

DUMBARTON OAKS
BYZANTINE STUDIES

Cemal Pulak

Frederick R. Mayer Faculty Professor of Nautical Archaeology, Texas A & M University

About the Speaker: Dr. Pulak, Associate Professor in the Nautical Archaeology Program at Texas A & M, is also Vice-President of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology in Turkey. Although primarily a specialist on Bronze Age seafaring, he has excavated shipwreck sites that range through the 16th c. A.D. Until recently his research focused on the publication of the Bronze Age shipwreck at Uluburun in Turkey, but the dramatic recent discoveries of numerous Byzantine ships in the Yenikapi excavations in Istanbul have shifted his current research agenda to the medieval Mediterranean.

EXCAVATING SHIPWRECKS IN CONSTANTINOPLE'S THEODOSIAN HARBOR



Summary: At the site of a new rail link between Europe and Asia, pre-construction excavations by the Istanbul Archaeological Museums have revealed one of the greatest nautical archaeological discovery sites of all time. At Yenikapi, along the Old City's Marmara shore, one of the world's largest archaeological digs is exposing the remnants of the ancient Theodosian Harbor of Constantinople. A major trade center from the fourth century until river silting rendered it useless at the end of the 10th century, the harbor, its stone walls, and amazingly well-preserved remnants of the port's activities had lain forgotten for centuries. Chief among Yenikapi's discoveries are some 29 shipwrecks ranging in date from the 7th century to the late 10th or early 11th century. The diverse collection of ships includes the first Byzantine war galleys, merchant vessels, some still with cargoes, and smaller fishing craft, all amazingly well preserved thanks to their burial in a thick layer of wet mud. The excavations are allowing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with a diverse collection of purpose-built hulls from this period. Their careful documentation and analysis should greatly enhance our knowledge of Byzantine shipbuilding, as well as the role of maritime trade in the history of Constantinople and the later Roman Empire.

Thursday, January 17, 2008

5:30 P.M. in the Music Room of Dumbarton Oaks

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