

THE BYZANTINE-TURKISH FOUNTAIN IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF ISTANBUL

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There is a double fountain of marble in the open - air display of the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, situated in the first garden to the left of the Çinili Köşk. This monument (inventory number 3217) was first published by A. M. MANSEL in 1931. Its lower, main body is Byzantine, carved out of a monolithic marble with two niches. The crown cut at the top is a Turkish work.

The back of this small monument, which was used as a fountain during the Turkish era, is covered with a decoration in relief, which clearly shows that originally it was a Byzantine work. Here are seen the curls of acanthus leaves, coming out of a kantharos and spreading symmetrically. In the middle there is a cross, whose lateral arms were wiped off during the Turkish era.

We think that the lower part, that is, the section belonging to the Byzantine era, was originally related to a water system, and most probably it was also constructed as a fountain. Though the decoration at the back, by its motif and the technique of carving, indicates the VI and VII centuries, it should be taken into consideration that this type of embellishment was used until the XIIth century. During the Turkish era, this Byzantine monument was reshaped as a Turkish fountain during the XVI-XVII centuries, as is realized from the buds of the crown at the top.

What is known about Byzantine fountains is very scanty. To date, artifacts of this kind have not been gathered together widely and thoroughly. Some examples have been encountered at Ephesus and Side. A Byzantine fountain carved out of rock is recorded in the fort of Afyon. The small inscribed monument still being used as a fountain at Kütahya is suspected of originally being a fountain. The common feature of almost all of them is the niche with its arch resting on two columns, which is also a feature of the fountain in the Archaeological Museum of İstanbul. Ch. Texier (1834) thought that the

ruins of a Byzantine fountain that he saw were the remains of the fountain at Hippodrome, called Phiale, but this interesting piece has disappeared.

This Byzantine - Turkish fountain in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul reminds us of many other Byzantine plastic works reused in Turkish fountains. There are some which were used in random, and some were used like the one in the museum, in the successful combination of two different fragments carrying the traces of two different styles. The existence of numerous Byzantine sarcophagi, plastic artifacts, and plaques even today is possible only because they have been given a function as water reservoirs of fountains or şadırvans.