
The Development of Constantinople as an Urban Centre

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In this paper I can do little more than summarize what I said, fairly succinctly, in a recent booklet¹ and what I hope to develop at greater length in a book that is still to come. The reason for this is that the urban development of Constantinople remains, strangely enough, an unexplored subject and the materials out of which it has to be constructed are too numerous and diverse to be presented in a single lecture. It is not something that can be readily deduced from the available scholarly literature, indispensable as some of it undoubtedly is.² Nor can it be apprehended by consulting a limited number of important texts -- indeed, with the one exception of the *Notitia urbis Constantinopolitanae*, a short Latin document of ca. 425 AD, which offers a statistical account of the city as it then was, there is a signal dearth of the kind of testimony that would be most useful to us. We can only accomplish our task, to the extent it can be accomplished at all, by collating thousands of bits of evidence and viewing them in a new light, i.e. not as they have been viewed by the very meritorious scholars who have studied Constantinople for the past hundred years: for the scholars in question have been largely and almost exclusively concerned with topography or, to put it differently, with what was where. Of course, topography is of fundamental importance, but even if we manage to ascertain the exact situation of *ta Amantiou*, *ta Anthemiou*, *ta Antiochou*, *ta Armatiou* and countless other localities that are mentioned in our sources, we shall still be a long way from understanding how Constantinople developed as a city.

What aspects, then, can we usefully consider? At the most basic level we must know the area covered by the city, and here we seem to be on familiar ground. Indeed, we have all been told that Constantinople underwent two successive enlargements, the first under Constantine, who, at the bidding of an angel, extended the circuit of Byzantium to a line that can be approximately determined, the second under Theodosius II, who, in 413, erected the Land Walls that are still standing. That is true enough and leads to the obvious conclusion that no further expansion occurred after 413 except for the small bulge designed to protect the exposed church of St. Mary of Blachernae and later the palace in which the Comnenian emperors came to dwell. The real picture, however, is much more complicated. In the first place, Constantinople -- I am referring to the period from the fourth to the seventh century -- was not limited to the walled city but was a conurbation as Istanbul is today. It included the suburb of Hebdomon to the west, the suburb of Sycae (Galata) across the Golden Horn, reckoned as an urban region until it was raised by Justinian to the status of a *polis*, and the independent city of Chalcedon across the mouth of the Bosphorus as well as numerous *emporía* and *proasteia*. Our knowledge of these tentacles of Constantinople, which sink into obscurity after the seventh century, is, unfortunately, very sketchy. But even if we confine ourselves to the walled city, it is by no means clear what is represented by the line of fortifications. That the Constantinian city came to be densely populated throughout is reasonably certain, but the same does not apply to the wide belt that was added under Theodosius II. Such indications as we have suggest that this considerable area was at all times rather sparsely and unevenly settled. It included a vast cemetery that occupied a good part of the seventh hill as well as the three immense open air cisterns to which I shall return. It was here that from the fifth century onwards numerous monasteries were set up in surroundings of relative tranquillity, some of them on private estates that were still designated as *proasteia*.³ We may further note that the urban regions (14 in number) were limited to the Constantinian city and that the added belt, except for the Golden Gate, did not receive any monumental adornment as we shall see presently. In short, the extent of the truly urban area remains somewhat ill-defined.

Constantinople was an artificial creation, like Washington D.C., St. Petersburg or Ankara. We are so used to statements of its incomparable natural advantages that we tend to forget certain facts. Ancient Byzantium, which had existed a thousand years before Constantine, never grew up into a really major

city, situated as it was somewhat on the fringe of the civilized world, considerably to the north of the major routes of east-west traffic. It is also worthy of note that when, in the period of the Tetrarchy, the area of the Straits assumed a new importance, I suppose largely for military reasons, the two centres that were upgraded to become imperial residences were Nicomedia to the east and Perinthus/Heraclea to the west. Was Diocletian as blind as the original Greek settlers of the seventh century BC who gave their preference to Chalcedon? One can hardly avoid the conclusion that the site of Byzantium was perceived to have some serious drawbacks. The most obvious one was that it was exposed to attack from its hinterland, not being protected by any natural barrier, and any agricultural territory it might possess in Thrace was equally liable to devastation, which is why, I suppose, ancient Byzantium went to the trouble of acquiring lands on the opposite side of the Sea of Marmara.⁴ Another clear disadvantage was the lack of sufficient sources of drinking water.

I should like to mention one further consideration because it has often been insufficiently appreciated. The natural function of Byzantium in antiquity as in modern times was to serve as the gateway to the Black Sea. This is stressed by Polybius,⁵ who informs us that Byzantium owed its prosperity to the control it exercised over Pontic trade, viz. in cattle, slaves, honey, wax and preserved fish that were shipped southward in exchange for olive oil and wine; as for corn, it was traded both ways. This traffic depended on the existence of the Greek colonies on the northern coast of the Black Sea, which were mostly wiped out in the third century AD. As a result, the very trade on which the well-being of Byzantium was predicated was no longer operative by the time of Constantine. Indeed, it remained dormant until the ninth or tenth century, when the northern trade route was, to some extent, re-opened by the Russian Vikings, a circumstance that may have had a beneficial effect on Constantinople.

One cannot say, therefore, that Constantine made an obvious choice of capital given the circumstances of the early fourth century. On the contrary, he took a considerable risk and if the gamble succeeded, this was due to quite extraordinary exertions on the part of his successors. Of course, the act of foundation in the year 324 did not attract overnight a vast number of settlers, but the city grew quite rapidly, reaching a first peak in about AD 350-360,⁶ and it continued growing for at least another century until it had become extremely overcrowded.⁷ I do not wish to become embroiled in a fruitless discussion of population figures, which we are unable to calculate with any degree of accuracy: let us say, for the sake of

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argument, that ancient Byzantium had about 20,000 inhabitants and Constantinople by the middle of the fifth century some 350,000. Let us also remember that Constantinople was planned on the model of other Tetrarchic capitals, like Nicomedia, Sirmium, Milan or Trier, and that its population expected the material comforts and amusements that were available in all major cities of the Late Roman world.

The point I should like to stress is that in the natural order of things Constantinople was incapable of supporting a population of 350,000. The very fact that already in Constantine's time arrangements were made for corn to be supplied from Egypt proves that it was not available from sources closer at hand. Total dependence on Egypt continued until the early seventh century and when shipments were delayed or interrupted people went starving and riots broke out. This made for an unstable situation considering not only the enormous distance from Alexandria to Constantinople but also the difficulty of sailing up the Hellespont in the summer when the prevailing winds are northerly.* In short, an elaborate and costly infrastructure had to be set up in order to make Constantinople into a viable *Großstadt*. We have some materials to study this subject from the point of view of both corn and water supply.

The architectural requirements of food supply are harbours and granaries. A simple calculation shows that in the sixth century the number of ships engaged in the Egyptian traffic alone, i.e. ships that docked at Constantinople every year, must have been between 2,400 and 3,600.⁹ Allowance must also be made for other commodities, such as olive oil, wine, meat, pottery, textiles, building materials, etc. Assuming that 500 ships may have had to dock simultaneously and allowing a width of 8 to 10 m for each ship, we would require a total length of wharfage of 4 to 5 km. This figure is lower than that of Portus, the main harbour of Rome, and quite in keeping with what we know about other Roman harbours throughout the Mediterranean.

When we address ourselves to the harbours of Constantinople, a subject that has been much confused by topographical uncertainties,¹⁰ we discover a clear progression both in terms of capacity and in terms of location. The ancient city had two adjacent harbours, called Proshorion and Neorion, both on the Golden Horn side, roughly between the Seraglio Point and the present Galata bridge. Neither is represented by any archaeological remains, but their combined width does not seem to have exceeded 700 m, which could perhaps have yielded a wharfage of 1,500 m. It is to be noted that in the fifth century the main concentration of granaries and warehouses was next to the Proshorion harbour and consisted of the *Horrea olearia* (for oil),

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the Horrea Troadensia, the Horrea Constantiaca and the Horrea Valentiaca, the latter two evidently built by the emperors Constantius II and Valens respectively. In other words, Constantine himself does not appear to have increased the harbour capacity of his city.

The next step dates from 362 when Julian built on the Marmara side a large harbour that was called after him until it was renamed as the harbour of Sophia with reference to the wife of Justin II. It is my belief, which I cannot argue here in detail, that the Julianic harbour is represented by the level space known today as Kadırgalimanı (the Byzantine Kontoskalion) plus the adjacent inflection of the sea walls at modern Kumkapı. This would have given it a width of about 600 m.

The third and last expansion was due to Theodosius I, who built the Theodosian harbour, also on the Marmara side but farther west, at the mouth of the stream Lycus. Its outline, clearer in the last century than it is today, is marked on all maps of the city. With a width of about 700 m, it was probably the biggest of the city harbours. Next to it two granaries are mentioned, the Horrea Alexandrina, obviously with reference to the Egyptian shipments, and the Horreum Theodosianum.

With the construction of the Theodosian harbour in ca. 390 AD the total length of available wharfage would have reached about 4.5 km. In the subsequent period there are several references to the upkeep of the existing system, but I can find no evidence for its enlargement either in terms of harbour facilities or of granaries. From the seventh century onwards, however, there are clear signs of a drastic reduction. The Proosphorion harbour disappears from view and the Theodosian is filled up to become what it still is today, viz. a tract of market gardens. The newly created imperial navy is based on the Neorion, while the unloading of essential supplies is transferred to Julian's harbour.¹¹ In effect, therefore, the harbour capacity used for non-military purposes is reduced to about one quarter of what it had been in the fifth century. The same trend also applies to public granaries: of the five mentioned in the *Notitia* it seems that only one survived into the ninth century.¹²

The other essential requirement of urban living, viz. water supply, also provides an instructive if somewhat indistinct picture. It must be understood in this connection that the consumption of water is a function of social custom rather than physical need: hence numerical calculation is extremely deceptive. Today we probably use more water in flushing our toilets than in washing our bodies or our dishes and only a tiny amount for drinking, not taking into account those who own swimming pools or sprinkle their

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lawns all summer. What is, in any case, reasonably clear is that the Roman Imperial period, including Late Antiquity, was one of extravagant use of water owing to the prevalence of luxurious public baths and constantly flowing fountains. Calculations made for various Roman cities indicate a supply of approximately 1 m³ per person per 24 hours, which is ten times as much as for Paris in 1900 (where, furthermore, the greatest part of water was used by industry).¹³ If Roman Nîmes had 20-30,000 m³ per day,¹⁴ Cherchell 40,000,¹⁵ Lyon 75,000¹⁶ and Rome 1,150,000,¹⁷ we would expect for Constantinople a figure of some 300-400,000, which is vastly in excess of any known water resources in the vicinity of the city, even allowing for their gradual exhaustion through the centuries. The water-yielding areas in question within a radius of 20-30 km from the Theodosian walls produced in 1922 less than 20,000 m³ per day.¹⁸

Pre-Constantinian Byzantium possessed an aqueduct built by the Emperor Hadrian and, it would seem, two large public baths, that of Achilles and that of Zeuxippus. I can find no mention of any relevant work undertaken by Constantine himself. By the middle of the fourth century the situation was becoming critical and led to the construction of an immensely elaborate system stretching to a distance of perhaps 100 km or more as far as the Istranca and Balkan mountains, nearly as far as the present Bulgarian frontier. This network became operational in 373¹⁹ and received the name of the aqueduct of Valens, not to be confused with the comparatively modest bridge of arches between the third and fourth hills of the city.

The system of aqueducts and conduits constructed in the second half of the fourth century is still partly extant in the poorly explored areas between Saray and Vize and beyond²⁰ and it is to be hoped that it will be more thoroughly studied in the future. In the meantime we shall have to content ourselves with a number of general observations. First, the network in question on which depended the civilized life of the citizens was extremely vulnerable to enemy action. This consideration must have been keenly perceived as soon as the network had been completed, certainly after the battle of Adrianople in 378, and led in the course of the fifth century to the building of the three immense open air cisterns within the Theodosian walls having a combined capacity of nearly 1,000,000 m³. Possibly the construction of the Anastasian Long Walls was also motivated to some extent by the need to protect part, if not all of the water supply system. Secondly, although we hear a good deal about the upkeep of aqueducts and can point to some expansion of storage facilities inside the city, notably under Justinian

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(Cisterna Basilica, Cistern of Philoxenus) and down to Phocas (cistern near the church of the Forty Martyrs), we find no reference to any enlargement of the sources of supply. Thirdly, the aqueduct of Valens was, in fact, cut by the Avars in the course of the siege of 626 and remained unrestored until 768, which must have spelled the end of a particular way of life and the abandonment of the great public baths and nymphaea. What evidence we have for the subsequent improvement of the water supply pertains to the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

We are somewhat better informed as regards the monumental aspect of the city and can describe a coherent progression from Constantine to the beginning of the fifth century. Constantine himself did not envisage a re-planning of the ancient city of Byzantium whose main features were left in place: this meant in particular that he could not take advantage of the magnificent site of the Acropolis, which contained the pagan cult centre. His intention was to extend the city utilizing existing elements. He, therefore, retained the two main squares of the Graeco-Roman city, viz. the Strategion (in the approximate location of modern Sirkeci station) and the Tetrastoon (to the south of St. Sophia), which were, I believe, linked by a north-south street, and he extended the east-west colonnaded street, ascribed to Severus, making it the main artery that came to be known as the Mesê. His own Forum, at whose centre stood the famous Porphyry Column, was sited just outside the ancient city walls on the axis of the Mesê.

While it is impossible to ascertain in detail all that Constantine did or intended to do, it is reasonable to suppose that his architects traced the main lines of the new, i.e. the added city, even if the latter remained for a time largely unbuilt and uninhabited. That meant in particular the laying out of the principal street, which, if I am not mistaken, was made to run a perfectly straight course from the Milion to the Capitol (the latter roughly on the site of the Lâleli mosque) along a distance of about 1850 m. At the Capitol the street forked: one segment of it extended north-west, past Constantine's mausoleum, the other south-west to the Golden Gate, I mean that of Constantine's walls. Of the transverse, north-south streets the only one that can be traced with any degree of certainty ran from the Golden Horn to the Propontis across the Turkish Grand Bazaar, its intersection with the Mesê being marked by a tetrapylon.

Not surprisingly the main centres of administration, religion, entertainment and commerce remained concentrated within the ancient city where the population still lived at the time. These included the

imperial palace next to the Hippodrome, the Praetorium, the vast complex of the Basilica with its law courts and shops, the first Christian episcopal church of St. Irene as well as the pre-existing harbours, theatre and amphitheatre. The new Forum with the adjoining Senate House was, as I have said, barely outside the ancient circuit walls. Only Constantine's mausoleum and the Mint were placed on the periphery.

Just as in the case of the harbours we have observed a westward extension of facilities whereby the Propontis shore acquired a commercial importance rivalling that of the Golden Horn, so the monumental adornment of the Mesê was gradually carried westward as well. Two stages are clearly marked: the first was the construction in 393 of the Theodosian Forum or Forum Tauri (roughly corresponding to modern Beyazit square), modelled on Trajan's Forum in Rome, with its spirally fluted column, its two triumphal arches (one represented by extant remains) and its basilica: the second, in ca. 403, was the laying out of the Forum of Arcadius on the seventh hill, also adorned with arches and a monumental column whose pedestal survives. As to the Forum Bovis, situated between those of Theodosius and Arcadius in the Lycus valley (modern Aksaray), it seems to have been built after 425 since it is not mentioned in the *Notitia*.

All the evidence we have surveyed so far as regards harbours, granaries, water supply and monumental squares indicates that a peak of development was reached soon after the year 400, i.e. roughly at the time of the construction of the Theodosian walls. Had the same momentum been kept up, we would expect to see the added belt of ground also receiving an appropriate monumental expression, but that, as I have said, did not happen to any appreciable extent. Only along the triumphal way linking the new, Theodosian Golden Gate to that of Constantine do we find some slight indication of monumental treatment: I have in mind a structure called Sigma, probably a semicircular portico, which I suspect may have been the same as the Forum of Theodosius II *in loco qui Heliane dicitur*, mentioned only by Marcellinus Comes.²¹ The Sigma was decorated with a number of statues including one of the same emperor. Yet, strangely enough, there does not seem to have been a straight and direct avenue linking the two Golden Gates.

The middle of the fifth century marks a turning point. If the coherent pattern of growth that can be traced from Constantine to Theodosius II was unimpeded by any major catastrophe, we now enter a period of social tension, rioting and frequent fires. The first circus sedition mentioned by Marcellinus Comes is dated 445.²² The fire of 433, which raged three days,

destroyed a good part of the north, coastal part of the city including the granaries and the baths of Achilles,²³ while that of 465 reduced to ruin eight out of the fourteen urban regions over an area of 2.5 by 1 km.²⁴ The frequency of conflagrations, of which the best known is that caused by the Nika riot of 532, continued unabated through the sixth century. That meant that greater effort was now needed to rebuild than to build afresh.

A second development that confronts us towards the middle of the fifth century is the multiplication of churches and monasteries. In 425, if the *Notitia* is to be trusted, Constantinople had only 14 churches. Soon thereafter the number began to grow very considerably. While it is impossible to give precise figures owing to the random nature of the documentation and the uncertainty of attributions, it is clear that many churches, including some very famous ones like those of the Virgin Mary of Blachernae and of Chalkoprateia, of St. Laurence, St. Theodore of Sporacius, St. Stephen, St. Irene of the Perama, St. Euphemia *en tois Olybriou*, of the Forty Martyrs and others, were built at this time, a leading role in this respect being played by the pious empress Pulcheria.

For monasteries we have more reliable lists, viz. those of the signatories of the deposition of Eutyches in 448 and of the councils of 518 and 536.²⁵ The total number for Constantinople and its suburbs (excluding the Asiatic side) is about 80, an astonishing figure in view of the fact that monasticism reached Constantinople at a relatively late date, not much before AD 400.²⁶ If we eliminate those of uncertain location (about 35) the breakdown is as follows:

Within the Constantinian city: 9 (of which 5 are uncertain)

Between Constantinian and Theodosian walls: 23 (2 being uncertain)

Suburban: 13 (2 being uncertain).

These figures speak for themselves. They show that in the early part of the sixth century there was as yet a reluctance to establish monasteries within city limits, but that the monastic population, much of which was of provincial origin and coalesced in 'national' groups,²⁷ was drawn as close to the city as possible, into that indeterminate belt of land between the two walls that was neither truly urban nor truly suburban.

The trend that was started in the mid-fifth century was continued and intensified in the sixth. Thanks to the *Buildings* of Procopius we are exceptionally well informed about the public works in Constantinople during the reigns of Justin I and Justinian, in all over a period of about forty years. We are so accustomed to regarding Justinian as the

greatest builder of Byzantine history and so dazzled by the majesty of St. Sophia that we unconsciously assume that Constantinople attained its greatest monumental splendour during his reign. In a recent (and most excellent) book on Procopius I find this statement: "In Justinian's new lay-out of the city he [Procopius] was much less interested, despite its importance for the development of ceremonial and imposition of a strong imperial stamp on the topography of the city."²⁸ I must confess that I am not sure what this refers to. It is true that as a result of the great conflagration caused by the Nika riot Justinian was obliged to rebuild the area that had been gutted, including the churches of St. Sophia and St. Irene, the vestibule of the palace, the Senate House and the baths of Zeuxippus, but I do not see that in so doing he altered in any way the lay-out of the city. In fact, if we examine the list of Justinian's buildings given by Procopius and supplement it with the occasional data of the *Chronicon Paschale*, we are left with the impression that his activity had little to do with the provision of public spaces or secular public buildings. In this respect his work was limited to a seaside promenade in the quarter of Arcadianae (north of the imperial palace),²⁹ to the installation of the Cisterna Basilica, already mentioned, and the completion of the bath of Dagistheus that had been started by Anastasius.³⁰ Justinian built a number of palaces for himself, both urban and suburban, and, in the sphere of welfare, six hospices; but by far his greatest contribution was the construction or reconstruction of 33 churches.

While there can be no doubt that the proliferation of churches and monasteries had a profound effect on the urban landscape of Constantinople, the nature of this change is not easy to visualize or to explain. In many cases, it would seem, churches and monasteries were set up not by the emperor but by rich private individuals on properties owned by them. What was the nature of these properties and how was their character altered by their consecration to religious use? Once we ask this question we realize how little we know about the way of life and pattern of domestic architecture in the capital. So let us take a few examples. One of the earliest takes us back to ca. AD 400 and concerns Olympias, the friend of St. John Chrysostom. This very rich widow, a member of the new aristocracy that sprang up in the days of Constantine, owned three houses (*oikiai*) at Constantinople, which she willed to the Church. She herself resided in one near the baths of Constantius, i.e. near the modern Municipality (Belediye) of Istanbul, an area, incidentally, that was very *chic* at the time. A second, called *tôn Euandrou*, cannot be localized. The third, called *tôn Olympiados*,

lay immediately to the south of St. Sophia, meaning, of course, the first cathedral of that name that had been consecrated in 360, and it was this property that she converted into a kind of private nunnery composed of her ladies in waiting and female relatives. The inmates, at first fifty, rose to 250. The *oikia ton Olympiados* appears to have been not so much a house or mansion in the ordinary sense of the word as a city block because it included something designated as a 'tribunal', a fully appointed bath, a bakery and a number of shops placed in the south portico (*embolos*) of the cathedral. This shows, incidentally, that the episcopal church did not rise in monumental isolation, but was tightly surrounded by commercial property. It is not recorded what architectural alterations Olympias made in converting the buildings to religious use other than providing a direct access to the narthex of the cathedral.³¹ The result must have been to turn what had been a highly desirable piece of income-producing real estate into a dependency of the patriarchal complex.

Our second example concerns Sporacius, consul in 452. This man possessed, close to the Basilica, a splendid mansion on the Mesê, to which was attached a private chapel dedicated to St. Theodore. In the course of a great fire, perhaps that of 465, the chapel was burnt but the mansion was miraculously spared. In gratitude for this event Sporacius built for the Saint a much larger church³² which survived all through the Middle Ages. After the founder's death it seems that his nephew retained certain rights over it,³³ but before 535 it had passed under the jurisdiction of the cathedral by whose clergy it was served.³⁴ We do not know what happened to the mansion.

Further examples are known from archaeological evidence and concern the mansions of Antiochus, Lausus, Anicia Juliana and, at a later date, that of Romanus I, i.e. the Myrelaion. I shall say a few words about the first two, which were situated next to each other, immediately to the north of the Hippodrome. Antiochus, who reached the rank of *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, was one of the most powerful men in the Empire during the early years of Theodosius II and probably built his palace in ca. 410-20. It was an extraordinarily pretentious affair, with a number of halls arranged fan-like round a semicircular portico 52 m in diameter. Antiochus was disgraced in ca. 420 and his possessions passed to the Crown, becoming a *curatoria*. At a later date, possibly at the beginning of the sixth century, the central, hexagonal hall was turned into a church in which the highly venerated relics of St. Euphemia were deposited in the early seventh.³⁵ The adjoining palace of Lausus was built by Antiochus' successor as *praepositus*, probably in the years 420-30. This was an equally grand

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construction, with a domed rotunda 22 m in diameter leading into a seven-apsed dining room 52 m long. The palace with its famous collection of classical sculpture was burnt down in 476 and it is said that a hospice (*xenodochion*) was installed over or amidst its ruins.³⁶ Then, in 602-10, an important church of St. Phocas (renamed after St. John the Evangelist) was built over part of the palace.³⁷

The examples I have quoted (and there are many more) are not all exactly similar, but share certain common traits. In some cases (those of Olympias, Sporacius, Anicia Julian, etc.) it was the owner who built a church or installed a monastery within the complex of his or her mansion; in others the property passed to the Crown and subsequently acquired a religious use. Now, if we look at the mansions of Antiochus and Lausus, the only two that have been excavated to a large extent if not completely, we cannot help being struck by their enormous proportions and ceremonial character. They are in the nature of imperial rather than domestic architecture. In neither case is it clear where the domestic quarters were situated: all we see are the grand reception rooms. We might have guessed as much on the basis of texts (bearing in mind, e.g. the fifty ladies in waiting kept by Olympias), but it is much more graphic to have the actual remains before our eyes. And if excavations have revealed two such mansions, we must remember that there must have been scores of others owned by powerful ministers and members of imperial dynasties (especially that of Theodosius). Unlike English country houses they do not seem to have remained very long in the hands of the same families and there must have been strong inducements to turn them into 'foundations' by giving them a religious status. It was partly by this process that Constantinople acquired its multiplicity of churches. Another side effect, given that the churches remained while the mansions tended to disappear, was the preservation of old toponyms -- all those names starting with *ta* or *ton* -- that usually take us back to worthies of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries.

Construction continued at Constantinople until the beginning of the seventh century³⁸ and then ground to a virtual stop. Even the great Heraclius has no buildings associated with his name. I have no doubt that following the suspension of the Egyptian corn supply, the collapse of the Empire's finances³⁹ and a succession of other calamities Constantinople went into a sharp and catastrophic decline, probably reaching its lowest point after the great plague of 747. The evidence for this trend is scattered but unmistakable and anyone who takes the trouble to read, and especially to read between the lines the *Parastaseis*

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syntomoi chronikai, the eighth-century compilation that has recently been the object of some attention,⁴⁰ cannot fail to be convinced of the fact. This text reflects a city that lay in ruins and whose inhabitants had lost all genuine feeling of continuity with the past.⁴¹ The only question is to what extent Constantinople contracted during the dark centuries and whether this contraction followed any given pattern.

Bearing in mind the case of medieval Rome, with its *abitato* and *disabitato*, we may ask ourselves whether anything of the kind also occurred at Constantinople. The evidence is not plentiful, but we do possess some information on where people (mostly, of course, important people) had their houses in the period between the eighth and tenth centuries. On a preliminary survey I find the greatest concentration on the southern, Propontis shore, especially in the area of the Acropolis (houses of the Patriarch Ignatios, Eulogios the Persian, Gregoras, Constantine Barbaros, the Caesar Bardas, Alexios Mouselis, Michael protovestiarios), from Julian's harbour to that of Theodosius (houses of Nikephoros Phokas the elder, Belonas, Krateros and palace of Eleutherios built by the empress Irene) and thinning out in the direction of Psamathia (house of Leo Katakalon). In the central part of the city there is a group in the area of the Tetrapylon, i.e. at the crossroads between the Mesê and the north-south portico of Domninos (houses of Agrikolaos, Leo the Armenian, Theophobos, *xenodochion* of Romanus I) and another in that of Constantianae/Zeugma (houses of Akropolites, Artabasdos, Isidoros, Toxaras, bath of Areobindos that was frequented by the logothete Theoktistos, *xenon* of Theophilus called Metanoia). The Golden Horn side is barely represented (house of the same Theoktistos at *ta Kanikleiou*) and there are two or three cases on the periphery. While these results need to be more closely verified, they do suggest that the population did not contract into a small compact area, but occupied a fairly extensive space to the east of a diagonal line extending roughly from the harbour of Theodosius to the Süleymaniye mosque and on to the Galata bridge, i.e. considerably less than Constantine's city. Such a distribution is not unexpected in view of the transfer, already noted, of commercial traffic to Julian's harbour and the attraction exercised by the imperial palace. More than half the area enclosed by the Theodosian walls must have remained pretty empty, with the valley of the Lycus particularly deserted.⁴²

While we have no notion of the density of occupation in the inhabited area, we can confidently say that the way of life of Dark Age and medieval Constantinople had changed drastically since the days