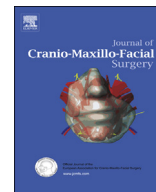


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Journal of Cranio-Maxillo-Facial Surgery

journal homepage: www.jcmfs.comOral and cranio-maxillofacial surgery in Byzantium[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Byzantine physicians (4th–7th and 8th–12th centuries A.D.), especially those interested in Surgery, developed a number of interesting concepts, views and opinions referring to the field now recognized as Oral and Cranio-maxillofacial Surgery and Pathology.

Material and method: The original texts of Byzantine physicians, written in ancient Greek, and now preserved in the electronic platform Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, at the University of California, Irvine, CA, USA, were investigated in relation to Oral and Cranio-maxillofacial Surgery and Pathology.

Results: The most eminent physicians of the Early (4th–7th century A.D.) and Middle (8th–12th century A.D.) Byzantine Period, in particular Oribasius Pergamenus, Aëtius Amidenus, Alexander Trallianus, Theophilus Protospatharius, Paulus Aegineta, Meletius Monachos, and Leo Medicus, in their works deal with topographic and surgical anatomy of the head and neck, and a large list of related topics, including dentoalveolar surgery, oral and cervicofacial infections, trauma of viscerocranium and neurocranium as well as the biomechanics of traumatic brain injuries, temporomandibular joints dysfunction as a consequence of mandibular dislocation, surgical oncology and reconstructive surgery of the head and neck, oral pathology, surgical pathology of salivary glands, therapeutic management of facial nerve dysfunction, preprosthetic surgery, craniofacial surgery, and deformities of the facial skeleton involving anthropologic and craniometric observations.

Clinical examination of patients presenting corresponding functional and esthetic problems is considered, using recognizable orthodontic and orthognathic surgical approaches. Finally, specific bandages of the head and neck are described, for treating traumatic injuries of the viscerocranium and neurocranium, diastasis of the cranial sutures, dislocations of the mandible (unilateral and bilateral), as well as inflammatory diseases of the parotids and the neck.

Conclusions: Byzantine physicians had been particularly interested in various subjects of the mouth, jaws, face, and head and neck in general, in the frame of course of their general surgery practice.

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1. Introduction

During the Byzantine millennium (330–1453 A.D.), the remit now established as Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery went unrecognized as a separate medical specialty by most medical authors in their writings. Byzantine physicians, especially those interested in Surgery, embraced Dental Medicine as well as Oral Medicine and

Pathology, Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery, and Otorhinolaryngology, within their general surgical overview.

Some concepts, views and opinions describing therapeutic methods apply both to conservative and surgical management of diseases and injuries related to the modern field of Oral and Cranio-maxillofacial Surgery and Pathology (Mylonas, 2011).

Investigation of various available sources (medical, theological, historical, literary) of Byzantine literature reveals that the practice of medicine in Byzantium comprised four major and basic specialties each with a wide range of the medical spectrum, i.e. internal medicine, surgery, gynaecology, ophthalmology, which were practiced in the corresponding separate wings and departments of the famous “Xenons”, – the remarkable public medical institutions or Hospitals of the Byzantine Empire (Lascaratou and Marketos, 1991; Bennett, 2000).

Despite the development of a separate and specific specialty of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery only in the middle decades of the 20th C, it still seems that in Byzantine times, physicians had been particularly interested in various subjects of the mouth, jaws, face, and head and neck in general, in the frame of course of their general surgery practice.

It appears that what we know as Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery was practiced in the Surgical Departments of the Byzantine “Xenons”, at least from the 6th century A.D. and afterward, whereas earlier it was also practiced by then “General Surgeons”, but on a private basis through the chief physicians ‘archiatroi’, or even by ordinary surgeons (Mylonas, 2011).

The contribution of the Orthodox Christian Church to the health care and treatment of surgical patients, including those suffering from oral and maxillofacial diseases and injuries, was congruent with the establishment of, the “Xenons” hospitals (Fig. 1), mainly attached to Monasteries, where the possibility for offering systematic and organized medical care was available (Miller, 1999; Constantelos, 1999; Bennett, 2000).

2. Material and methods

The original texts of Byzantine physicians, written in ancient Greek, as preserved in the electronic platform Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, University of California, Irvine, CA, USA, were investigated in relation to the surgical remit now known as Oral and Cranio-maxillofacial Surgery. The intention was to identify opinions, techniques, surgical instruments, pharmacologic treatments, conservative and interventional management referring to the various disease entities and conditions of Oral and Cranio-maxillofacial Surgery and Pathology.

3. Results

The most eminent physicians of the Early (4th–7th century A.D.) and Middle (8th–12th century A.D.) Byzantine Period, in particular Oribasius Pergamenus (Fig. 2), Aëtius Amidenus (Fig. 3), Alexander Trallianus (Fig. 4), Theophilus Protospatharius (Fig. 5), Paulus Aegineta (Fig. 6), Meletius Monachos, and Leo Medicus, in their works give their attention to various subjects the modern clinician would recognize as being within the remit of Oral and Cranio-maxillofacial Surgery (Raeder, 1926a, b, 1928, 1929, 1931, 1933a, b; Puschmann, 1878, 1879; Olivieri, 1950; Heiberg, 1921, 1924; Greenhill, 1842; Cramer, 1836; Ermerins, 1840).

These references include topographic and surgical anatomy of the head and neck, dentoalveolar surgery, oral and cervicofacial infections, trauma of viscerocranium and neurocranium as well as biomechanics of traumatic brain injuries, temporomandibular joints dysfunction as a consequence of mandibular dislocation, surgical oncology of the head and neck, reconstructive surgery of

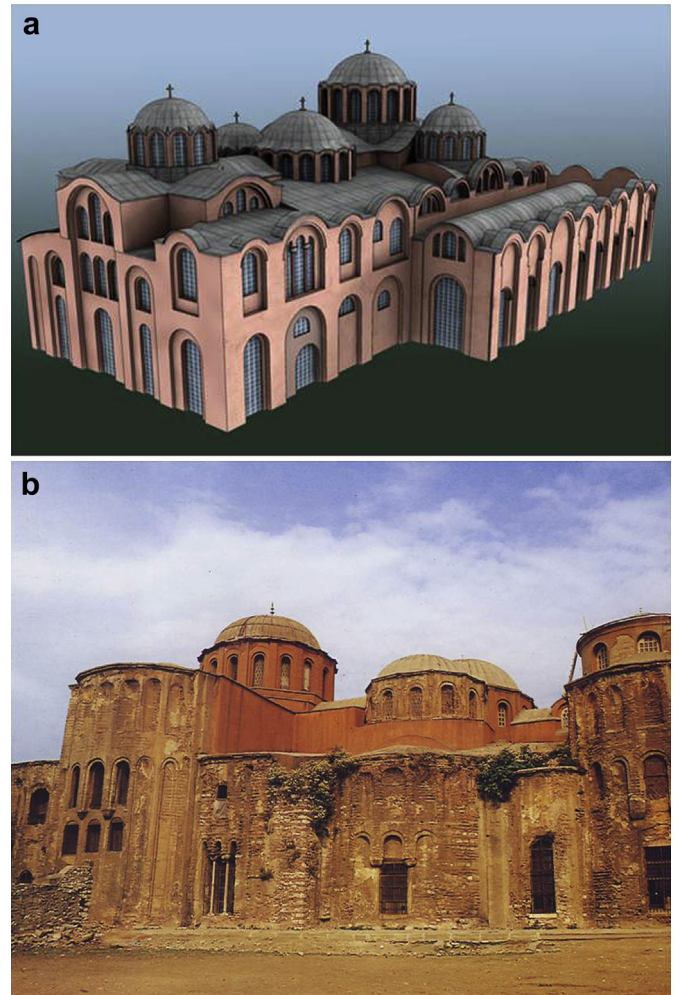


Fig. 1. a. Image of Pantocrator Monastery's ‘Xenon’ in Constantinople, b. Pantocrator Monastery as it is today in Constantinople.



Fig. 2. Oribasius Pergamenus (left) having a conversation with the ancient Greek physician Philippos (right). From Codex 3632, f. 97v., 14th century A.D., Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna.

the head and neck, oral pathology, surgical pathology of salivary glands, therapeutic management of facial nerve dysfunction, pre-prosthetic surgery, craniofacial surgery, deformities of the facial skeleton, and particularly anthropologic and craniometric observations, plus approaches to managing patients with functional and

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