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Δελτίον ΧΑΕ 10 (1980-1981), Περίοδος Δ'. Στη μνήμη του Ανδρέα Γρηγ. Ξυγγόπουλου (1891-1979)



Ο προφυρίτης κίων του Μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου και το παρεκκλήσι του Αγίου Κωνσταντίνου (εικ. 1, πίν. 17-18)

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ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΧΡΗΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑΣ

Constantine's Porphyry Column and the Chapel of St.
Constantine (fig. 1, pl. 17-18)

Cyril MANGO

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ΑΘΗΝΑ 1981

CONSTANTINE'S PORPHYRY COLUMN
AND THE CHAPEL OF ST. CONSTANTINE

(PL. 17 - 18)

It was at the 1953 International Congress of Byzantine Studies held at Thessaloniki that the late Ernest Mamboury presented his tantalizing and highly amusing account of "Les mystères de la Colonne Brulée".¹ In view of the fact that Andreas Xyngopoulos took an active part in the organization of that Congress, I trust that a further exploration of the same topic will not be inappropriate as a tribute to his illustrious memory.

I shall not repeat here Mamboury's description of the excavations that were carried out in 1929 - 30 round and under the Porphyry Column, a description that was published without any illustrative material. It may be recalled, however, that the excavations were undertaken by the Danish theosophist Carl Vett whose unstated purpose was to discover the Palladium of Troy, Noah's axe and the other relics that had allegedly been buried under the column. Mamboury served at first as technical adviser, but he was subsequently dismissed by his employer and the work was continued for a time without the benefit of archaeological expertise. I do not know what materials by way of notes, drawings and photographs were in Vett's possession or what has become of them. It seems that at one time he intended to deposit them at the Royal Library of Copenhagen, but did not do so. He also sought the collaboration of Ejnar D ygge with a view to a joint publication, an offer that the eminent archaeologist felt compelled to decline.

Mamboury died shortly after the Thessaloniki Congress. In due course I was informed that he had bequeathed to me a trunk-full of miscellaneous papers, among which I discovered a substantial dossier devoted to Constantine's Column². Since that dossier was limited to

1. Πετρ. τοῦ Θ' Διεθνoῦς Βυζ. Συνεδρίου I, Athens, 1955, 275 - 80.

2. The greater part of the papers in question was later given by me to the German Archaeological Institute at Istanbul. I am much indebted to Prof. W. Müller-Wiener, Director of that Institute, for supplying to me the photographs reproduced here as Pl. 18a and b.

drawings, I set out to trace any other relevant documentation. To my surprise, it turned out that Carl Vett was still alive and residing in New Jersey, and when I wrote him in 1954, he expressed willingness to show me his materials. Alas, that was not to happen: he was then in failing health and eventually died in Rome in 1957. All my subsequent endeavours to locate his papers ended in failure³.

I thought it necessary to set down the above facts because there is still a faint possibility that the Vett Nachlass will be found and may have a bearing on what I propose to say here. My archaeological information is limited to Mamboury's drawings and published reports. For the rest I shall have to rely mainly on Byzantine texts.

The most accurate delineation of the column as it appeared before its pedestal, base and lowest drum had been obscured by a tapering sheath of stonework was made by an anonymous artist in 1574 and is now preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge (Pl. 17). The drawing is incorrect in one important respect, namely in unduly reducing the width of the platform of steps upon which the pedestal is placed. As established in the excavations, the top of the platform forms a square 8.35 m. wide, whereas the pedestal is only 3.80 m. wide. The Cambridge drawing appears, on the other hand, to be reasonably reliable in its representation of the pedestal with a row of fleurons at its foot and a projecting moulding at the top, of the two-course plinth and the mouldings of the base. All these details are confirmed by another drawing executed in 1561 by the Danish artist Melchior Lorck⁴ which, however, also places upon the pedestal an elaborate relief depicting the *aurum coronarium*. In commenting on these drawings some years ago⁵ I endeavoured to establish certain facts concerning the column that have been consistently misrepresented in scholarly literature, in particular that the shaft never had more than seven drums of porphyry (not eight, ten or eleven as often claimed) and that the Turkish reinforcement of the pedestal was added in 1779 (not in 1701). I could not then decide (and still cannot do so now) whether the relief of the *aurum coronarium* ever really existed; and I set aside the problem of the chapel of St Constantine. It is the latter that I should now like to discuss.

3. I should like to thank Øystein Hjort for making a number of relevant enquiries in Denmark.

4. Reproduced, e.g., by E. Fischer, Melchior Lorck, Copenhagen, 1962, p. 84, No. 13.

5. 'Constantinopolitana', JDI 80 (1965), 306 - 13.

The existence of the chapel is known to us from four passages of the Book of Ceremonies which have often been commented upon, notably by D.F. Beljaev⁶, J. Ebersolt⁷ and A. Vogt⁸. They concern the ceremonial for the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (I, 1, pp. 28 - 30 Reiske), Easter Monday (I, 10, pp. 74 - 5), Annunciation day (I, 30, pp. 164 - 5) and the celebration of a triumph over the Saracens (II, 19, pp. 609 - 11). On these occasions the emperor would mount to the top of the steps called δεσποτική ἀνάβασις (p. 29. 19), i.e. on to the platform of the column, and would normally stand on the right side, leaning on the parapet (p. 74. 18: ἐπακουμβίζων τῷ καγκέλλῳ ἐν τῷ δεξιῷ μέρει. Cf. 164. 17). Behind the emperor, next to the door of the chapel, was placed a processional cross that fitted into a marble base (p. 609. 12). The emperor did not enter the chapel, presumably because there was insufficient room in it, but the patriarch did so along with his deacons and cantors. It should be noted that the litany (ἐκτενή) was recited by a deacon who, in so doing, leaned out of the north window of the chapel (p. 30. 7: προκύπτοντος διὰ τῶν θυρίδων τοῦ εὐωνύμου μέρους τοῦ αὐτοῦ εὐκτηρίου).

It is not altogether easy to visualize the stations assigned to various groups of participants in the above ceremonies, except that the imperial chamberlains stood upon the steps on the right (p. 29. 3: ἐν ταῖς δεξιαῖς ἀναβάθραις τοῦ αὐτοῦ κίονος), while the metropolitans and archbishops stood on the same steps on the left (p. 29. 14: ἐν τῷ εὐωνύμῳ μέρει τῶν ἀναβάθρων τοῦ κίονος). The difficulty concerning the position of the other groups arises from something called the κιονοστασία τοῦ φόρου. Thus we are told that the senators stood on the right, in front of the emperor's station, i.e. inside the κιονοστασία τοῦ φόρου (p. 29. 1 - 2), whereas the members of the two hippodrome factions stood on the little steps (ἐν ταῖς ἐκεῖσε μικραῖς ἀναβάθραις) opposite the emperor, i.e. outside the κιονοστασία of the right side wherein the senators stood (p. 29. 4 - 6; cf. 611. 13 - 14). Furthermore, the ἔκδικοι would precede the patriarch ἔνδοθεν τῆς κιονοστασίας (p. 29. 8). Elsewhere we are told that the patricians and other dignitaries, i.e. the senators stood κάτω (p. 74. 21) or, more precisely, κάτω πλησίον τῶν κίωνων (p. 164. 20), which suggests that the κιονοστασία consisted of several columns.

What is the meaning of κιονοστασία, a term that does not appear to

6. 'Evkirij sv. Konstantina pri porfirovoj kolonne', Letopis' Ist. - Filol. Obšč. pri Imp. Novoross. Univ., IV, Vizant. Otd., II, Odessa, 1894, 1 - 22.

7. Sanctuaires de Byzance, Paris, 1921, pp. 71 - 74.

8. In his edition of the Book of Ceremonies, Commentaire, I, pp. 73 - 4.

be otherwise attested? Reiske translated it as *locus, ubi columna erecta est*, and noted (II, p. 133): *Videtur haec vox totum ambitum et fundum, quem columna cum suis appendicibus occupat, significare, et hic ambitus clathris ferreis septus fuisse*. Sophocles, in his *Lexicon*, suggests “the base of a pillar or column.” Beljaev⁹ understood it to mean an enclosure of columns or rather colonnettes which surrounded the pedestal of the big column at the foot of the flight of steps and had, outside it, a number of lower steps. Vogt translated κιονοσταςία as “l’emplacement sur lequel s’élève la colonne”, and commented, in the light of a brief conversation he had had with Mamboury: “Sur le Forum se trouvait un assez vaste espace entouré de colonnes surélevées au-dessus de gradins que le rédacteur appelle les ‘petits gradins’ et sur lesquels prenaient place les factions. Une portion au sud a été retrouvée. L’espace compris entre ces gradins et les degrés de la colonne était la ‘kionostasia’ ou emplacement de la colonne.”¹⁰ In other words, he imagined that the *kionostasia* designated the entire area of the Forum delimited by the external porticoes, surely a most unlikely assumption. The normal term to designate the open, i.e. paved area of the Forum was ὁ πλακωτὸς or τὸ πλακωτόν..

The key to the problem is, I believe, provided by another archaeological discovery made, not in the course of the Vett excavations, but in connection with the laying of a sewage system some time in the twenties or thirties. Mamboury reports as follows: “Sur la droite de la rue, en direction du forum Tauri [i.e. to the west of the Porphyry Column], quatre bases de colonnes, richement moulurées sur un stylobate de marbre, étaient encore en place à 2,40 m. de profondeur. D’une direction rectiligne et d’une longueur de plus de 20 m., ce portique fait songer au portique Kalinarique [sic] qui se trouvait sur le forum.”¹¹ There is probably little justification in identifying this portico with the so-called Χαλινάρια, a toponym attested, if I am not mistaken, by only one text¹². What interests us here is that within the area of the Forum there stood, to the west of the Porphyry Column, a long portico. The ditch dug for the laying of the sewer revealed a single row of pedestals or bases, but

9. Op. cit. 12.

10. Loc. cit.

11. ‘Les fouilles byzantines à Istanbul’, *Byzantion* 11 (1936), 254.

12. Script. orig. Constant., ed. Preger, 279 - 80: Αἱ δὲ πύλαι αἱ χαλκαὶ αἱ ἱστάμεναι εἰς τὴν Τρικύμβalon τοῦ Τζουκανιστηρίου [in the Imperial Palace] παρὰ Βασιλείου τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπήρθησαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐμβόλων τοῦ Φόρου ἐκ τὰ Χαλινάρια· ἐστάθησαν δὲ παρὰ τοῦ μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου ἀντικρυς τοῦ Σινάτου· κτίσας δὲ τὴν Νέαν [in 880] ὁ Βασίλειος ταύτας ἀνελάβετο. This suggests that the Χαλινάρια, presumably the bazaar for horses’ bridles, was in the north outer portico of the Forum, near the Senate House.

there must have been a second running parallel to it. Was not that the *kionostasia* of the Forum?

We now come to the chapel of St. Constantine. Mamboury's account of the excavations shows that the steps were uncovered, in whole or in part, on the east, south and west sides of the column, but not on the north. It was found that the west side showed very little wear and that the corners of the platform, i.e. those formed by the fifth or highest step, had been cut out in a symmetrical fashion (Pl. 18a)¹³. The presence of these cuttings was explained by Mamboury with the help of a text of Nicephorus Callistus who speaks of four strong arches surrounding the base of the column (*ἀψίσι δὲ στερραῖς τέσσαρσι τὴν τοῦ στύλου περικύκλω βάσιν ἐδράσας*)¹⁴. Mamboury concluded that the cuttings were made to accommodate four corner piers from which the supporting arches sprang, and he drew a reconstructed elevation based on that assumption (Pl. 18b)¹⁵. He further argued that the chapel or, more exactly, "le lieu où se déroulait le culte" was simply the space delimited by the four arches and screened off by parapet slabs of which some fragments were found. The cult practices, he thought, were conducted on the west side of the platform which, because of its infrequent use, showed relatively little wear.

Ingenious as such an explanation is, it does not accord with the data contained in the Ceremonial Book which imply the existence of a real, if tiny chapel having a door and at least one window, a chapel that was entered by the patriarch and was not indetical with the open platform. Note particularly that when the emperor had mounted to the top of the steps, the processional cross was placed behind him and in front of the door of the chapel: *ὁ δὲ σταυρὸς ἀνέρχεται καὶ ἴσταται ἐν τῇ βάσει ὀπισθεν τοῦ βασιλέως ἔμπροσθεν τῆς πύλης τοῦ ναοῦ* (p. 75. 4 - 5: cf. 165. 6 - 7). In view of the fact that the platform at the top of the steps is somewhat less than 2.50 m. wide, it is impossible to accommodate the chapel against the pedestal of the column on the west side. The only reasonable solution, it seems to me, is to place the chapel on the north side as shown in Text Fig. 1, i.e. on the one side that was not excavated.

13. Mamboury's plan shows similar incisions at all four corners. I am not sure whether the two on the north side were actually observed or supplied in the drawing by analogy. In his 1953 article (p. 277) Mamboury refers specifically to the corners of the south face "que nous avons pu plus particulièrement étudier".

14. *Hist. eccles.*, VII, 49, PG 145, 1325D.

15. Redrawn in W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen, 1977), fig. 288.

That would also explain why the deacon recited the litany by leaning out of the north window: there was not one on the south. But, in that case, what are we to make of the four arches mentioned in the 14th

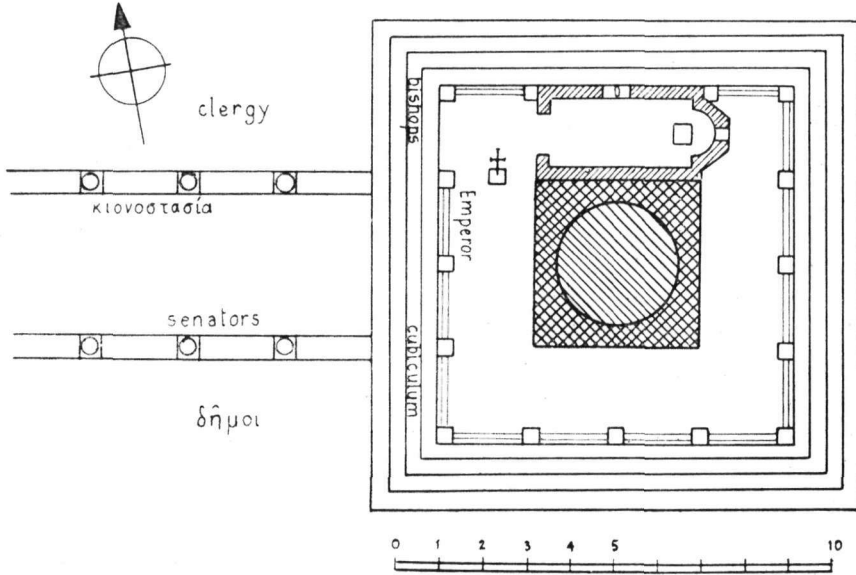


Fig. 1. Tentative reconstruction of base of Column and Chapel of St. Constantine.

century by Nicephorus Callistus, and by him alone? I would suggest that the arches were built after the period of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, possibly by Manuel I. Indeed, we may recall that the statue of Apollo/Constantine which had stood at the top of the column fell down on 5 April 1106. Since it was blown down by a strong south wind¹⁶, the likelihood is that it fell to the north, killing, as we are informed, about ten people and probably damaging the chapel. The work of restoration, which involved the replacement of the original capital by the somewhat makeshift termination that is still visible today and the erection upon it of a large cross, was carried out after a considerable lapse of time by Manuel, as indicated by the extant inscription. It may well have been judged at this juncture that the column required buttressing at the base both for reasons of stability and to prevent loss of life if another collapse were to occur. The construction of the arches may have involved the

16. *Script. orig. Constant.*, 138. 20: βίαιος νότος. Cf. Anna Comnena, XII. 4. 5, ed. Leib, III, 66: άνεμοι πλατύτατοι λίβες.

elimination of the chapel which, to the best of my knowledge, is not mentioned after the 10th century¹⁷.

Apart from its archaeological interest, the chapel of St. Constantine is also of some importance in the wider context of the ideology of the Byzantine State. The fact that it was the focus for the celebration of military triumphs over the Saracens, when the emperor, standing at the top of the steps of the column, placed his foot on the head of the captured Arab commander, shows that the sainted Constantine was regarded at a given period as the celestial patron of his Empire. At a much earlier time (4th - 5th centuries) his statue on top of the Porphyry Column had been the object of a barely disguised pagan cult¹⁸ which must have become gradually christianized. Unfortunately, we do not know when the chapel was built. It certainly existed in the late 9th century, since the ceremonial we have quoted for Easter Monday was in use until the reign of Leo VI¹⁹. A consideration that may be of relevance in this connection is that in two apocalyptic texts Constantine's Column is represented as the only monument of Constantinople that was destined to survive the ultimate destruction of that city. I am referring to a Daniel revelation that can be dated with reasonable certainty to 716 - 17²⁰ and to the famous revelation of St. Andrew the Fool which is commonly assigned to the 9th or 10th century, but which I regard as being of the 7th²¹. The latter text states the reason why the column was to be preserved until the end of time: it was because it possessed the Holy Nails, presumably in the radiate crown of the statue²².

17. R. J a n i n, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, 1/3, 2nd ed., Paris, 1969, p. 296, connects with the chapel the reference by 'the anonymous English pilgrim' to *forum, ubi est sanctus Constantinus*: S. G. M e r c a t i, *Santuari e reliquie constantinopolitane*, *RendPontAcc* 12 (1936), 150, No. 13. A fuller version of the same text, subsequently edited by K. N. C i g g a r, *Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pèlerin anglais*, *REB* 34 (1976), 255, No. 13, gives, however, *forum ubi est (columna) sancti Constantini*.

18. Philostorgius, *Hist. eccles.*, II. 17, ed. Bidez, 28. Cf. Theodoret, *Hist eccles.*, I. 34, ed. Parmentier, 90.

19. De cer., 85 - 6 Reiske. Cf. V o g t ' s, *Commentaire* I, 105.

20. Ed. K. B e r g e r, *Die griechische Daniel-Disgese* (Leiden, 1976), 15, § 9. 5: Καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀπομείνη ἐν σοὶ εἰ μὴ ὁ στῦλος τοῦ μεγάλου σκήπτρου τοῦ Βυζαντίου τοῦ μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου, ἵνα ἐκεῖ θρηνησῶσιν οἱ πλεόντες τὴν θάλασσαν. My reasons for placing the composition of this text in 716 - 17 are given in an article due to appear in *Riv. intern. di studi biz. e slavi*, 1.

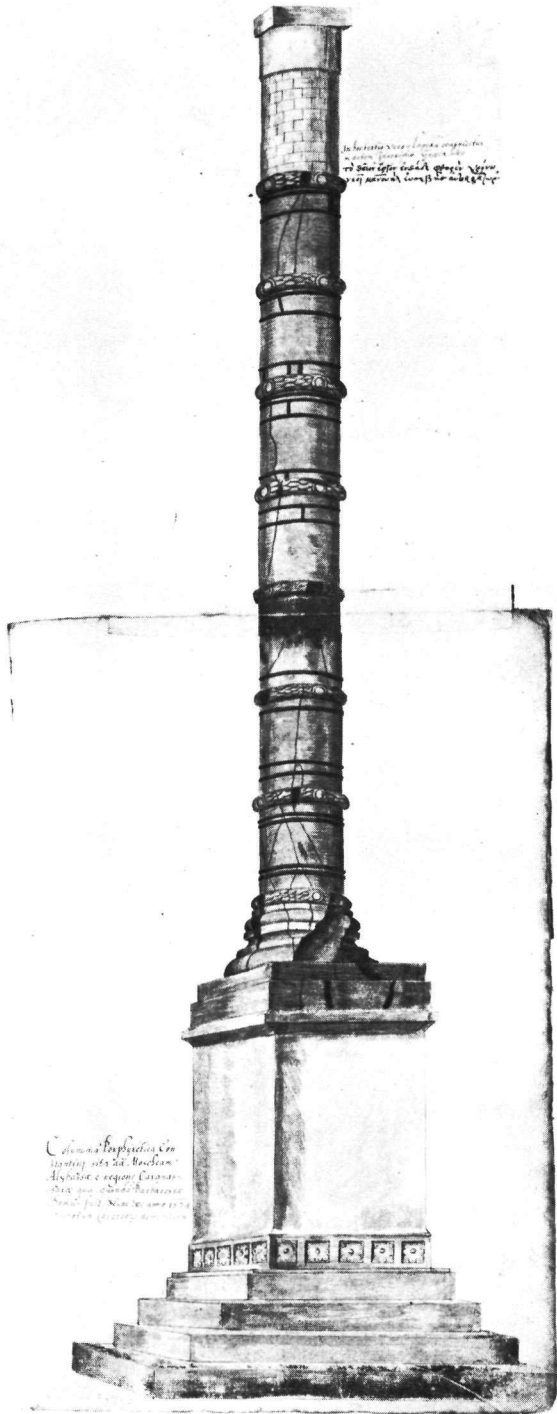
21. PG 111, 868B = L. R y d é n, *The Andreas Salos Apocalypse*, *DOP* 28 (1974), 211.

22. Cf. *Script. orig. Constant.*, 174.

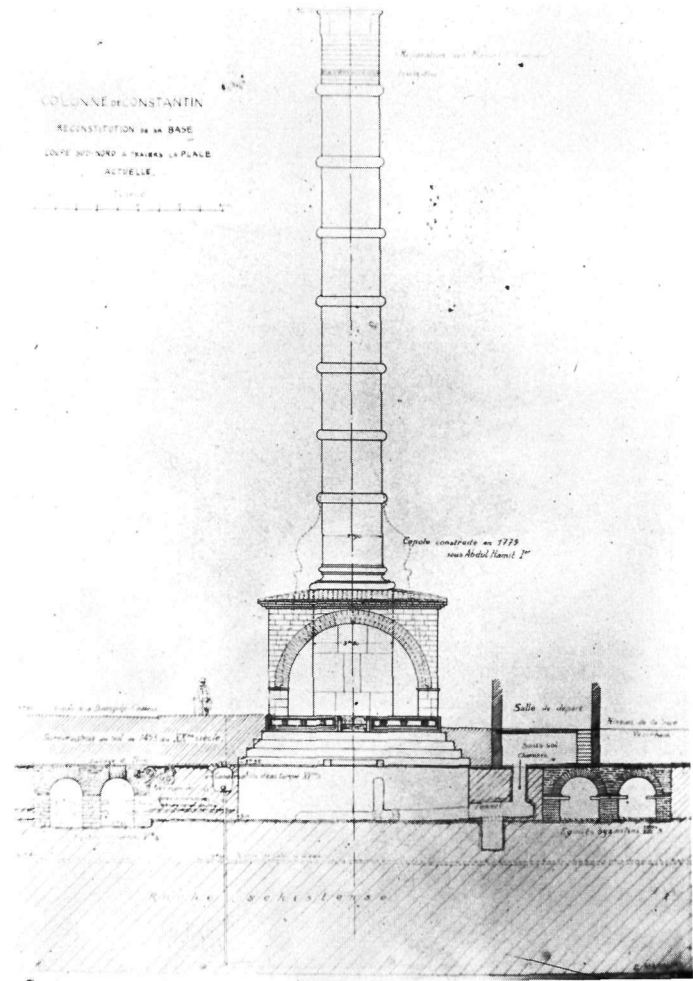
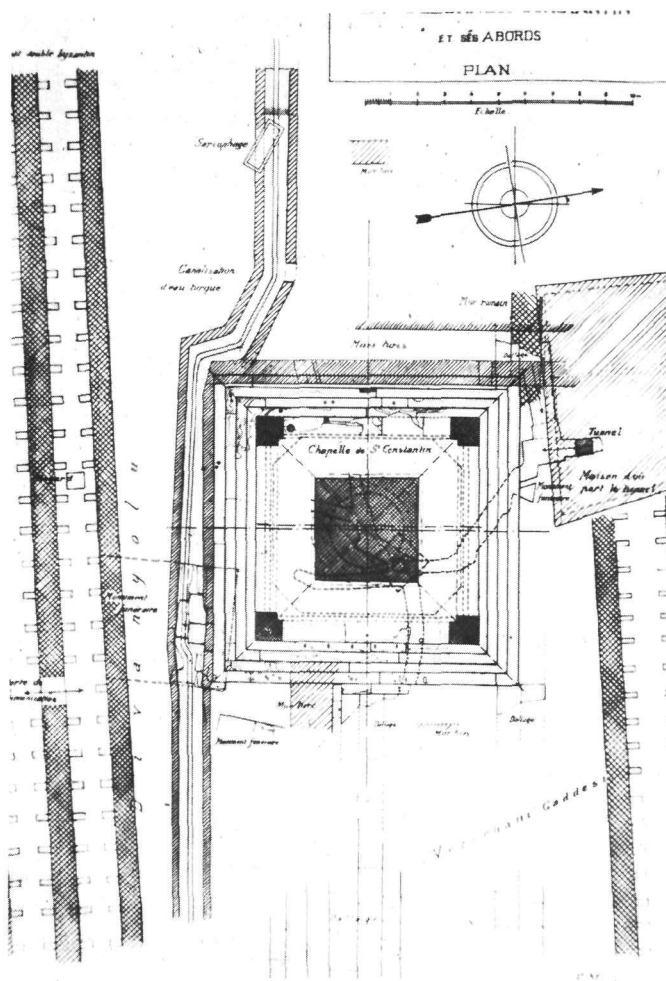
It may be suggested, therefore, that the chapel of St. Constantine was built in the 'dark centuries' of Byzantium, possibly in the period of Iconoclasm, in order to enhance and sanctify the symbolic significance of the column. Why is it then that this chapel disappears from view after the 9th - 10th centuries in the sense that it is not mentioned in any later source? Is it not because Constantine's role as patron of his Empire and his City had been taken over by the Theotokos?

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Constantine's Column.
Anonymous Drawing of 1574.
Library of Trinity College,
Cambridge.



a. Plan of Constantine's Column and Surrounding Area. b. Reconstructed Elevation of Constantine's Column by E. Mamboury. German Archaeological Institute, Istanbul.