

= Baths of Zeuxippus =

The Baths of Zeuxippus were popular public baths in the city of Constantinople , the capital of the Byzantine Empire . They were built between 100 to 200 , destroyed by the Nika revolt of 532 and then rebuilt several years later . They were so called because they were built upon the site where a Temple of Jupiter (Zeus) had formerly existed . They were built around 500 yards south of the much older baths of Achilles of the earlier Greek Acropolis in Byzantion . The baths were famed primarily for the many statues that were built within , and the famous people they each represented . However , they were later used for military purposes , during the seventh century . Excavations of the site and the Baths were made in 1928 .

= = Description = =

The original baths , which were founded and built by Septimius Severus , and decorated under Constantine I were adorned with numerous mosaics and over eighty statues , mostly those of historical figures , with Homer , Hesiod , Plato , Aristotle , Julius Caesar , Demosthenes , Aeschines and Virgil all among them , as well as the figures of gods and mythological heroes ; . These statues were taken from various places worldwide , including regions such as Asia and the surrounding areas , Rome , Greece and Asia Minor . The Baths did , indeed , follow a trend of architecture during the period ; places such as the Palace of the Senate , that of the Forums , the Palace of Lausus were all adorned with similar statues , of heroes (mythological and not) , historical figures , and powerful people , becoming part of a contemporary form of artful architecture .

For a relatively small fee , entrance could be gained by any member of the general public to the Bath complex . While the area was obviously primarily used for public bathing , one could exercise and enjoy a variety of recreational activities . Attendants were paid to oversee these activities , and the happenings of the complex , enforcing opening and closing times , and the rules of conduct . Men and women were not allowed to bathe together ; they would either be in separate baths , or bathe at different times of the day .

The popularity of the Baths of Zeuxippus was very great among the citizens , despite the numerous number of baths that had been available for public access at the time in Constantinople , and therefore , the great competition that existed in that commercial area . Even the likes of clergy and monks were seen there , despite the insistence by their superiors that the baths were places of impious behaviour .

= = Location = =

The 12th century scholar Zonaras tells of how Severus connected the baths to the Hippodrome and , in doing so , built it on the site of the Temple of Jupiter . However , Leontius , who was more accurate in his writings (which also predate those of Zonaras) , instead asserted that the baths were not actually joined to the Hippodrome , but was simply close to it :

Between Zeuxippus ' cool refreshing baths ,
And the famed Hippodrome 's swift course I stand .
Let the spectator , where he bathes himself
Or sees the struggling steed panting for breath
Pay a kind visit , to enhance his pleasures ;
He 'll find a hearty welcome at my table .
Or if more manly sports his mind affects ,
Practice the rough diversions of the stadia .

In addition to this , the Baths of Zeuxippus were also close (most probably adjacent) to the Great Palace grounds . This evidences their popularity , as such a location would have attracted many people , being in such great proximity to such significant places . The square of the Augustaeum and the basilica of Hagia Sophia were also close to the Baths .

The map to the right shows the Baths ' approximate location within Constantinople , as determined

by excavations made there . As can be seen , the Baths were roughly quadrangular in shape , and were , indeed , very close to , or even " connected " to the Palace , as Zonaras indicated .

= = Destruction and later use = =

As a result of the Nika revolt of 532 , which constituted the worst uprising Constantinople had seen at the time , and which left half of the city in ruins and thousands of people dead , the original Baths of Zeuxippus were destroyed in blazing fire . While Justinian took action to rebuild the Baths , he could not recreate or restore the statues or the antiquities that were lost in 532 .

Soon after this however , in the early 7th century , as a result of extreme military and political pressure on the Byzantine Empire , public bathing changed from being a common luxury to a rare and infrequent one , and many public facilities and venues began to be used for the austere purposes of the military . They are last attested as being used as baths in 713 , before being converted to other uses : part of the building became the prison known as Noumera , while another part appears to have been used as a silk workshop .

Almost 1 @, @ 000 years later , in 1556 , the Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan built the Haseki Hürrem Sultan Hamam? on the same grounds . Later still , in 1927 @-@ 1928 , excavations were made at the site , and many historical relics were recovered , such as earthenware and glazed pottery , giving unique insights into the architectural designs and social interests of the people and culture of Constantinople at the time .

Most particular of the objects found at the site were two statues which were inscribed with the words Hekabe and Aeschenes [sic] on their bases , giving rise to the theory that tells of how Christodorus of Coptus effectively wrote the six epigrams on the many statues of the Baths , and lending further plausibility to the writings of both Zonaras and Leontius .

= = Inspired Literature = =

Christodorus of Coptus , an Egyptian poet and writer wrote a lengthy (416 lines long) hexameter piece of poetry inspired by the glory of the statues housed within the halls of the Baths of Zeuxippus . This poem actually consisted of a number of short epigrams (six in total) , each focusing on one or a small group of statues within the Baths , designed to combine to form one work . While it has been suggested that the epigrams of Christodorus of Coptus may actually have been inscribed on the (bases) of the statues themselves , this is unlikely because of his use of the ekphrastic medium , and the presence of the past tense in the text .