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Investigating the hinterland of Constantinople: interim report on the Anastasian Long Wall

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Two of the most impressive monuments of the Byzantine age, the Theodosian Land Walls and Justinian's church of Hg. Sophia, still stand today. By their very size and elaborate construction, both monuments represent highly innovative and original solutions to the challenges encountered by the founders of the city of Constantinople.[1] This city, like other newly emerging cities of the late-antique world, grew rapidly in response to imperial initiative and patronage.[2] Not only was a new ruling class established there, but from the 4th to the 6th c. Constantinople became the undisputed capital of the late Roman world. This impressive growth occurred despite the threat posed to the city by the migrations of the Germanic and Turkic peoples. Defending the city against its enemies was as much a part of the city's infancy as was its growth as a metropolis, political capital and religious centre.

Some evidence about the physical growth of the city during these first centuries can be found in the *Notitia urbis Constantinopolitanae*, a partial inventory of building activity dating to *c*.425.[3] The *Notitia* provides an impression of growing civic monumentality and of the variety and wealth of public and private buildings. From an archaeological viewpoint, however, very little of the information reported in the *Notitia* can be corroborated. Identifiable physical remains of any kind for the early centuries are difficult to come by. It is monuments such as the Theodosian Land Walls, Hg. Sophia and a handful of other buildings that constitute the surviving physical record. Modern scholars have turned to this limited physical record and the available textual evidence in their investigations of the early growth of the city.[4]

The discovery and current investigation of two impressive complexes located outside the walls, however, promises to throw considerable new light on the foundation and development of Constantinople. The first is the so-called Long Wall (or Anastasian Wall) of Thrace,[5] built in the city's western hinterland, *c*.65 km west of the Theodosian Land Walls, and following a roughly N-S line from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara (fig. 1). The Long Wall constitutes an important architectural achievement in its own right — indeed it is one of the most remarkable late Roman structures to survive anywhere. In the first instance it was conceived as a forbidding line of defence for the emerging city of Constantinople in the face of mounting pressure from without.[6] To the modern eye, it is a striking testimony to the ingenuity, idealism and resolve of the city's founders. The second complex is an equally impressive aqueduct system, the remains of which stand in the vicinity of the Long Wall as well as at scattered points to the east and west of it. During its working life the system was vast and elaborate: it stands claim to be the longest water-supply system known from antiquity. It was no doubt intended to meet the needs of Constantinople's growing population, or at least the city's public utilities.[7]

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1 For Hg. Sophia see the recent, comprehensive studies in Mark and Çakmak 1992. For the Land Walls see Müller-Wiener 1977, 295, 298, and Foss and Winfield 1986, 41-77.

2 The most successful attempts to chart the growth of the city are represented in the works of Dagron 1974 and Mango 1990. As for the creation of the Constantinian city, two contrasting perspectives are offered by Krautheimer 1983 and La Rocca 1993, 553-83.

3 O. Seeck (ed.), *Notitia Dignitatum accederunt Notitia urbis Constantinopolitanae et Laterculum Provinciarum* (1876) 227-43.

4 Müller-Wiener 1977; Mango 1990.

5 In modern historiography of this monument it is also referred to variously as the Anastasian Wall and the Wall of Thrace: see Croke 1982 and Whitby 1986.

6 For an account of the late 5th-c. invasions see Stein 1949.

7 An insight into the hydraulic needs of the new capital is offered by the *Notitia urbis* where we read of 8