process compounded over several centuries, I refer to a procedure of acculturated cognition. Aspects of national identity, religious affiliation, and nostalgia, the sickness for nostos, a homecoming indefinitely deferred, have been, since the fall of the city, given over to a topos that is both physical site and literary construction, the latter eclipsing the former.

However, this process is not limited to the period since Constantinople’s fall. An ascriptive practice, following this definition, was also evident in the classical Byzantine period, during which Constantinople’s monuments and public spaces constituted, above all, a symbolic topography. The apparent continuity of tradition was ensured by the maintenance of ritualized ceremonies, some of which are recorded in the Book of Ceremonies. A consideration of the function
of tradition calls into question the adequacy of architectural and art historical approaches based on formal analysis to analyze the meaning and significance of such Byzantine monuments and spaces. An example of a more complex approach to Byzantine architecture is provided by Wharton-Epstein’s analysis of the role of ritual and the production of meaning in Byzantine buildings, and the influence of these cultural practices on the public understanding of the structures and their representational agenda. She questions, for instance, how the architecture and decorative programme of the Neonian Baptistry in Ravenna (fourth and fifth centuries) was understood in its own time. How did it perform as a setting for baptismal ritual, rather than as a constructed element of an architectural tradition, or as an art-historical object? How were forms and iconographical programmes compounded and impacted by the formation of a tradition?

To address the interrelation of space and performance in the territory of the Imperial Palace, as suggested in extant documents and chronicles, is a potentially fruitful approach for research into the long history of the Great Palace as a cultural artefact that is inadequately represented by built remains. The Palace, now no more than a few hotly debated ‘sad relics’, continues to stimulate substantial scholarship, although its significance is hardly reflected in architectural surveys of Byzantine architecture, dominated as they are by a preponderance of research into ecclesiastical building types and construction techniques. Perhaps because of its unfashionably imperial associations, the Palace has, remarkably, received little attention from architectural historians.
The Great Palace is both a physical and a ritually-enacted monument. Its physical evidence supplements and contextualizes the historical significance of other monuments, like Haghia Sophia, that bear the weight of “meaning” beyond the fact of their existence as architectural works and sites. So, too, it reveals something of the operation of meaning itself, which relegates, in these cases, buildings and monumental objects to the status of fetish objects in the eyes of their contemporary public. After the Palace’s disappearance, its stones taken for other buildings and its remains buried, the specific relations between concrete space and ritualized meanings irreparably changed, but the traditions born of these relationships outlived the spatial constraints of the Palace itself.

Continuity with the Roman Palatine Tradition

Thus far, I have discussed the use of spoliation and ascription as devices by which new structures connect back to Imperial precedents. Indeed, a central question with regard to the form and appearance of the Great Palace involves the degree of intention in relating to the cultural forms of Imperial Rome. However, the problem of the architectural form of the Great Palace cannot be definitively resolved for the moment. If, as is generally accepted, the first, Constantinian palace followed the late Roman forms of the Tetrarchy, then how did the later Byzantine palace develop in style and character? To what extent were late Imperial characteristics preserved in traditional rituals? What, in other words, did these structures mean to their inhabitants?

Traditions, it can be argued, are based on the assumption of continuity, of an unchanging symbolic order. The material reality of social, political and economic change must be placed against a faith in the continuity of transcendental order. Against this background, the ascription of significance to ritual and material forms, pertained to a synchronic cultural perception.

Recent Byzantinist scholarship has built upon the theoretical speculations by Lavin and Krautheimer on a typological connection between the Palace and the form of Imperial churches. It should be understood within the evolution of ceremonies and buildings of the late antique emperor cult toward the imperial forms of Byzantium. Berger notes that in the late Roman and early Byzantine period, certain public buildings, such as the Forum, the Capitol and the imperial mausoleum, as well as the city itself, were meant to glorify, or apotheosise, the Emperor in both life (through the Adventus) and death. In the time of Constantine VII, the recorded ceremonies preserve a trace of this earlier function.

The issue of imperial precedent is contentious in recent scholarship. To what extent can both artistic and architectural forms and iconography trace back to Imperial Rome? An architectural example implicated in this debate is the centralized Palatine chapel, understood by Krautheimer as derivative of either imperial funerary architecture or the centralized Palatine triclinia. Mathews is critical of the ‘Emperor Mystique’ that he perceives underlying certain historians’ approaches to Byzantine culture.
against understanding Byzantine culture in terms of the classical past. He rejects a symbolic continuity between Imperial Roman and middle Byzantine (post eighth century) architecture, emphasizing instead the increasingly oriental forms of the Palace and a transformed social context and mentality characterized by a drastic reduction in classical scholarship after the sixth century:

Knowledge of classical cultural practices was simply unavailable to all but a tiny elite consisting of the higher clergy, and a few officials. The proponents of a persistence of classical tradition within Byzantine culture are linked both to European romanticism and to a racial model of culture that privileges the Greek
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“race” ahead of other “eastern” races: Syrians, Egyptians, Jews, Armenians, Slavs ....

In this period, from the eighth century onwards, many urban institutions and structures transformed or disappeared, while architectural form and decoration also underwent change. However, it is quite possible that within the Palace, and certainly up to the tenth century, there was, in fact, a form of continuity based upon spoliation and imitation of ancient forms, to which were attributed an imperial significance, inferring an intended continuity with the institutions and structures of Rome.

The Palace was, furthermore, the quintessential site where any intentional continuity of cultural practices would likely be maintained, as the imperial office derived its own authority from tradition. In a discussion of surviving ritual, Bolognesi has noted that within the Palace, the fourth century “Gothic Dances” survived into the ninth, while in the City the ancient Brumalia, the festivities of Dionysius, were celebrated as late as the tenth century, pagan-derived masquerades as late as the thirteenth. Regardless of their veracity or degradation as mimetically-derived or remembered forms, the rituals and their material setting may have been deliberately intended to recall, or identify with, the imperial Roman past. In other words, they fell squarely within the rubric of tradition.

The Chrysotriklinos has already been discussed in relation to the practice of spoliation. It is one of the clearest examples of an apparently deliberate connection back to the forms of Antiquity. Bolognesi has suggested that it was possibly a reconstruction or refurbishment of a centralized triclinium in the grounds of the late antique Hormisdas Palace, to the south of the hemicycle of the Hippodrome. Even if it were a new construction, we can, following Lavin and Swoboda, certainly understand it as a development of the late antique Palatine trichorum or triklinos, and beyond this type, possibly to third century Sassanian crown halls (Figs 9-12). It continued the ritual functions performed earlier in the Constantinian Augusteion, or crown hall, and the Consistorium, a hall for the reception of delegations (who would remain standing). Thus the Chrysotriklinos was used for the reception of dignitaries, presentation of edicts and promotion of officials, as well as rituals of a religious nature, and continued performing these functions as late as the ninth and tenth centuries.

The Chrysotriklinos also performed a symbolic function. The image of Christ above the imperial throne in the Chrysotriklinos may be compared with the famous icon installed above the emperor’s porphyry pavement at the entrance to the Chalké gate, and to the golden hand, the Chrysocheir, above the central portal at the entrance to the Augusteion. Each projects the idea of the Emperor as the representation of Christ on Earth, implicating either a transformation of the former emperor-cult or an innovative response to the religious climate.

The Chrysotriklinos is thought to have been a large polygonal structure, with a lower reception area and an upper gallery for the use of the Imperial party. It would thus seem to recall, in form and function, the halls built by the tetrarchs.
and the later Christian emperors from Constantine to Justinian. The roof is thought by Krautheimer to have been a ‘pumpkin dome’, ‘with straight and convex webs in alternation’. It was probably constructed of wood, and surfaced on the interior with gold mosaic, and would appear to have corresponded in type to what Baldwin-Smith describes as the skene, or tent of heaven, an architectural motif evident in Roman imperial architecture: for example, in the circular domed reception hall in Nero’s Domus Aurea.

The space for the edification of the Imperial figure within the Chrysotriklinos may also be linked with the Palatine church of San Vitale, which appears to place the image of Emperor Justinian I in direct relation to iconic representations of Christ, emphasizing his pretensions toward being Christ’s vicar on Earth. Thus two ascriptive practices are merged: the Emperor is both secular and spiritual ruler, but under God’s dispensation, symbolized both by the ikon and by the ceiling depicted as the dome of heaven.

Jonathan Bardill has argued that the Great Palace complex was a conscious emulation of the Flavian Palace on Rome’s Palatine Hill. His comparison between the two palaces has an interesting implication. Surely an attempt to construct the Imperial Palace in Constantinople on the basis of Roman precedent would seem more likely to have happened first under Constantine or his son Constantius. The earlier example was almost certainly much more compact than at the time of the Book of Ceremonies, and probably planned around a formal demarcation between domestic functions (the Daphne Palace), and ceremonial functions (the halls of Augusteus, Dekaneakkoubita and Consistorion), with the district of the guards and palace officials lying between the palace and the forum of the Augustaion between the Palace and Haghia Sophia.

Bardill characterised the Great Palace as an open layout of pavilions, gardens and courtyards. However, the Flavian Palace itself is far from “dispersed”, but is rather a tightly planned, if vast, succession of increments in a close physical relation to both the Forum and the Circus Maximus. It is far more “ordered” than Hadrian’s Villa, for example, and may indeed be comparable to the first palace at Constantinople.

Thus Bardill’s reference to the Flavian Palace in support of his attribution of the Peristyle courtyard with mosaic pavement excavated by the University of St Andrews team as the (dispersed) location of the Augusteus, the central hall of state, seems flawed. The peristyle and its mosaic are stylistically of the fourth or fifth centuries, yet are datable on archaeological evidence to the end of the sixth. Their style appears archaic and anachronistic, possibly deliberately so. Kosteneç’s postulation that the original Augusteus should be placed symmetrically at the centre of the old Daphne Palace facing the Tribunal, or ceremonial parade ground, is in accordance with other late Roman examples, and seems (to me) more plausible than Bardill’s proposal.

Beyond the question of continuity with Imperial Roman architectural practice, it does appear to have been the case that original elements of the Constantinian
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palace were re-interpreted in successive structures, as shown by the example of the Chrysotriklinos. The Palace grew over its millennial development from a unitary core by the addition of such new complexes, much as the Imperial Palace had developed in Rome.

Kosteneç is probably right in interpreting the Augusteum, or throne room, as an original element of the Constantinian phase of the Palace, and part of a cohesive architectural ensemble. However, over the ensuing centuries, ceremonial elements of this complex migrated into an extended precinct, including that of the area of the Walker Trust excavations (datable to the sixth century), but built over earlier structures. My point, here, is that both ritual and significant form were appropriated and re-used to convey an impression of continuity in the face of significant change.

Conclusion

As introduced at the outset, the Palace site, part of a World Heritage Precinct, is now proposed as an outdoor museum. In place of the usual archaeological evidence, the Palace can only be “reconstructed” through a combination of textual analysis, typological comparison and topographical survey. The function of the museum remains largely ambiguous. Can the site be considered “heritage” in the comparative absence of material artefacts? This poses a dilemma for the various cultural agencies and commercial interests engaged with this site.

As for the vanished form of the palace, we might draw some tentative conclusions.

The literary texts and scant archaeological remains pertaining to the site suggest that the architecture of the Great Palace was based upon Roman precedent, constituting a substantial continuity in Palatine building practices, certainly as late as the end of the sixth or early seventh century. This is exemplified by the centralized triclinium layout of the Chrysotriklinos as recorded in contemporary accounts and the archaizing layout of the Peristyle Court and Apsed Hall of the
St Andrews excavation. Building works under the Macedonian dynasty as late as the tenth century seem to indicate a deliberate policy of renascence, through restoration and mimesis, of traditional forms and iconography. I describe these practices as ascriptive, conferring particular significance and symbolism to certain forms and their attendant rituals.

In summary, a mimetic process of spoliation of architectural elements of the Constantinian Great Palace, such as the ceremonial halls of the Augusteus and Consistorion, occurred in the later life of the Palace. Both the preservation of ceremonial, and its housing in structures recalling an Imperial past may be understood within the mechanisms of tradition. Mimetic appropriation provided a spatial and iconographical setting for its maintenance. This mimetic practice was, I argue, part of a process of ascription, through which buildings in the Great Palace were imbued with symbolic associations both with Imperial Rome, and with Byzantium in its period of greatness. As with works of the tenth century Macedonian Renaissance, such ascriptive practices were used to reconnect the Imperial institution with its past. Under these terms, the architectural complex of the Great Palace becomes a symbolically charged setting for the enacting of Tradition.
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Notes


13 Ann Moffatt of the Australian National University is currently finishing a translation of The Book of Ceremonies with commentary; Dagron and Featherstone of the Collège de France are preparing a French translation of the full text based on two surviving manuscripts.


15 Mango, ‘Ancient Spolia’.


19 George Gordon Noel Byron, Lord Byron: ‘... Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth! / Immortal, though no more! though fallen, great! ...’—Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, canto ii, stanza 73. He was of course referring to the Classical heritage of the Greeks. Hagia Sophia has itself continued to generate a growth industry, notably with the survey of the fabric by R Van Nice from 1937 on, published by Dumbarton Oaks in 1965 and 1980, and more recently, the collection, R Mark and A S Çakmak (eds), Hagia Sophia, From the Age of Justinian to the Present, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

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refers here to the debate over the supposed centralized palace church tradition.

21 Given the scant evidence available, the problem of reconstructing the palace layout persists to the present day. Indeed, to what degree are reconstructions of the Palace biased by cultural preconceptions? By what means do they assemble the fragmentary evidence and speculations into a projected whole, and what does this reveal of their prejudices? The attempts of Labarte (1861) and Ebersolt (1910) to establish the Palace topography were both extensive and ambitious, exhibiting compositional principles of symmetry, rhythm and proportion akin to Grand Prix projects of the Ecole de Beaux-Arts. As noted earlier, they were based on a study of the Book of Ceremonies and other Byzantine texts, and lacked a foundation in archaeological survey. Among the numerous subsequent attempts, Ebersolt’s reconstruction was informed both by knowledge of Byzantine architecture, and study of the palace of Diocletian at Split. His layout was further revised by Vogt (1935). Mango cited the Labarte’s monograph as the first systematic attempt to reconstruct the topography of the palace on the basis of the Book of Ceremonies. See Labarte, Les Palais impérial de Constantinople et ses abords au dixième siècle, Paris, 1861; cited by Mango, The Brazen House, a Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople, Copenhagen: Arkæologisk-kunsthistoriske Meddelelser udgivet af Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 4, 4 (1959), p 14 and ff. See also Ebersolt, Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des Cérémonies, Paris, 1910; Vogt, Le Livre des Cérémonies, 1935. For the involvement of the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in historical reconstructions see R Middleton (ed) The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-century French Architecture, London: Thames and Hudson 1982. In contrast, more recent and partial reconstructions by Cyril Mango (1959) and Wolfgang Müller-Wiener (1977) are far more episodic, and less orthogonal, which is perhaps inevitable, given the availability of additional, if inconclusive, archaeological evidence: Mango, The Brazen House, 1959, fig 1; Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls, Tübingen, 1977, fig 263. There was an apparent reluctance in both cases to propose conjectural layouts. Mango limited himself to the observation that the original Constantinian palace was ‘more like that of Galerius [in Thessalonike] than that of Diocletian’ (pp 22-23). Both palace types of the Tetrarchic period are characteristic of what Curic has suggested as a city in miniature. The Castrum type, which derived from the Roman military camp plan, developed into the form of a fortified villa complex, characterized by a perimeter wall and frequent towers, similar to a city wall. It was usually, but not always, built in an isolated or rural location. The Domus type derived from the traditional Roman land-owner’s house, and was centred on one or more peristyle courtyards and the main reception rooms, usually a central reception room for the Lord to meet his guests and clients, and a triclinium for formal dining. It was found in both urban and rural settings. Large high-status houses and palaces might combine elements of


27 A comparison could be made here with the Mediaeval Florentine belief that the Baptistry was a Roman structure. The building served as an ostensible classical model for early Renaissance architects and artists.


31 This identification is slightly different to that of Cameron, who emphasizes what she sees as the attempt by the ‘builder’ of the Chrysotriklinos, Justin II, to make clear his identification as ‘... the image of Christ on earth’.—A Cameron, ‘Artistic Patronage’, XII, *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, London: Variorum, 1981, pp 76-77.
See also Swoboda for a discussion of motif in palatine architecture.—Swoboda, ‘The Problem of the iconography of Late Antique and Early Mediaeval Palaces’.—Cameron, ‘Elites and Icons in Byzantium’, XVIII, Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium, p 17ff. The primary source for the Chrysotriklinos is provided by De Ceremoniis, II, 15.

Bardill, The Great Palace, p 230. Bardill suggests that although the archaeological evidence is lacking to support such a theory, there may have been an original Augusteus built by Constantine, on or about the area of the St. Andrews excavation site. He cites the Patria in speculating that the origin of the Augusteus was a coronation room, possibly dedicated to Constantine’s mother, Helena. This would, he argues, neatly explain the association with the ceremony for the crowning of the empresses, in the absence of hard evidence.—J Bardill, ‘The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors and the Walker Trust Excavations’, Journal of Roman Archaeology, 12 (1999): 216-230.


Kleijwegt notes in relation to the plan of late Roman provincial villas that ‘…the middle room, as can be demonstrated for instance in the case of the villa at Newton on the Isle of Wight, is usually representational and designed for the shared celebration of religious ceremonies (my emphasis). Newton is unusual in retaining evidence of doorway positions, and thus it can be demonstrated that the middle room did not communicate with the rooms on either side ….’ See M Kleijwegt, review of Roman Villas: A Study in Social Structure, by J T Smith, Bryn Mawr Classical Review (20 March 1999), available at http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1999/1999-03-20.html accessed 23 February 2005. It would appear possible that the function of the Augusteus in the private section of the Palace was a Christianized derivation of this cultic room, possibly originally devoted to ancestor worship.

Mango has suggested that an earlier palace bath complex had occupied the site of the peristyle. See Kosteneç, ‘The Heart of the Empire’, p 16.

Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, p 349.