



Palace of Lausus

Summary :

The palace of the *praepositus* Lausus (Lausus) was situated on the north side of the Mese, near and east of the Forum of Constantine. Lausus is best known for his collection of antique statues which included for example Zeus of Olympia by Pheidias. The palace was damaged and the collection destroyed by a fire in 475.

Date

5th century

Geographical Location

Constantinople, Istanbul

1. Lausus and the historical context

Lausus is attested as the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* (grand chamberlain) at the court of the emperor [Theodosius II](#) (408-450) between 420 and 422. He may have held this office again in 431 and 436.¹ Lausus owned a substantial palace in [Constantinople](#) which was situated on the Mesê (the present Divan Youlu Caddesi follows the course of the Byzantine street), not far from the [palace of Antiochos](#) (who also served as a *praepositus* before him). Lausus became famous especially for his large collection of antique statues. In 391 Theodosios I (379-395) declared Christianity as the only legitimate imperial religion, ending state support for the traditional roman religion. As a result of this emperor's edict old pagan temples were closed and abandoned, many of them consequently replaced by churches. No doubt such a situation enabled Lausus, who must have been a powerful and rich man, to obtain many classical Greek, Hellenistic and Roman statues most of which had been originally placed in pagan temples.

2. The statues of Lausus' palace

Lausus' palace together with the statues, which were set up near the *portico* of the Mesê, were destroyed by the great [fire](#) of 475 which devastated a large area in the city centre. Fortunately, [byzantine historians](#) Kedrenos² and Zonaras³ referred to Lausus' rich collection. According to them, Lausus owned masterpieces such as Pheidias' Zeus of Olympia. It was the main temple statue in the temple of Zeus at Olympia; a chryselephantine figure of Zeus sat on a jewel-encrusted throne and carried a small figure of Nike. The statue's height was at 12 – 14 m and it was dated to the fifth century BC. He also owned Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles (statue known from antique copies, made for Aphrodite's sanctuary at Knidos and dated to the fourth century BC) and Eros (statue made possibly by Lyssipos and dated to the fourth century BC). In addition Kedrenos enumerates other pieces from the collection: Hera of Samos (probably not the main statue of the sanctuary of Hera but rather a votive one dated to the sixth century BC and possibly carved by Bupalos) and Athena of Lindos (a votive statue 'of emerald stone' placed originally in the sanctuary of Athena at Lindos on Rhodes, allegedly attributed to the sculptors Skyllis and Dipoinos and dated to the sixth century BC). Kedrenos mentions also the statue of Kairos, centaurs, pans (from the Hellenistic or Roman period) and statues of various animals. The statue of Kairos, dated to the fourth century BC, is referred to as Chronos by Kedrenos and is attributed by him to Lyssipos; it is described as a running figure being bald at the back of his head with a shock of hair in front and with winged feet that moves forward on tiptoe while carrying a razor - this suggests that the statue represented Kairos (Kairos expresses the idea of a moment within the longer passage of time, while Chronos refers to the chronological or sequential time).⁴

3. The palace of Lausus

Until recently scholars identified the Palace of Lausus with a huge rotunda (preceded with horseshoe-shaped portico) and adjoining long hall which were discovered immediately north of the hexagonal hall of the Palace of Antiochos (situated on the west side of the [hippodrome](#) – now Atmeydan – and close by Adliye Sarayi, the Turkish palace of justice).⁵ This identification was doubted by E. Torelli Landini who pointed to the fact that the residence of Lausus was accessible from the Mesê which was not, however, the case



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with the rotunda and the long hall.⁶ More recently, J. Bardill has reasonably relocated the Palace of Lausos on the opposite side of the Mesê, near the [Forum of Constantine](#). Bardill argues that the palace stood immediately east of a large open cistern whose eastern wall is still visible on Babiali street and identifies this water reservoir as the [Cistern of Philoxenus](#) which was, according to textual sources, near the Palace of Lausos.⁷ After the fire of 475 the palace was repaired but it was damaged again in 498, 512, 532 and 603.⁸ In addition, it has been suggested that the residence of Lausus passed into the ownership of Symmachus by the sixth century and was also known under the latter's name then.⁹

1. On Lausus see Martindale, J.R., *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire 2: AD 395-527*, Cambridge 1980, s.v. Lausus 2 and Lausus 3.
2. George Kedrenos, *Compendium Historiarum*, I. Bekker (ed.), *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae ope I* (CSHB, Bonn 1838), p. 616-7.
3. Büttner-Wobst, T. (ed.), *Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum 3* (Leipzig 1897), p. 131.
4. For English translation of the descriptions of the Lausus collection by Kedrenus and Zonaras as well as for the discussion of the statues see most recently Bassett S., *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*, (Cambridge 2004), pp. 232-238.
5. Dolunay, N. – Naumann, R., 'Untersuchungen zwischen Divan Yolu und Adalet Sarayı 1954', *Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri Yilligi 11-12* (1964), p. 137; Müller-Wiener, W., *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen 1977), pp. 238-239 with bibliography.
6. Torelli Landini, E., "Note sugli scavi a nord-ovest dell'Ippodromo di Istanbul (1939/1964) e loro identificazione", *Storia dell'Arte* 68 (1990), p. 25 and p. 28.
7. Bardill, J., "The Palace of Lausus and Nearby Monuments in Constantinople: A Topographical Study", *American Journal of Archaeology* 101:1 (Jan. 1997), pp. 67-95.
8. Berger, A., *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos* (ΠΟΙΚΙΛΑ BYZANTINA 8, Bonn 1988), p. 285.
9. Bardill, J., "The Palace of Lausus and Nearby Monuments in Constantinople: A Topographical Study", *American Journal of Archaeology* 101:1 (Jan. 1997), p. 85-86

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	Mango C., Vickers M., Francis E. , "The Palace of Lausus at Constantinople and its Collection of Ancient Statues", <i>Journal of the History of Collections</i> , 4:1, 1992, 89-98
	Bardill J. , "The Palace of Lausus and Nearby Monuments in Constantinople: A Topographical Study", <i>American Journal of Archaeology</i> , 101:1, Jan. 1997, 67-95
	Berger A. , <i>Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos</i> , Bonn 1988, Ποικίλα Βυζαντινά 8
	Guberti Bassett S. , "‘Excellent Offerings’: The Lausus Collection in Constantinople", <i>The Art Bulletin</i> , 82:1, Mar. 2000, 6-25
	Bassett S. , <i>The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople</i> , Cambridge 2004



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Torelli Landini E., "Note sugli scavi a nord-ovest dell'Ippodromo di Istanbul (1939/1964) e loro identificazione", *Storia dell'Arte*, 68, 1990, 5-35

Webliography :

The Palace of Lausus

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/greece/hetairai/lausus.html

The Palace of Lausus and Nearby Monuments in Costantinople: A Topographical Study

<http://www.jstor.org/pss/506250>

Glossary :

praepositos

(from lat. praepositus sacri cubiculi) The praepositos or praipositos (*πραιπόσιτος του ιερού κουβουκλίου* or *του ευσεβεστάτου κοιτώνος*) was a grand chamberlain by the Early Byzantine period the highest official, usually Eunuch, in the imperial service. After the 6th C. his functions were assumed by the parakoimomenos. The dignity involved in palace ceremony and disappeared until the end of 11th C.

stoa, portico, the

A long building with a roof supported by one or two colonnades parallel to its back wall.

Sources

Büttner-Wobst, T. (ed.), *Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum* 3 (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, Leipzig 1897), p. 131.

George Kedrenos, *Compendium Historiarum*, I. Bekker (ed.), *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae ope* I (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, Bonn 1838), pp. 564, 616-7.

Quotations

Byzantine historians comment on the Lausus collection destroyed by fire

a. Zonaras

διέφθειρε δὲ τὸ πῦρ ἐκεῖνο καὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς Λαύσου τῆς πόλεως ἀγλαΐαν καὶ τὰ ἐκεῖ ἐνιδρυμένα ἀγάλματα τῆς τε Σαμίας Ἥρας καὶ τῆς Λινδίας Ἀθηνᾶς καὶ τῆς Κνιδίας Ἀφροδίτης, τὰ κατὰ τέχνην περιβόητα ἀφιδρύματα, καὶ μέχρι τοῦ Φόρου ἐπέδραμε.

Büttner-Wobst, T. (ed.), *Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum* 3 (Leipzig 1875), p. 131.

b. Kedrenos

συνέφθειρε δὲ καὶ τῆς μέσης τῶν παλατιῶν ἐκατέρωθεν στοᾶς καὶ τῶν Λαύσου τὰ κάλλιστα ἀναθήματα· πολλὰ γὰρ τῶν ἀρχαίων ἀγαλμάτων αὐτόθι ἐνίδρυτο, τῆς Ἀφροδίτης τῆς ἐν Κνίδῳ τὸ περιβόητον, καὶ τὸ τῆς Σαμίας Ἥρας, καὶ τὸ τῆς Λινδίας Ἀθηνᾶς ἐξ ἄλλης ὕλης, ἣν Ἄμασις ὁ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων βασιλεὺς τῷ σοφῷ Κλεοβούλῳ ἀπέστειλε, καὶ ἄλλα μυρία.

I. Bekker (ed.), *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae ope* I (CSHB, Bonn 1838), pp. 616-7.

The palace's location near the cistern of Philoxenos

Ἔστι ἐν τοῖς Λαύσου ἦσαν οἰκίματα παμποίκιλα καὶ ξενοδοχεῖά τινα, ὅπου ἡ φιλόξενος ἐχορήγει τὸ ὕδωρ...

I. Bekker (ed.), *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae ope* I (CSHB, Bonn 1838), p. 564.