

# Rediscovery of a Forgotten Palace and Harbor;

## Boukoleon



1Plan By Agiasofia.com

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2Photo by byzantium1200.com

The Palace of Boukoleon still stands on the Marmara seashore of the city walls. It is between the Çatladıkapı and the west of the Great Palace. It is supposed that the name Boukoleon originated from “bukolos” meaning “shepherd” in the ancient Greek Language but at the same time western writers claims that it comes from “bucca leone” meaning “at the mouth of lion” (İ.A. p.327) and at the harbor there were a statue of a bull and of a lion so they named the palace as Boukoleon. (Kazhdan)

The palace is built during the reign of Theodosius II (408-450) but the remains which we can see today are largely from the reign of Theophilos (829-842). But there also some Justinianic parts which are so-called house of Justinian (Bardill p.147). In addition to this, at the era of Constantine VII Prophyrogenetos, in the tenth century, the palace was ornamented by the representation of animals collected by different palaces (Paspates p.177), and many emperors had added buildings too, in order to provide the needs over years. However, in late eleventh century this palace lost its popularity and gives it importance to Blacherna Palace (Harris p.9). On the substructures of the Palace they used marble spolia from antiquity. The Palace had two parts and the imperial steps divided the two areas. The walls were decorated

with marble in different colors and the upper walls with mosaics representing the triumph of emperors, birds, animals and mythological scenes (Harris p.9). The east of the building was damaged at 1870's during the constructions of the railroad. During the excavations they founded two vaults separated with a passage this vaults are the parts of the Palace which I mentioned above. However the vaults were damaged on an earthquake but at the inner vault the workmen found some pillars with beautiful work on them and slabs which had a head of an ox and other had a head of lion. This is a proof that these were the vaults of Boukoleon Palace. (İ.A. p.327)

On the other hand the Boukoleon Harbor which is next to Boukoleon Palace was separated from the sea with a breakwater. Its remains could be seen until 1960's before the construction of the Kennedy Caddesi. However, Archeologists could not find yet the real borders of the harbor. This harbor is used to serve imperial family to access on sea and their galleys, called chelandia or dromoi (Paspates p.177), at mean while, its architecture style is more modest than the others.



3Photo by [livius.org](http://livius.org)

In my brochure I will try to address to the eastern part which still stands today. This part of the palace is staircase to Justinian II (Bardill p.147). We can see the marble windows while passing from Kennedy Caddesi. The walls are today is not easy recognizable, normally a person passing through the way could not understand what is the windows like constrictions. By having knowledge about this monument, it could be more easy to imagine how was like the Boukoleon palace and its harbor on its time. But as there are not much information about this Palace, I will try to do best I can in order to help for the imagination of the era. The area which could be seen is an open public area meaning that there is not a museum to visit. You can go and walk by the walls and watch them. On the other hand, I was able to understand that during the month of December 2009, Vehbi Koç Vakfı is working on this area, after that, it is hoped that the secrets of the Boukoleon will be brought into light to us.

As I do pass by the Kennedy Caddesi frequently I was always wondered what these windows-like walls were. I thought that this wall was different from the seawalls because it was a dent and was pierced by monumental windows. Finally I learned that it was Boukoleon Palace. I think that many others, like me, wonder what those windows are and why they stand there, but they never know as they quickly pass in front of them with cars. On the other hand, I think that Boukoleon Palace is unique because it is a seafront palace but at the same time there are not much said about this palace. Because of all these reason I choose to prepare a brochure about Boukoleon Palace.

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