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1965 YILI MARMARA ADASI
ZİYARETİNDE YAZMAYA
BAŞLAMIS OLDUĞU MAKALE
MARMARA "TAŞ YONTU"
MERKEZİNE KAYNAK
OLAN FAKTÖRLERDEN BİRİ

THE REUSE OF MARBLE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

By GODFREY GOODWIN

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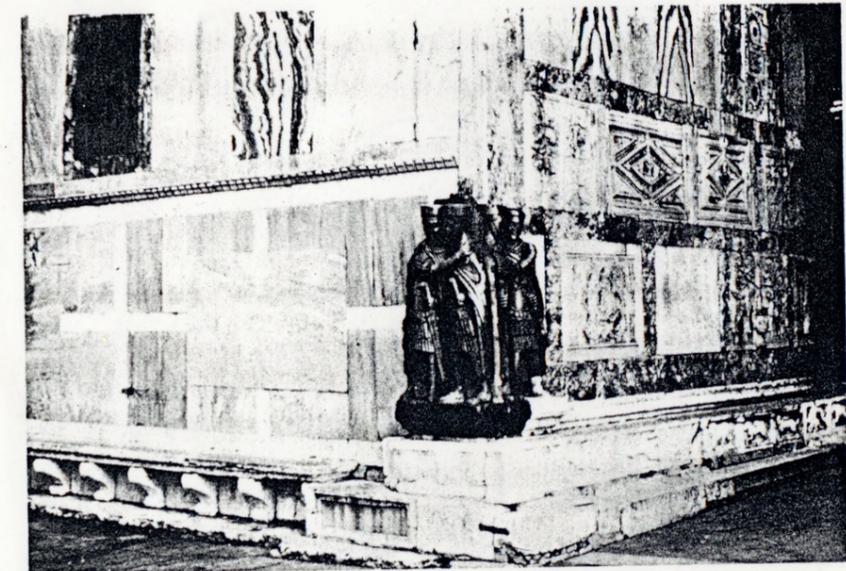
Precious building materials have always been used over and over again – the spoils of the architectural war. A section of the Colosseum is now the Palazzo Farnese and the Church of the Wisdom of God in the respectable Surrey town of Kingswood harbours capitals from Ephesus, the Studion, and the Myrelaion in Istanbul, besides a quantity of Byzantine marble. Precious marbles were transported far and wide by sea and, although it is not surprising that porphyry from the Red Sea coast of Egypt is used in the Pantheon, it is interesting that Giallo Antico from Algeria or Tunisia and Pavonazetto from Phrygia which decorated, for example, the Basilica Julia in Rome have been found at provincial Colchester.¹

The quarries of Proconessus supplied a low-grade but harmonious grey and white marble in great quantities to both the Byzantines and the Ottomans. The effect of these marbles on the character of Ottoman architecture, matched by the reuse of others not procurable fresh cut, is important not because of the influence of the past in terms of polychrome beauty but because of its influence on the proportions of columns on portico and colonnade.²

Like Ephesus, Constantinople was a depot for marbles and there are still marble shops in the former Phanariot section of the city today. Without such wholesalers, Hagia Sophia could never have been built so rapidly.³ Our knowledge of the marbles in the church comes not only from Procopius but from the detailed authorized account of Paul the Silentiary, Poet Laureate and Head of the Civil Service. His accuracy is vindicated by former doubts over a statement that black rivers crossed the pavement of the nave, which were resolved when the prayer rugs were removed to reveal that it was divided by dark ribs of marble which might at least be called brooks.

Only the provenance of the huge porphyry columns of the exedrae is in doubt. They may have come from Rome and, indeed, been stored for some grandiose use because of their unique value, although the bronze bands probably mark where several have been broken or are composite. Porphyry, which is the hardest of all marbles, is notorious for wearing out cutting tools, yet it cracks easily.⁴

The columns of the courtyard completely disappeared, probably before the Ottoman conquest and so at the time when the Venetians stripped the principal, west façade of the church, leaving one fractured panel of Proconessian marble hanging still as evidence of its former grandeur. This piece was probably one of a series, like the 36 floor slabs in the centre of the West Gallery, that were cut in



Venice. St. Mark's. The Tetrarchs and marble panels from Constantinople.

slices from a single block through which the veins ran true and opened up to produce a continual pattern of mirror images.⁵ It was only this west face of the Great Church that could be seen properly because the other flanks were masked by the palace and secretariat, library, and other subsidiary buildings. Its marbles went to enhance the basilica of St. Mark along with materials from the immense church of St. Polyeuctus, which had been built between A.D. 524 and 527 by Anica Juliana, the sister of Justinian. As with Hagia Sophia this was a very short time in which to erect a stone and brick building almost as large as the Süleymaniye mosque. The so-called Syrian pedestals which stand outside St. Mark's on the Piazzetta side were matched by identical pedestals discovered during the excavation of St. Polyeuctus at Şehzadebaşı.⁶

It was at this time that Dr. Fıratlı of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum retrieved the lost half foot of one of the Tetrarchs on the Piazzetta corner of St. Mark's while working in the enormous buried rotunda which forms part of the remains of the palace of Romanus Lecapenus, below the Church of the Myrelaion (Bodrum Cami).

The Proconessian and other marble of St. Mark's and other churches in Venice in part, at least, was not mint cut, but looted from dead and living monuments of Constantinople. Those used on the Piazzetta wall were as haphazardly slapped up as other marbles hung on kiosks of Topkapısaray later.