



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Introduction

Burgersdijk, D.; Gerritsen, F.; Waal, W.J.I.

Citation

Burgersdijk, D., Gerritsen, F., & Waal, W. J. I. (2024). Introduction.
In *Constantinople through the ages* (pp. 1-22). Boston: Brill.
Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4283627>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licensed under Article 25fa Copyright Act/Law \(Amendment Taverne\)](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4283627>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Introduction

Diederik Burgersdijk, Fokke Gerritsen, and Willemijn Waal

Almost seventeen centuries ago, reportedly on 11 May 330, the city previously known as Byzantion was inaugurated as a new capital in the Roman Empire. The name Byzantion, after its mythical founder Byzas, was supposedly changed into 'Constantinople' after its second founder Constantine I.¹ The circumstances of the initiation rites, in which a statue of the eponymous emperor might have been paraded over the city's central axis the Mese, can only be reconstructed using later written sources, which with the benefit of hindsight added imaginative details to the record. It was, however, not so much Byzas who caused the epithet 'second' to be applied to Constantine and his city, but rather Romulus, founder of Rome, the empire's capital of old.² After the demise of its western part, the empire continued as the Eastern Roman – also called Byzantine – Empire until 1453. In this year, the Ottomans conquered the city and made it the capital of their empire, while adopting Istanbul as the most commonly used name.³ It remained the Ottomans' capital until 1923, when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's new Republic of Turkey transferred the capital to Ankara, turning Istanbul (again) into a second city.

The city's long and rich history, of which traces are still visible in present-day Istanbul, makes it an ideal and popular object of study from the perspective of urban studies. Two recent volumes, *The Cambridge Companion to Constantinople* (edited by Bassett) and *A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul* (edited by Hamadeh and Kafescioğlu), exemplify the multidisciplinary approach that characterizes contemporary urban studies of Constantinople in their integrated treatment of historical and literary sources as well as archaeological

1 The 'founding' and 'refounding' of cities was a very typical phenomenon among generals and emperors in Antiquity, at least since Hellenistic times. Also the naming of a city after its 'founder' was a frequent phenomenon, see Dey 2015, 33–57; Dagron 1974, 26; Van Dam 2007, 198–199, and Lenski 2017 for Constantine as founder of new cities.

2 Due to a lack of contemporary sources, the original naming (even founding) of the city that became known as Constantinople cannot be pinpointed. For the initiation rites of 330, see Dagron 1984; Havaux 2017. Van Dam 2010, 47–62 considers the position of a new capital in relation to old Rome. See Kelly 2001 and Grig and Kelly 2012, 3–25 about the notion of 'Christian capital' from the start (with opposing opinions).

3 Note that the inhabitants of the Eastern empire were not familiar with the term 'Byzantine'. As Kaldellis 2019c, 15 observes 'Byzantium' was a term from the sixteenth century that was only used widely from the mid-nineteenth century onward. See further Aschenbrenner and Ransohoff 2021.



MAP 0.1 The metropolitan area of Istanbul situated on the Bosphorus between the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea
MAP: BERT BROUWENSTIJN



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Gate of St. Barbara | 22 Vefa Kilise Mosque / Church of St. Theodore(?) |
| 2 St. Demetrios Church | 23 St. Polyeuktos Church / |
| 3 Hagia Irene | Saraçhane Archaeological Park |
| 4 Hagia Sophia / Ayasofya Camii | 24 Forum of Arcadius |
| 5 Chalkoprateia | 25 St. John Stoudios Church / Imrahor Mosque |
| 6 Basilica Cistern / Yerebatan Sarnıcı | 26 Castle of the Seven Towers / Yedikule |
| 7 Milion | 27 Golden Gate / Porta Aurea |
| 8 German Fountain / Alman Çeşmesi | 28 Gate of St. Romanus / Topkapı |
| 9 Hippodrome / Atmeydanı / Sultanahmet Square | 29 Church of St. John the Forerunner tou Libos / |
| 10 Sultan Ahmed Mosque | Fenari Isa Mosque |
| 11 Hormisdas Palace | 30 Church of the Holy Apostles / Fatih mosque |
| 12 Sts. Sergius and Bacchus / Küçük Ayasofya / | 31 Church of the Pantepoptes / |
| Little Hagia Sophia | Eski Imaret Mosque |
| 13 Forum and column of Constantine / Çemberlitaş | 32 Pantokrator Church / Zeyrek Mosque |
| 14 Nuruosmaniye Mosque | 33 Gül Mosque / Church of St. Theodosia(?) |
| 15 Grand Bazaar / Kapalıçarşı | 34 Panagia Mouchlitissa Church |
| 16 Beyazid II Mosque | 35 Pammakaristos Church / Fethiye Mosque |
| 17 Forum of Theodosius / Forum Tauri / Beyazit Square | 36 St. John in Petra Church |
| 18 Saray-ı Atık-i Âmire / Old Palace | 37 Chora Church / Chora Monastery / Kariye Mosque |
| 19 Myrelaion Church / Bodrum Mosque | 38 Tekfur Saray |
| 20 Theotokos Kyriotissa Church / Kalenderhane Mosque | 39 Church of St. Mary of Blachernai |
| 21 Süleymaniye Mosque | 40 Eyüp Sultan Mosque |

MAP 0.2 The historical peninsula of Istanbul with places, buildings and monuments mentioned in the volume

MAP: BERT BROUWENSTIJN



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Rüstem Paşa Hanı | 12 Santa Maria Draperis Church |
| 2 San Paolo Church / Cami-i Kebir / Arap Camii | 13 French Palace |
| 3 Palazzo del Podesta' | 14 English High School for Girls |
| 4 Sts. Peter and Paul Church | 15 Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons |
| 5 St. George Church | 16 St. Antoine Church |
| 6 St. Benoit Church | 17 Galatasaray High School |
| 7 Galata Tower | 18 British Palace |
| 8 Tünel | 19 Cercle d'Orient / Büyük Kulüp |
| 9 German High School | 20 Melek Cinema / Emek Cinema |
| 10 Russian Embassy | 21 Hagia Triada Church |
| 11 Casa Bailaggia / Venetian Embassy | 22 Atatürk Cultural Center |

MAP 0.3 Istanbul neighborhoods to the North of the Golden Horn with places, buildings and monuments mentioned in the volume

MAP: BERT BROUWENSTIJN

and architectural materials, paying attention to elites and commoners alike.⁴ Like most previous handbooks and companions to Constantinople, however, they have a (relatively) limited chronological scope, focusing respectively on, roughly speaking, the city's history before 1453 and between 1453 and 1839.⁵ The present volume, by contrast, aims to visit all periods of the city's existence, from its Prehistory to its rise as a global city in the twenty-first century.⁶

We aim to map the shaping of the city as a Mediterranean and cosmopolitan center, home to a variety of peoples and concomitant cultures, and the varying yet at the same time consistent character of urban culture. The starting point will be the 'visible city': the ways in which continuity and change in history are still visible in present-day Istanbul.⁷ The term 'visual culture', with the related notion of 'visibility', has been introduced in recent research to describe and analyse experiences of inhabitants and visitors of, among others, cities and all that constitute city life or urban experience.⁸ 'Visual culture' can be the product of representations of legitimacy of rulership, in an ideological context, e.g., by landmarks (monuments, palaces) with the aim to enhance positions of political power.⁹ A similar goal may be detected in the erection of religious symbols to showcase religious identities (statues, altars, temples). The visual outline of a city is also established by geographic features (hills and waterways, soil structures, etc.), public architecture, and urban design, and the marks left by the participants in city life. Cities as living organisms may keep essential

4 Bassett 2022 and Hamadeh and Kafescioğlu 2021.

5 We may now also add *The Routledge Handbook of the Byzantine City* (edited by Bakirtzis and Zavagno), which appeared when the present volume was already in its final proof stage.

6 We do, however, by no means claim or strive to be exhaustive; this would require a completely different kind of publication than is intended with this volume.

7 Examples of recent studies over a longer period of time concerning the role of visual culture in successive periods in Byzantine times are Chatterjee 2021, who treats the function of originally pagan sculptures and artifacts in later experience; Hamadeh 2008 who discusses the city's delights, not least by the visual spectacles it had to offer to the inhabitants and visitors, in eighteenth-century Ottoman Istanbul; Roberts 2015, who treats the interaction between Europe and the Ottoman Empire in visual culture in the nineteenth century. See also Hamadeh 2017.

8 See Kristensen 2013, 43 and n. 18 for considerations about enhanced 'visual practices' in Late Antique ritual contexts. See Safran 2006 for theory relating to the 'visual' in Classical and (Early) Modern theory. See Elsner and Meyer 2014 for examples of the approach of 'visuality' and 'visibility' in Roman imperial monuments.

9 Beller and Leerssen's theory of 'imagology' defines notions such as 'monument' (Jourdan 2007, 371–372) and 'visual arts' (Weststeijn 2007, 450–455) and provides a good framework to approach the urban phenomena as discussed here (Beller and Leerssen 2007).

characteristics, while others come and go, all adding up to the historical image the city presents.

The fourteen chapters of this book each address the interaction between the different layers of time and cultural domain: how later inhabitants received, and eventually appropriated or rejected, the legacy of their predecessors; how these left their marks on the visual remains of the city; and how this heritage has been perceived and used in the past and the present. The longer lines of history, and the parallels between the past and the present are the guiding themes in this collective effort, in line with the mission of the series “Cultural Interactions in the Mediterranean”. Within the diachronic framework, we have chosen an eclectic approach in order to address the ‘visible city’ from as many angles and perspectives as possible. The result is a kaleidoscopic journey, revealing both continuity and change in the rich and fascinating history of the city at the Bosphorus.

1 Second to None?

Both ancient and modern scholars have characterized Constantinople as a ‘second’ city, later often tagged as ‘second Rome’ – the Byzantine scholar and diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras’s *Two Romes* (1411) being a prominent example.¹⁰ How ‘second’, however, was the position of Byzantium-Constantinople-Istanbul in the respective empires of which it formed part? At the very beginning, the city seemed, in name, to be overshadowed by Chalcedon on the western part of the Bosphorus. Note, however, that the oracle who advised Byzas about the location of his new settlement told the prince from Megara to found the city ‘across from the blind ones’ (as pointed out in Van den Eijnde’s chapter). Byzas was wise to heed to oracle’s advice. Access to the rich waters and shores of the Black Sea guaranteed a flourishing existence for a city that not only functioned as a transmitter of ships and merchandise, but also as a ‘bridge’ between the northern commercial and cultural spheres and the Aegean world and beyond. Its strategic position as the main terrestrial road from Asia to Europe and *vice versa*, attracted travellers, merchants, and armies alike. Indeed, no ‘second’

10 E.g., in the seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale* (see Whitby and Whitby 1989), which in part derives its information from the *consularia constantinopolitana* (see Becker et al. 2016). Dey 2015, 78–83 (citing the eighth-century *parastaseis syntomoi chronikai*) about the initiation rites of Constantinople, enacting an *adventus* in the guise of a triumphal entrance (see for the latter source Av. Cameron and Herrin 1984).

place was reserved for this bridgehead of the most prosperous seascape in Antiquity.

One might therefore wonder whether Constantine, when he chose Constantinople as his foremost residence, actually meant to replace the old capital of Rome with a new one – or if this move to the new residence was a purely strategic choice, as one out of the many residencies Constantine fostered.¹¹ Constantine never showed a clear preference for Rome, which had been abandoned as the empire's capital already by his predecessors. Some may have seen Constantine's settlement in his new home city as a disparagement of Rome, but no contemporary source confirms Constantine's move as a replacement of any other city. Moreover, Constantinople seemed to forge an independent path and develop its own character; it was to become a melting pot of ancient culture and a political predominance in competition only with Rome. No 'second' or 'new' Rome seems to have been founded, apart from the adoption of many elements that every self-conscious city in the empire featured (market squares, palaces, hippodromes, theatres, city walls, etc.). Insofar as Constantinople was a 'second Rome', it deserved the epithet mainly for the course it took in the decades following its new inauguration by Constantine: by the end of the fourth century the Theodosian dynasty did consider the city on the Bosphorus as the residential capital (as Rome had once been).

As Humphries demonstrates in his chapter on the relationship between old Rome and Constantinople, contrary to expectations, it was rather Constantinople that eventually provided a modern urban model for Rome. Most studies of the relationship between the two cities focused on how the new city developed in ways that imitated the old, by examining topographical similarities and the development of institutions (both secular and ecclesiastical) that gave the two cities some degree of parity. Yet increasingly from the last decades of the fourth century, Constantinople rather than Rome served as the preferred base for emperors and their administrations; indeed, already under the Constantinian and Theodosian dynasties emperors usually experienced Constantinople before Rome. Humphries reverses the usual understanding of the relationship between the two capitals between the fourth and the seventh century. His chapter explores both how Constantinople provided a model for imperial deportment that was applied to Rome, and how it impacted the development of historical memory in the eastern capital.

11 Other residencies were Nicomedia, Trier, Serdica, and others: Grig and Kelly 2012, 7; Van Dam 2010, 29.

2 A Christian Capital?

In caput 3.49 *Life of Constantine* Eusebius of Caesarea (fourth century) provides a short description of the city:

You would see at the fountains set in the middle of squares the emblems of the Good Shepherd, evident signs to those who start from the divine oracles, and Daniel with his lions shaped in bronze and glinting with gold leaf. So great was the divine passion which had seized the Emperor's soul that in the royal quarters of the imperial palace itself, on the most eminent building of all, at the very middle of the gilded coffer adjoining the roof, in the centre of a very large wide panel, had been fixed the emblem of the saving Passion made up of a variety of precious stones and set in much gold. This appears to have been made by the Godbeloved as a protection for his Empire.¹²

The main square of the city is decorated with statues of the Good Shepherd, which can be interpreted as pagan as well as Christian. Given Eusebius's religious conviction he chooses the latter option.¹³ He interprets a statue of a man with lions as Daniel in the lion's den (compare *Daniel* 6), but this might as well have represented another figure. In any case, it is clear that Eusebius is out for the Christianization of Constantine and his city, living in a period of transition from classical to Christian culture. From the center of the city, the reader is then taken to the political heart of the new empire, into the main hall of the imperial palace. In Roman buildings, images often reflected what message the house's master, in this case the emperor, wanted to convey to his visitors about his family and ideology.¹⁴ If Eusebius may be believed, a look into the imperial palace revealed that Constantine the Great featured Christ's suffering as central tenet for the house, and thus for the whole Roman Empire. Even, according to Eusebius, Constantine's face was integrated in the work of art, and in front of the entrance to the palace a depiction of the cross was exhibited on a large panel (*Vita Constantini* 3.3). The square Eusebius speaks about

12 Translation Av. Cameron and Hall 1999, 140.

13 In a Christian context (compare John 10:11) we also find this image in the entrance to the fifth-century mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna.

14 The image in the center of the ceiling of the foyer might have represented Christ's cross, made of precious stones and gold. Perhaps the so-called 'Konstantinische Deckengemälde' with fifteen cassettes from the peristylum house near the basilica in Trier (the capital where Constantine's father Constantinus Chlorus resided) served as an example, although it features painted, non-Christian scenes.

is the Augustaion, the center of Constantine's new capital. East of this square the new Senate was located; at the southern part the imperial palace was built.

Despite the image that Eusebius presents, it is unlikely that Constantine immediately considered his city a new Christian capital from the very beginning (but see Verhoeven in this volume on Byzantine churches, and see above note 2) – this idea must only have occurred from Theodosian times onward. Constantine's Christianity is a question of lasting dispute, although by 330, when the inauguration of the re-founded city took place, few doubts existed about the sympathy Constantine cherished towards the new religion. New churches were built all over the empire (not least of all in Rome and Jerusalem, where important episodes in the lives of Christ and Peter had taken place), and Constantinople followed suit. A sanctuary dedicated to Aphrodite was renamed the Basilica of Peace, known as Hagia Irene, which remained the main episcopal seat until in 360 the Hagia Sophia ('the Holy Wisdom') was built on the northern side of the Augustaion. This example, however, reveals little about Constantine's plans and design for the new city, even if some authors (such as the already mentioned emperor's biographer and advocate Eusebius) may have interpreted his actions from a Christian perspective.

Under Theodosius II (408–445) the imperial palace became a warehouse for Christian relics, including Constantine's cross, particularly promoted by the emperor's sister Pulcheria. The Hagia Sophia was rebuilt after a fire and dedicated again on 10 October 415. This second version of the Hagia Sophia was in turn burned down in the so-called Nika Rebellion in 532, caused by competing groups who were meeting, as was customary, around the Hippodrome (west of the Augustaion). Social unrest and discontent about newly proposed laws had led to conflicts of different groups against each other, and the emperor Justinian (527–565) took firm action, suppressing the rioters. The devastations of parts of the city made new architectural projects and embellishment of the city, however wryly, possible.¹⁵ The construction of a new church, part of a large imperial complex, was commissioned to the architects Anthemios of Thralles and Isidoros of Miletus; the church was consecrated on 26 December 537. Mary became the guardian patroness, replacing Athena, who had been the guardian goddess of ancient Byzantium. To this day, the building is the most iconic architectural monument in Constantinople: witness, for example, the famous architect Sinan's (1498–1588) use of it for his designs.

Apart from controversies over Christian vs. classical or secular interpretations, in the course of its early existence questions about its geographical

15 Hasse-Ungeheuer 2019, 152 about the primary sources for the Nika riots. Ousterhout 2019, 199–216 about the rebuilding of the church after the Nika rebellion.

position arose: did Constantinople, as a clear bridge between European and Asian realms, have a distinct position in the religious rivalries between the eastern and the western part of the empire? Schulz's contribution to this volume investigates how over the centuries certain bishops of Constantinople positioned themselves vis-à-vis the hemispheres Orient and Occident. When Gregory of Nazianzos (329–390) and Photius (858–886) polemicized against western clerics (ultimately led by Rome) in 381 and 867, they connotated the Occident negatively. While Gregory and Photius could have claimed the bright Orient, where after all Christianity had started, for their cause, they were hesitant to do so, for different reasons. It is remarkable that Photius used similar arguments centuries after Gregory, although the political and ecclesiastical landscape had shifted radically. Schulz shows how cultural interactions between 'East' and 'West' were channelled, in their guise of disputes between religiously divided groups, and competition between cities over hierarchy.

3 The Heyday of the Byzantine Empire

The era of Justinian (reigned 527–565) is the heyday of Byzantine Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire, which in the sixth century encompassed large parts of Asia Minor, Italy, North Africa, and southern Spain. Justinian managed to maintain stability in the empire that had been split into east and west under Theodosius I in 395, some 150 years earlier. Among his lasting achievements can be reckoned the *Codex Iustinianus* (529), which was partly based on the *Codex Theodosianus* of Theodosius II a century before (438), the Basilica cistern, and the construction of the already mentioned Hagia Sophia, thus establishing the name of Constantinople as legal, political, and religious capital. After Justinian's reign the Byzantine Empire shrank to no more than a core state, which from the sixth century onward met a rival in the advancing Islam in the south, and was constantly in competition for hegemony in the Christian world against the Pope residing in Rome.

Two emperors, Constantine and Justinian, are depicted in mosaics above the southwestern entrance of the Hagia Sophia (see fig. 0.1). Emperor Justinian shows the church to its protector Mary, while on the other side Emperor Constantine offers her the city. Mary, enthroned in the middle, holds up the Christ child begotten by her womb, itself serving, as it were, as the seat of the Saviour. The monograms on either side of her head signify her role as Mother of God (MP and QY), to whom at the council in Ephesus in 431 the title 'Theotokos' was assigned. Christ, who at the same council was endowed with two natures, one divine and one human, blesses the viewer with his right hand, while his left hand carries a scroll. The harmony of the images sharply contrasts with



FIGURE 0.1 Mosaic at the southwestern entrance of the Hagia Sophia, with the Virgin Mary holding Christ on her lap in the center, Emperor Justinian I to left with a model of the Hagia Sophia, and Emperor Constantine I to right with a model of the city
 SOURCE: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:HAGIA_SOPHIA_SOUTHWESTERN_ENTRANCE_MOSAICS.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hagia_Sophia_Southwestern_Entrance_Mosaics.jpg)

the devastating disputes that had arisen over the correct interpretation of the nature of Christ and his mother.

Proceeding further into the building, the apse features a similar image of Mary and Child. The date of the mosaic can be pinpointed thanks to the seventeenth homily of the Patriarch Photius: on 28 March 867, the mosaic was unveiled in the presence of the emperors Michael III and Basileios I. The golden frame surrounding the image, which reflects the heavenly paradise, is two centuries older. The intermediate period had been the time of iconoclasm (literally: ‘destruction of images’), which banned depictions of biblical figures and the worship of icons (754–787 and 815–843). This period started with the removal by Emperor Leo III of a Christ symbol above the entrance of the palace, the so-called Hagia Chalke, a distant successor of the symbol venerated by Constantine. It is unknown whether it was a portrait of Christ or a cross or some other symbol, but the consequences were far-reaching. The intensive production and worship of icons was banned. After a synod in 843, led by Empress Theodora, iconoclasm was condemned as heresy, and churches could again be decorated with religious images.

4 From the Ninth Century to the Fifteenth Century

After a period of crisis, characterized by loss of territory, ignominious defeats and internal strife (poorly known due to a relative scarcity of sources), a turning point occurred in the history of Byzantium during the ninth century. This period witnessed military successes and cultural progress, and is also better documented. The perception of the Byzantine court in Constantinople is informed in particular by the *Book of Ceremonies*, a tenth-century compilation associated with the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (913–959). Tougher's chapter explores how this famous text has shaped modern understanding of life at the Byzantine court (a round of unchanging ceremonial) and how this picture can be qualified and augmented. It focuses especially on court life under the Macedonian dynasty, one of the longest-lived Byzantine dynasties. It was founded in 867 by Basil I and lasted until the death of his great-great-great-granddaughter Empress Theodora Porphyrogeneta (984–1056). Constantine VII was a member of the dynasty. In addition to the *Book of Ceremonies* the chapter draws on a broad range of other sources, including material evidence and other texts, such as the writings of Liudprand of Cremona, a western visitor to the courts of both Constantine VII and Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969). The essential argument of the chapter is that the emperor or empress stands at the heart of Byzantium and is central to the understanding of its court.

One of the foremost sources of the ninth century is Photius (already mentioned above), whose legacy included the *Bibliotheca* and *Lexikon*, both of importance for our knowledge of Classical, Christian, and Byzantine Antiquity. Around 860, Bardas opened the imperial university, which enabled the production of new manuscripts. Around this time, Arethas, one of Photius's disciples, copied the oldest text of Plato known to us. This period is sometimes tagged as the first Byzantine renaissance, which parallels the Carolingian renaissance in western Europe. Further authors and scholars worth mentioning are the historians Theophanes Confessor (eighth–ninth century), George Monachos (ninth century), Michael Psellos (eleventh century), John Zonaras (eleventh–twelfth century), and Constantine Manasses (twelfth century), not to mention the many poets of epigrams and larger works, such as John Geometres (tenth century).¹⁶

16 About the literary legacy of these centuries, see Rosenqvist 2007; and, as Geometres is missing in this overview, for John Geometres: Van Opstall 2008.

Ronconi's chapter aims to analyse the preservation and use of classical texts by Constantinopolitan literati and elites in light of the cultural dynamics that characterised the different periods of Byzantine history. Ronconi shows the changes that affected the attitude of Constantinopolitan elites toward classical heritage throughout these different phases of Byzantine history. The result leads us to question the legitimacy of concepts such as 'humanism' and 'renaissance' when referring to the Byzantine cultural system. The chapter also assesses the quantitative implications of surviving manuscripts and quotations of ancient texts in some major Byzantine works. An underlying question is what kind of texts Constantinopolitan literati considered classical, and to what extent it was legitimate to read and quote them. A balance can be seen between internal sociocultural dynamics and external influences (namely Arab and 'Western'). Also practical issues are at stake, the importance of the buildings in which books were stored for the urban layout and accessibility to users, the people involved in the reproduction of ancient texts, and the various ways in which they circulated within Constantinopolitan elites' circles.

The Komnene dynasty, the family that ascended the throne after the Macedonian dynasty (867–1056) saw relative stability in the empire in the twelfth century.¹⁷ In this period an erudite and ambitious family member, Anna Komnene, stood out with her biography of her father Alexios I (1081–1118). This work, called the *Alexiade*, contains an important account of the First Crusade. This crusade had been initiated partly at Alexios's request to defend his city against the advancing Turks, and resulted in the capture of Jerusalem. The Fourth Crusade (1202–1204), by contrast, propagated by Pope Innocent III and supported by the Venetian Doge Dandolo, was an almost fatal event in the history of Constantinople. After taking and plundering the city, the Crusaders took the ancient bronze horses of the Hippodrome, on the western side of the Augustaion, to Venice, where they still adorn the facade of the San Marco. A similar fate befell, among numerous other artworks, the Madonna Nikopeia, which was (and still is) placed next to the main altar of this basilica.

Next to ascend Constantinople's throne in the newly founded Latin empire was a Flemish prince, Baldwin (1172–1205). The rift between the Catholic West and the Orthodox East was by then complete, and is known as the Great Schism. The Byzantine Empire broke into many states, such as Trebizond, Thessalonica, and Nicaea, a phenomenon styled the *partitio terrarum*

17 For an overview of the dynasties of the Byzantine Empire, see Lygo (for the Komnenian house: Lygo 2022, 218–261); on the nature of dynasties and succession: Mango 2002, 201–206.

imperii romaniae ('division of the areas of the Roman Empire'). The Roman Empire after 1261, with the accession of Michael VIII Palaiologos, sought self-preservation in countless wars, in addition to a cultural revival marked by new literary production. The Late Byzantine period is marked by the efforts of the Palaiologan emperors to restore the Byzantine Empire and its capital city to their former glory. By restoring and redecorating buildings, this glorious past was evoked in the present, a topic that is the subject of modern research.¹⁸

The city of Constantinople experienced a happy revival, which is evident from, for example, the restoration work of the Chora Church by John Metochites (1315–1321). Another great Constantinopolitan scholar from this period was George Gemistos, better known as Plethon. In addition to his important role in the explanation and transmission of Plato's writings, he tried to reverse the work of the Emperor Constantine by reintroducing the Olympian gods to religious life, with Zeus as supreme ruler – ultimately as a way to revive ancient Greek social life and culture, with an undeniably metaphysical dimension to the project.¹⁹ As advisor to the emperor John VIII Palaiologos, in 1438 he traveled with him and his large retinue (including the cardinal and lawyer Bessarion) to Ferrara and Florence (Italy) in an attempt to reunify the eastern and western churches. The negotiations ended in an agreed decree of reunion in 1439. However, when the representatives returned to Constantinople, this treaty was not unanimously recognized. Plethon exercised great influence on younger authors, such as the Ottoman historiographer Nikolaos Chalkokondyles (also called Laonikos, ca. 1430–1465), who knew Plethon personally. Contrary to contemporary Byzantine conceptions, the followers of Plethon considered their culture as utterly Greek, rather than Roman.²⁰

5 Continuity after the Ottoman Conquest

When the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II took the city and entered the Hagia Sophia on 29 May 1453, more than eleven hundred years after the foundation of Constantinople, he allegedly saw a soldier molesting the floor with an axe. On asking why he acted so, the hacker said, 'For the faith'. Mehmed

18 E.g., Jevtić and Valman 2018.

19 Herrin 2007, 293–298 about Plethon, his attempts to revive ancient Greek culture, his defense of Platonism, and cult of the ancient Gods.

20 Kaldellis 2014, vii–viii on Laonikos's attachment to Plethon, and his ambition to imitate Herodotus in his works.

forbade him any further vandalism and told the soldier he could loot the city, but that the buildings belonged to him. Despite the respect for the interior of this important sanctuary, its walls were covered with plaster following Islam's absolute prohibition on religious images. Elsewhere in the city, however, there was continuity of ancient sculpture, art, and architecture,²¹ as, for instance, Strootman demonstrates in this volume with respect to the urban design around the Hippodrome and the central axis of the Mese road. Since the reign of Constantine, Constantinople had been deliberately shaped as a city with imperial allure. After the Ottoman conquest, successive sultans – in competition with their Safavid rivals – continued the policy of expressing Constantinople's prestige as a symbolic center of the world through (religious) architecture, the accumulation of relics, and rituals.

Even so, as evidenced in Verhoeven's chapter, the Byzantine churches of Constantinople have had long histories of significant physical changes and dramatic transformations. A dozen churches from the Byzantine period survive in contemporary Istanbul, in different conditions and functions. The histories of these religious buildings can be traced from their construction, through their transformation and appropriation by Latin Crusaders and Ottoman Turks, to their significance as heritage objects in modern times. Verhoeven shows that buildings such as Hagia Sophia, Hagia Irene, and the Pantokrator Church (now the Zeyrek Mosque) are showcases par excellence for the city's multiple and multilayered pasts.

Court life continued to thrive during Ottoman times, not far from the spot where the Byzantine emperors resided: in what was henceforward called Topkapı Palace. Changes may be seen in the way the court was organized and inhabited, with a large corps of eunuchs. Prominent sultans such as Süleyman I (1520–1566), son of the harsh ruler Selim I who ended the southern Mamluk sultanate, continued the expansive politics of his predecessor. By doing so, Süleyman I gave new glory to the city and played a prominent role in international politics. In internal politics, Süleyman I acted as an innovator of law. He not only presented himself as a new Justinian, but also as his namesake, the Old Testament Jewish king Solomon. Süleyman became known as a pious propagator of Islamic law, although his reign included a policy of

21 Authors such as George of Trebizond tried to emphasize, if not create, continuity by presenting Mehmed as the new Roman emperor, even if the latter's language and religion clearly differed from the past. George, however, hoped that after the new ruler's conversion to Christianity, Mehmed would be able to unify different religions under one empire, see Freely 2009, 97–98; Lobovkikova 2010, 262–265.

religious tolerance toward Jews and Christians. For his accomplishments in promoting Islamic law, the sultan was honoured with an inscription in the mosque that was named after him, the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, designed by Sinan the sultan himself.²²

6 New Urban Forms

Moving into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a different and highly dynamic neighbourhood looms on the flanks of one of Istanbul's hills: Pera. The districts across the Golden Horn, traditionally home to a large Latin or western European population, enhanced their multicultural and contested character after the Ottoman conquest of the city.²³ Girardelli's chapter offers a critical overview of the relationships between topography, architecture, demographic change, and religious shifts in the microcosm of Pera and Galata. After the loss of imposing Catholic landmarks such as the Dominican San Paolo (turned into *Cami-i Kebir* in 1475, and later the *Arap Camii*) and the Franciscan complex of San Francesco (damaged by fire in 1696 and replaced by a mosque), the relative islamization of Galata is paralleled by the move of many Catholic inhabitants beyond the walls to the heights of Pera. This movement not only involved the relocation of churches, but also gave rise to the development of a new environment for European diplomacy outside the Genoese walls, away from the medieval legacy of the Latin presence, and in synergy with a type of settlement that displayed remarkable Ottoman characteristics. Pera as an Ottoman/Catholic construction is one of the main concerns of the chapter, focusing also on the role and agency of Ottoman Armenian converts to Catholicism in shaping this new urban environment.

Verderame's chapter discusses the phenomenon of 're-branding' water within the context of the imperial fountains in the Hamidian historical peninsula. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, large projects to renovate the city's infrastructure took place, including the construction of flamboyant water fountains. Verderame analyses the restoration of the water fountains of the historical peninsula, other newly built water fountains (such as the one now kept in the courtyard of Topkapı), or restored examples (such as the water fountain along the walls of the Gülhane Park) within the broader context of imperial display, and in the light of the highly symbolic restoration of the historical

22 About Süleyman's building project and the role of Sinan herein: Yürekli 2021.

23 On urban and architectural developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Z. Çelik 1986; Gül 2012, 2017.

peninsula's monumental landmarks. The urban renovation of Istanbul gained speed at the turn of the twentieth century, and resulted in a deep transformation of the city's infrastructure. Water lines were also reshaped by several institutional and non-institutional actors, ranging from the Municipality of Istanbul (Şehremaneti) to the various concession-holding water companies. Broadly speaking, the goal of institutional actors was to ensure water supply and to preserve the well-being of the Ottoman capital's inhabitants by preventing contagious diseases and fires, whereas private companies considered water as an object of trade that involved the (wealthy) inhabitants of the city as customers.²⁴

Verderame's chapter analyses how the regime of Abdulhamid II (1876–1909) directly intervened in building and restoring water fountains located in the historical peninsula, in order to highlight the sultan's symbolic continuity with other members of the dynasty, and more generally, the religiously-connoted generosity of the Ottoman rulers who had traditionally built water fountains and *sebils* for the free distribution of water. This phenomenon gained momentum in the years 1894–1902 and went hand in hand with the renovation of the Hippodrome area in the aftermath of the 1894 earthquake. The chapter analyses the continuities in the public display of (religious) generosity by focusing on an area with a high density of historical, dynastic, and religious landmarks, in a wider context of modernization of the urban fabric.

7 The Turn of the Twentieth Century

Compared to the much larger burial grounds of Istanbul's Christian Orthodox and Jewish communities, the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery lies almost completely hidden in the heart of today's modern city. But despite its modest size and presence, the cemetery offers untold evidence about Istanbul's unique intercommunal past, particularly its sizable and diverse foreign population. The chapter by Johnson and Wittman traces the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery's history from 1859 to the present, covering key events in its creation, growth, and administration. It highlights a selection of individuals buried there who are considered important for their influence and impact on society both in Istanbul and, more broadly, the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. Specific monuments are discussed, especially in relation to the development of western funerary art and symbolism from the sixteenth to the twentieth

24 See Karakaş 2021 for a description of water use in Early Modern Istanbul.

centuries, within and in dialogue with a unique, Muslim environment. The chapter also places the site in the larger context of the evolution of the city's Christian cemeteries from the Conquest to the modern era.

Abi's contribution then discusses Istanbul under Allied occupation (1918–1923). The occupation by the American, British, French, Italian, Russian, and Greek forces took place under drastically different circumstances than previous occupations of Istanbul. First, there was no siege or battle to capture the city. Thus, the city was not physically damaged by the Allied takeover in 1918 and there were no casualties on either side. Second, and perhaps more important, unlike the Latins and Ottomans in the past, the Allies had no open or official intention of holding onto the city, even though there were multiple plans for its future. However, their presence in the city, as well the material and social repercussions of this presence, made a lasting but rarely recognized impact on the cityscape and its peoples.

During the war, the Ottomans had to face the prospect of losing their capital city, which became a real possibility with the Allied occupation. The Ottomans therefore had to reevaluate their relationship to the city and its past, accelerating a process that started in the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman state began to use Istanbul to communicate its power and ideology, both to its citizens and to the world. Once the Allies became occupiers, they also had to establish a new relationship with Istanbul and its past in order to legitimize their presence. None of the Allied powers were complete strangers to the city. Istanbul had played a role in the religious and historical imaginations of many Europeans for centuries, particularly in the nineteenth century as Europeans gained economic influence in the city.

Abi's chapter discusses how the Ottomans and the Allied powers dealt with the occupation and the challenges and opportunities it provided, and the kind of strategies they employed, such as resisting, enabling, accommodating, adapting, and legitimizing the occupation, especially using the urban space, the built environments of the city, and, most importantly, its past. The chapter also addresses changes to the city as well as the changing relationship between the city, its past, and its inhabitants.

8 Modern Istanbul

In 1923, a momentous event in the history of modern Istanbul took place: after the War of Independence, Kemal Atatürk declared Ankara the capital of the newly established Republic of Turkey, relegating Istanbul to a second

position.²⁵ No longer were the Ottoman sultans the protectors of the city. Yet Istanbul remained a prime economic mover in international contexts, retaining its industrial and trade potential. The population soon began to expand again, but the political elite initially showed little concern for city planning, urban design, and restoration. Only from the 1930s onward were new policies in city planning introduced, such as the famous Prost Plan including new avenues, wide boulevards, and vast parks for social gatherings. After the Second World War, economic growth and social expansion gave new dimensions to Constantinople as a metropole between 'East' and 'West'. Culturally speaking, the Atatürk Cultural Center in Beyoğlu, the region that we earlier encountered as Pera (see Girardelli's chapter), was an important factor in the city's development into an international hotspot.

Cengiz's chapter draws from Istanbul's position as a city that appealed to the artistic imagination, and that elicited many literary representations in poems, songs, movies, stories, and novels. The city of Istanbul has always been a muse for all literary genres of Turkish literature, and prose fiction was no exception. Unsurprisingly, the mass migration from Anatolia is a widely explored topic in prose fiction from the 1950s onward, painting a vivid picture of the city through the eyes of the 'old' Istanbulites and/or the newcomers.

Next, Maessen takes up Istanbul's story from the 1950s, tracing its urban development to the last decade of the present era. Maessen's chapter focuses on the changing functions and appreciation of Beyoğlu in Istanbul. The district had been marked by a multiethnic and multireligious demography until at least the 1950s. Following intense urbanization and a near complete demise of the historically 'multicultural' demography of the district between the 1950s and 1980s, a growing appreciation of these 'non-Muslim quarters' of the former Ottoman city became apparent in the 1980s. Previous research effectively shows how nostalgic representations of a multicultural utopia in Beyoğlu prior to the 1960s started to flourish. These nostalgic representations tend to marginalize the district's historical and spatial complexity in the intermittent period of the second half of the twentieth century, particularly from the perspective of demography, but also that of daily life. Maessen shows the intricate dialectics between communities, institutions, schools, clubs, theatres, cinemas, hotels, diplomatic posts and the district. These microhistories of Beyoğlu can inform us of the ambivalent processes of urban change in Istanbul and complicate

25 See for a description of this era in Turkish history: Zürcher 2015, 195–206. Istanbul since 1923 also features in numerous chapters in Zürcher and Yenen 2023.

understandings of urban development, urban nostalgia, and concepts of multiculturalism in Turkey.

9 (Un)changing Views of Istanbul

Over the centuries, the Bosphorus and Istanbul have been praised by numerous visitors from east and west – and often in euphoric terms. The nineteenth-century British traveler Thomas Thornton, for instance, viewed the Bosphorus as a ‘majestic river through a vast garden’ rather than a sea separating Europe from Asia. Even today one cannot help but be fascinated by the special location of present-day Istanbul on the banks of the Bosphorus. Modern urban developments reveal Constantinople’s layers of history. Perhaps even more striking, archaeological knowledge about this ancient and Byzantine city was rather limited until recently, primarily due to a lack of systematic excavations in the historic districts. As Vroom’s chapter shows, this situation has now somewhat improved. During the construction of a metro line straight through modern Istanbul, sensational discoveries have been made from the past of this metropolis that for so long linked ‘East’ and ‘West’.²⁶

Right in the middle of the nineteenth century, an important discovery was made in the sacred heart of old Istanbul: many mosaics, including those of Mary and Child (see figure 0.1), briefly reappeared during the activities of the Swiss Fossati brothers, who were commissioned by Sultan Abdulmejid (1839–1861) to document and restore the treasures of Hagia Sophia. During an earthquake in 1894 several of these rediscovered mosaics disappeared or were badly damaged. It was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who gave the Hagia Sophia its secularized use as a museum in 1935 with the mosaics on display. The building now has a religious function again, as Verhoeven relates in her chapter. The mosaics have survived the threats of iconoclasm, looting, and natural disasters, and partly determine the image of the old city that exists today, even if they are now covered by draperies.

The image of the old city is subject to change. Maybe someday, it will not be necessary to refute ancient prejudices against Byzantine culture, which include corruption, betrayal, violence, cruelty, opulence, and bureaucratic and

26 Within the framework of this book, this chapter appears in the Byzantine section, as the finds that were testimony to Constantinople’s history mainly attest to the city as the Byzantine capital.

theological quibbles behind a facade of artistic brilliance.²⁷ Fortunately, its great and influential achievements in literature, architecture, visual arts, law and military strategy are being recognized in modern scholarship. This fairly recent development contrasts with the contempt for Byzantine civilization in the nineteenth century, to which historian Edward Gibbon contributed significantly in the later chapters of his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788). The disapproving astonishment found its echo in later Byzantine scholars, including the influential historian Alexander Lindsay (1812–1880). His student John Ruskin, the author of the famous *The Stones of Venice*, delivered a much more positive image of the city's contribution to western culture although he had never been in Constantinople himself.

The Byzantine Empire now enjoys a growing interest, part of an emerging revaluation for other postclassical periods (such as Hellenism, Late Antiquity, and Middle Ages).²⁸ The attention was initially focused on the art historical achievements of the Byzantines, as many wonderful encyclopedic works from the last century show, but literature long remained underexposed and undervalued.²⁹ Though an increase in interest does not always lead to the adjustment of the conventional image (more strongly put: it can be beneficial for museum curators and authors to confirm prevailing prejudices rather than to convey new insights), familiarity with history is certainly promoted through recent exhibitions and publications. The history of the Byzantine Empire still generates discussion. Herrin's book *Byzantium. The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (2007) caused a stir with its thesis that today's Europe would have looked very different without the Byzantines.

This volume tries to deconstruct the boundaries between the Late Antique, Byzantine, Ottoman, and Turkish periods that were the background of an ever-thriving city. The visible city from an (art)historical, archaeological, religious, and literary perspective is the main concern of the contributors to this volume. Ground patterns of ancient buildings are still in place, just like the street patterns, which have always steered the passersby in certain directions, leading their gaze to landmarks (buildings, monuments) that established the

27 Kaldellis 2019c, ix–x emphasizes the dangers of the use of the term 'Byzantine(s)' itself, suggesting that the people involved considered themselves Romans, not Greeks, also in an ethnical sense.

28 As demonstrated for example by the triannual International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, held since 2007. See also Kılıç and Kitapçı Bayrı 2022 and Durak 2023b.

29 For an overview of exhibitions in the period up to 2011, and further bibliography, see Burgersdijk and Waal 2011, 9 n. 6.

city's identity, or identities, according to the historical situation. The continuity in urban layout and planning, even taking into account the ever-expanding neighbourhoods outside the historical city-centre, is remarkable. The same characterization applies to the city hidden in archives and libraries: literature, legislation, and manuscripts are important aspects of Constantinople's cultural legacy, whether Byzantine, Ottoman, or Turkish. The city's success as a cosmopolitan hub cannot be explained without considering its strategic location on a land-based east-west connection and a maritime north-south route – precisely what the series in which this volume appears envisages: Cultural Interactions in the Mediterranean.

Acknowledgements and a Brief Note on Spelling

We are deeply indebted to the anonymous reviewer for their valuable comments, to our copy-editor Jennifer Palinkas for doing such a meticulous job and to Bert Brouwenstijn for his work on the maps at the front of this volume. We would further like to thank The Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO) and The Netherlands Institute in Istanbul (NIT) for their generous support. To conclude a brief note on spelling seems in order: The orthography of ancient personal and place names is notoriously tricky. In this volume, we follow the conventions of the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium. For names that are not included in this reference work, we have decided to adhere to the spellings that are most conventional in the English language, which are often (though not always) Latinized or Anglicized forms.