

Byzantium in the Sixteenth Century: An Introduction

This volume brings together the papers presented at the international workshop »Byzantium in the Sixteenth Century« held at the Johannes Gutenberg-University of Mainz in May 2022, with the addition of texts submitted by scholars who did not participate. The preparation of the Mainz workshop was an unusually long process for a one-day event: it was originally planned for May 2020 as part of the activities of the Leibniz WissenschaftsCampus »Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident«, Mainz/Frankfurt, with the participation of experts from Germany, Turkey, Greece, France and Austria, but the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which hindered international travel and gatherings, forced us to postpone it indefinitely. Despite efforts to reschedule for the 2020-2021 academic year, which were unsuccessful due to continuing restrictions, the project was revived at the earliest in early 2022, when it finally became clear that the time was ripe for the workshop to be held in the spring of that year. Unfortunately, despite everyone's commitment to the original idea, the new date did not suit everyone, and some colleagues were sadly forced to withdraw. However, new volunteers eagerly joined us and the workshop was successfully held at the University of Mainz.

The papers read at the workshop offered fresh perspectives on the topic to an engaged audience and sparked lively discussions among the participants, who included, in addition to the speakers, various members of the departments of Eastern European History, Byzantine Studies and Early Modern History at the University of Mainz. The WissenschaftsCampus »Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident«, which had endorsed the idea from the very first planning stages, showed great interest in publishing the papers presented at the workshop and making them available to a wider audience through its series of publications; the result is the present collection of papers on one of the most important cities of late antiquity, the Middle Ages and the early modern period, which played a decisive role in world history throughout its historical development. For this publication, the original participants have been joined by other specialists working on similar topics, most of whom are associated with the workshop or with the broad pool of Byzantinists in Mainz.

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Fourlas of the Leibniz Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA) and of the Leibniz WissenschaftsCampus. Professors Jan Kusber (East European History, Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, [JGU]), Johannes Pahlitzsch (Byzantine Studies, JGU), and Christian Maner (East European History, JGU) were major factors in the organization and success of the Workshop. Zachary Chitwood, also at Mainz University at the time, as well as Natalia Kupermann, Sabine Reichert, Michael Ober, Semjon Kaul, and Dennis Wambolt generously offered assistance in various practical matters. The meticulous work of Stefan Albrecht (LEIZA) was crucial for the completion of the publication. To all of these friends and colleagues I owe special thanks.

The title of this volume might strike the reader as an oxymoron. If it is generally agreed that the Byzantine Empire ended in 1453, how can we speak of Byzantium in the sixteenth century? Of course, it could refer to the early stages of the discipline of Byzantine Studies, which are usually connected with the rise of humanism in Italy and north of the Alps – indeed, an important issue that is currently debated among Byzantinists of recent years¹; this is not completely irrelevant here (the reception of Byzantium by sixteenth century-century audiences is a recurring theme in many of the contributions), but the subtitle »Constantinople and its Afterlife« makes it clear that the project is about the city itself and how the former capital of the Byzantine empire continued to preserve elements of its pre-Ottoman past even when it became the seat of the Ottoman sultans. The idea that the term Byzantium can still be used to describe phenomena after 1453 is by no means a novelty: Nicolae Iorga's classic study of the Greek and Romanian circles revolving around the Patriarchate of Constantinople, »Byzance après Byzance«, has demonstrated that this is a legitimate approach². That Constantinople/Kostantiniyye is an appropriate place to focus on for tracing survivals of Byzantium has also been made evident on numerous occasions.

There is certainly no lack of scholarship on the rich history of Constantinople or on the multiple layers of its urban development through the Byzantine and Ottoman periods – and there is no doubt that the historic metropolis will continue to inspire scholars of the two respective disciplines (Byzantine and Ottoman studies) and invite new approaches to its

1 See for example the various essays in the volume Aschenbrenner/Ransohoff, *The Invention of Byzantium*.

past. The idea for the workshop described above and for the present volume was born out of the need to fill the gaps that emerge in the study of the intersection between the two phases. The disciplinary boundaries between Ottoman and Byzantine studies and the awkward stance classicists and early modern historians adopt toward the East Roman Empire and toward the Islamic Near East aggravate the difficulties and hinder a holistic approach to the transitional years that saw the metamorphosis of the city that served as the capital of the two respective empires. However, experts of both fields (Byzantinists and Ottomanists) have always been well aware of the necessity for a synergy as the best solution to clarify key questions regarding the landscape of Constantinople/Istanbul and Byzantinists (to which group the editor of the present volume belongs) have inevitably relied on later evidence to elucidate facts about Byzantine buildings and their uses; the monumental *Bildlexikon* on the topography of the city by Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, published in 1977, stressed the validity of treating both periods (as well as the Greek and Roman layers) together. Scholars such as the pioneer of Constantinopolitan studies Cyril Mango have consistently relied on evidence from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century as a methodological tool to shed light on the history of Byzantine Constantinople, its monuments, and its urban physiognomy³.

Because a city such as Constantinople requires the implementation of multiple methodological approaches and of an interdisciplinary point of view, edited volumes dealing with various aspects of the Byzantine capital, its urban layout, its monuments, institutions, cultural and economic activity, and religious life have appeared on previous occasions⁴. They usually concentrate on the Byzantine phases of the city, but the book edited by Nevra Necipoğlu, contains an important contribution by Peter Schreiner, which demonstrates the vitality of sixteenth-century Constantinople for Byzantium and for Byzantine studies in general: in his article on John Malaxos's work on the «Antiquities of Constantinople», a topic he and several other scholars have worked on for decades, he was able to shed light on the activity of Patriarchal circles studying Byzantine monuments and manuscripts in Istanbul⁵.

Of course, the Patriarchate of Constantinople was the institution that embodied the continuation of religious and social life in the city during the transitional years that followed the Ottoman conquest. Although it was reconstituted, reorganized, and forced to relocate to a new site in 1454, the internal organization of the Church reflected that of the Late Byzantine patriarchate, which it aspired to continue. The patriarchs of the first Ottoman decades were prominent figures within the Byzantine monastic and ecclesiastical elites and the seat of the Church, albeit far from the Hagia Sophia that had been its headquarters for more than a millennium,

was a Byzantine monastery adorned with Byzantine mosaics and portraits of Byzantine emperors. Dimitris Apostolopoulos has shown that scholars and hierarchs of the Patriarchate systematically relied on and perpetuated the Byzantine legal tradition, whereas the codices once used for the Palaiologan Patriarchal Register were preserved and consulted by churchmen and administrators until the sixteenth century⁶.

It is becoming increasingly common to transcend periodization in the historical disciplines and stopping abruptly at any specific date – no matter how crucial its importance for world history – makes little sense in a city with such a long continuous life and with such a rich urban stratigraphy. Thus, although it is rather obvious that any account of Byzantine Constantinople should end with the Ottoman conquest in 1453, studying the transition to Ottoman Istanbul is equally important for understanding the Byzantine city as the two phases blended organically to create the mixed cityscape which continues to fascinate scholars, locals, and visitors until the present day (albeit filtered through the modernization processes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). The sixteenth century, considered by many experts as the apogee of Ottoman power and the pinnacle of Ottoman architecture and urban planning, presents multiple challenges, as – it will be shown – the Byzantine layer of the city was still alive and often made its presence felt.

From the point of view of the urban landscape, it is certainly legitimate to ask questions about the afterlife of Byzantine Constantinople: several key monuments and landmarks inherited from the late antique and medieval city continued to be used and reused during Ottoman times and were infused with new life under the new regime: the Hagia Sophia became the chief sultan mosque of the Ottoman capital, several former monastic complexes were populated by dervish communities, the Hippodrome was once again the center of public life hosting official ceremonies and sporting events, the aqueduct became the core of the Ottoman water supply system, and the Byzantine fortifications continued to delineate the Ottoman city, with their gates functioning as points of entry into the capital of the Ottoman empire. Thus, despite important changes in the urban layout due to the establishment of the New Palace (what is now known as the Topkapi Saray) on the site of the acropolis and the abandonment of both Byzantine palatial complexes (the Great Palace and the Blachernai), the replacement of the Holy Apostles by the Fatih mosque, the development of the Grand Bazaar in the center of the peninsula, and the establishment of new mosque complexes, medreses (theological schools), imarets (soup kitchens), and hamams (bathhouses) as parts of pious foundations, the Ottoman city inherited several components from Byzantium. Elements of the street system, the water

2 Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance*.

3 For example, in his analysis of some of the images in the so-called Freshfield Album: Mango, *Constantinopolitana* and his monograph on the mosaics of the Hagia Sophia: Mango, *Materials*.

4 For example, Mango/Dagron, *Constantinople and its Hinterland*; Necipoğlu, *Byzantine Constantinople*.

5 Schreiner, John Malaxos.

6 Apostolopoulos, *Puiseur*.

supply, and the harbor facilities were integrated into the new Ottoman framework and the domes and minarets of the new buildings rhythmically conversed with the domes of the pre-existing Byzantine buildings and the columns of the late antique *fora* to create a new imperial landscape in the powerful city.

Aside from the refoundation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the human geography of Constantinople during the first decades after the Ottoman Conquest was dependent on the repopulation projects initiated by Mehmed II, which resulted in the influx of new inhabitants – Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Armenians, and Jews – from diverse parts of the empire⁷. Thus, the demography of Ottoman Istanbul is different from that of Palaiologan Constantinople, but some old families and Christian social groups were able to resettle and to develop their activity around the revived Patriarchate and accordingly laid claims to Byzantine ancestry; in most cases, these claims were based on some seeds of truth. Indeed, Greek scholarly circles were actively researching the Byzantine past by observing its built environment, recording inscriptions, and studying the wealth of manuscripts still preserved in the patriarchal library and in private collections of wealthy Greeks. This activity shows that some elements of Byzantium were still alive in sixteenth-century Constantinople. The Levantine and European-orientated communities in the former Genoese colony of Pera/Galata (especially the mercantile families and the great religious orders) likewise present several direct links with the pre-Conquest period.

Agustino Pertusi, in his detailed study on the role of humanism in the development of Byzantine studies, discerned three main reasons that triggered the rise in the interest in Byzantium⁸: curiosity about the Ottomans and their predecessors (i.e., the East Roman Empire), fascination with the past and with antiquity (traces of which could be seen in Byzantine manuscripts transmitting classical texts), and the attempts to establish religious dialog with the Orthodox Church, especially from the part of Protestants seeking an anti-Catholic alliance, which revitalized the study of Greek fathers, Greek ecclesiastical history, and Eastern Christianity in general. The city of Constantinople played an important role in all three directions, thanks to the travels of learned scholars to the city and their first-hand encounter with the physical space of the former Byzantine capital. Information about the Ottomans and manuscripts containing works of Byzantine and Ottoman history were acquired thanks to the activity of travelers such as Nicolas de Nicolay and Hans Dernschwam, details about the antiquities and classical texts were obtained by scholars such as Pierre Gilles and Ogier de Busbecq, whereas facts about the Byzantine monuments and the Greek Church were relayed to Vienna and Tübingen by

theologians such as Stephan Gerlach and Salomon Schweigger. In addition to texts, images also played an important role in relaying information on Istanbul and its Byzantine aspects to audiences in the West. Picture books, such as the Costume Books of Lambert de Vos and the so-called Freshfield Album, and panoramic views, such as the well-known Prospect of Constantinople by Melchior Lorck, have traditionally served as crucial evidence for the study of the city, its people, and its monuments; contextualizing them against the backdrop of contemporary realities is vital for distilling even more information about multiple aspects of the Ottoman and Byzantine worlds⁹.

Manifestations of the survival of Byzantine Constantinople within the context of early Ottoman Istanbul were explored in the one-day workshop held on 20 May 2022 in Mainz. The nature of the city's mutations and the degree to which the Byzantine background affected sixteenth-century realities were studied based on an array of narrative and archival texts, careful examination of the material remains still visible in modern Istanbul, and a close focus on the diverse institutions active in Ottoman Istanbul; the participants of the workshop analyzed the dissemination of texts and images on sixteenth-century Istanbul in the West and how it influenced scholars during the following centuries, as well as the ways the continuous transformation and subsequent survival of the Byzantine monuments affected the urban growth and layout of Istanbul in the longue durée up to the nineteenth century.

In the workshop the participants investigated diverse aspects of the urban physiognomy of Constantinople/Istanbul during its early Ottoman phase: they focused on aspects of the Ottoman urban and institutional framework, the theological, humanist, and political interests of scholars and diplomats active in the city, the identity and organization of the local Christians under the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the appearance, use, and re-use of the Byzantine monuments and public spaces, and the ways the image of the city was captured by artists and mapmakers for use among western European audiences. By combining these approaches, we addressed more complex issues, such as the ways Ottoman-Habsburg relationships were affected by the familiarization of westerners with the physical space of the Ottoman capital and its Byzantine background and the ways the Patriarchate assumed a leading role in the organization of Christians in the Ottoman Empire, as well as on an international scale, through its discussions with the Orthodox world and other Christian denominations beyond the Ottoman empire, even the importance of the city's material remains for the development of classical and Byzantine studies on a world-wide basis.

7 Inalcik, Policy of Mehmed II; Braude, Foundation Myths.

8 Pertusi, Storiografia umanistica.

9 For these sources, see the contributions by Paribeni, Turquois, and Melvani in the present volume.

By bringing together scholars specializing in Ottoman history and art history, Byzantine and post-Byzantine archives, Greek palaeography and philology, Byzantine architecture and archaeology, Western European travel literature, and Byzantine art history and historical topography from Germany, Austria, France, Greece, and Turkey we attempted to explore these issues from the points of view of a broad variety of disciplines. Indeed, the purpose of this workshop was to compare different approaches to the diverse phenomena that characterize the transition from the Byzantine to the Ottoman Empire and the confrontations between Christian West and Islamic East. This topic is relevant within ongoing debates about the relations between East and West and about the place of Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire within these debates. Thus, understanding the role of the capital city of both empires within the international framework is crucial for addressing a series of questions regarding the afterlife of Byzantium and its reception by Ottomans, Greeks, Levantines, Westerners, and Russians. The addition of relevant texts submitted by colleagues who did not participate in the Mainz Workshop has broadened the canvas and has further promoted the discussion inaugurated during the event.

The volume is divided into four sections focusing on the monuments, institutions, and reception of sixteenth-century Istanbul. The first part is the main topographical section and concentrates on emblematic monuments and sites in the historic peninsula of Constantinople which formed an important part of the city's Byzantine heritage in Ottoman times and marked the transition between the two imperial phases: Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger analyzes how the Theodosian Land Walls, together with the maritime fortifications, were maintained in Ottoman times, functioned as the Ottoman city's boundaries, and continued to define the shape of the city, as they had in Byzantine times. Andrea Paribeni follows travelers' footsteps and describes the fate of the famous Hagia Sophia during its first decades as a mosque, as well as its impact on the world of the Renaissance. Bilge Ar directs our gaze slightly to the north and deals with the use of another great church, the Hagia Eirene, as an armory within the Ottoman palace. Elodie Turquois employs the methodological tools of textual analysis to discuss the representation and reception of the Hippodrome by French humanists who sojourned in the city during the time of Francis I (1515-1547) and Henry II (1547-1559). Arne Effenberger turns to

the sixteenth-century evidence to elucidate episodes of the Byzantine phase of the Pammakaristos monastery, the seat of the Patriarchate of Constantinople after the Conquest.

The section on the topography and monuments of sixteenth-century Constantinople is followed by two papers which offer the alternative view from Galata and its Levantine community and appropriately expand the discussion with two sites: Philipp Niewöhner examines the material and textual evidence from Saint Benoit, a former Byzantine building which functioned as the stage for the growing influence of the Kingdom of France and of the Jesuit congregation in the Ottoman Empire; Vanessa de Obaldía focuses on the Dominicans and their properties and sheds light on important aspects of the transition of the Order from Byzantium to the Ottomans. With the papers of Youli Evangelou and Taisiya Leber, the discussion shifts toward the various activities and institutions in sixteenth-century Istanbul, which enhance the spatial aspects of the other papers. The former revisits the crucial issue of the Byzantine identity of the post-1453 Patriarchate of Constantinople by highlighting (with the help of archival material) the Orthodox networks that developed in Ottoman Istanbul; the latter traces the production and circulation of printed books among the various communities claiming the legacy of Byzantium in the Ottoman capital. The last section of the volume explores further aspects of the reception of Byzantium: Nicholas Melvani deals with the movement of travelers from the Holy Roman Empire through the streets of the capital of the East Roman Empire and Roman Shliakhtin questions the real impact of Byzantine Constantinople on Muscovite imagination at a time when the duchy of Moscow was emerging as a major power in eastern Europe.

The papers included in this volume adopt very different approaches with the use of diverse methodologies. However, they all share the idea that studying sixteenth-century Constantinople is less about describing the destruction and death of Byzantium and more about narrating how the city began its new life through co-existence with its older phases and their memories – in other words, how Byzantine Constantinople was integrated into Ottoman Istanbul and European imagination and how aspects of the city's sixteenth-century phase can teach us lessons about the urban and human geography of the capital city of the Byzantine Empire.

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