

# Byzantine Constantinople and Habsburg Global Aspirations: The Reception of the Roman Imperial Heritage in Ottoman Istanbul by Scholars from the Holy Roman Empire\*

## Introduction: Ambassadors and Antiquities

The Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry in Hungary and Ottoman expansion in eastern and central Europe resulted in intense diplomatic activity between the two empires and in the frequent presence of envoys from Vienna in Istanbul during the sixteenth century<sup>1</sup>. Spending time in the heart of the Ottoman capital brought these travelers into direct contact with the remains of Constantinople or New Rome, the legendary capital of the East Roman Empire and contributed significantly to their knowledge and understanding of the Byzantine city's physical space and its built environment. This paper will explore aspects of this experiential encounter with Byzantium and its impact on Habsburg perceptions of the Byzantine Empire within the framework of the confrontation with the Ottomans.

The diplomats selected to represent the Holy Roman Emperors belonged to the pioneering ranks of humanist and Reformation scholarship of the time: for example, the learned Ogier de Busbecq was a passionate collector of manuscripts containing literary and scientific works from classical antiquity<sup>2</sup>. The embassy's chaplains Stefan Gerlach and Salomon Schweigger were prominent theologians from Tübingen who came into contact with the Greek Patriarchate in an attempt to promote religious dialogue with the Orthodox<sup>3</sup>. Other officials and professionals joined the administrative staff of the delegation: Hans Dernschwam, a highly educated merchant in the service of the Fugger family enterprise<sup>4</sup>, and the erudite apothecary Reinhold Lubenau from Königsberg are the most notable examples<sup>5</sup>. They were also joined by artists, some of whom were important figures on the international art scene; these painters and draftsmen were entrusted with the task of producing images of the Ottoman capital. The best-known cases are those of Pieter Coecke van Aelst in 1533 and

Melchior Lorck in 1559, who executed, among other pictorial representations, spectacular panoramic views of the city<sup>6</sup>. These visitors recorded their impressions of the antiquities of imperial and Christian Constantinople in travel accounts and journals, some of which were published during their lifetimes, and illustrated their reports with appropriate woodcuts.

## Scholars and the Topography of Byzantine Constantinople

Based on their readings from classical geographers, mainly Strabo, Ptolemy, and Pliny, as well as on recent literature of the time (particularly the study of the Frenchman Pierre Gilles<sup>7</sup>), the visitors had a good knowledge of the geographical space of the Byzantine and Ottoman capital and its natural position, defined by the water volumes surrounding it, namely the Bosphorus, the Propontis, and the Golden Horn. They were clearly aware of the limits of the historic capital's urban area, as contained within the three fortification lines, the Theodosian Land Walls to the west and the two branches of the maritime walls to the north (along the Golden Horn coast) and south (along the shore of the Propontis). For example, the aforementioned Reinhold Lubenau, who accompanied emperor Rudolf II's envoy to sultan Murad III in 1587-1588, wrote an extensive description of the three sections, including references to the Byzantine gates<sup>8</sup>. Likewise, Maximilian Brandstetter, the secretary of Adam Herberstein when the latter negotiated the peace treaty of 1608 between Rudolf II and Ahmed III, included in his account data about the overall extent of the fortifications (»Umfang in der Ringmauer«) and a list of all 25 gates in the city's walls, from Bahçe Kapı (Czifut Kapı in the text) in the northeast, counterclockwise to Ahır Kapı in the southeast<sup>9</sup>.

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1 Strohmeier, Freundschaft; Agoston, Conquest.

2 Gastgeber, Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq; Arrighi, Écritures.

3 Cazacu, Le patriarcat; Burschel, Topkapı. For the dialogue between the Protestant circles and the Patriarchate of Constantinople, see: Wendebourg, Reformation; Moore, Wittenberg.

4 Birnbaum, The Fuggers.

5 Koder, Lubenau.

6 Born, Mœurs 283-302; Westbrook/van Meeuwen, Reconstructing.

7 Grémois, Itinéraires.

8 Reinhold Lubenau 138-140.

9 Nehring, Herberstein 169.



**Fig. 1** View of the inner courtyard of the Elçi Hanı facing north with the Column of Constantine in the background. – (After Vienna, Austrian National Library, Codex Vind. 8615 [end of 16<sup>th</sup> century], fol. 141<sup>v</sup>).

Indeed, the image of the formidable Land Walls was the first impression experienced by the incoming delegations, as they arrived from Vienna through the old military road that crossed the Balkans<sup>10</sup>. The account of Salomon Schweigger is illustrated with a woodcut depicting the ceremonial entry of the delegation headed by Joachim von Sintzendorf in 1578 and escorted by Ottoman cavalymen<sup>11</sup>.

The first encounter of incoming visitors from the west with the interior of the city was upon entering through the gate

of Selymbria (Silivrikapı), from where an avenue leading to the center of Istanbul opened up<sup>12</sup>. By taking this route, they passed by the column of Arcadius (on which, see below) and ended up in their lodgings in the designated caravanserai. From the 1550s onwards the members of diplomatic missions to the Porte resided in the Elçi Hanı, also called the German House, a typical Ottoman urban caravanserai opposite the talismanic porphyry column of Constantine, that had once supported the sunlike statue of the city's founder<sup>13</sup>. The

10 For this road, see Yerasimos, *Voyageurs* 43-53; Jireček, *Heerstrasse*; Popovic, *Von Budapest*.

11 Schweigger, *Reiss Beschreibung* 50-51.

12 For this street, see Asutay-Effenberger, *Landmauer* 213-214.

13 Eyice, *Elçihani*. For the Column of Constantine and the eponymous forum, see Kaldellis, *Forum*; Ousterhout, *Life*.



**Fig. 2** Sultan Süleyman I riding through the ruins of the Hippodrome of Constantinople. – (After Pieter Coecke van Aelst, *Les mœurs et fachons de faire de Turcz...* Antwerp [?], 1553. London, British Museum).

building is no longer preserved, but its location facing the Column of Constantine and the mosque of Atik Ali Pasha is well known thanks to the accurate descriptions in the written sources and its depiction in images by artists residing in it (fig. 1). A few days after arriving, the delegation would be pompously collected by a group of chiaus cavalymen headed by the çavuşbaşı in front of the »German house«, at the plaza between the residence, the Atik Ali pasha mosque and the Column of Constantine, and taken to the Saray for an audience with the Sultan according to the prescriptions of a strict protocol. The procession followed the Divan Yolu road artery eastwards, a route which corresponded with the Byzantine thoroughfare of the Mese and drove them past the Hagia Sophia and the Hippodrome to the Imperial Gate leading to the first courtyard of the Palace complex<sup>14</sup>. By following this route, the members of the Habsburg delegation experienced and became acquainted with important elements of the ceremonial topography of Ottoman Istanbul, as well as that of the old civic center of Byzantine Constantinople<sup>15</sup>.

Some material remains of Byzantine Constantinople were still present and visible within the context of Ottoman Istanbul, occasionally preserving elements of the secular power of the former East Roman Empire, with which the Ottomans shared the same geographical space and identical claims; it seems that traces of the city's Roman heritage were among

the most popular sights appreciated by travelers from the Holy Roman Empire. However, their perception of the urban image of Byzantine Constantinople as the capital of the East Roman Empire was inevitably based on an incomplete and fragmentary picture, since key focal points had been overwhelmingly transformed by the Ottomans<sup>16</sup>: the Topkapi Palace at the eastern tip of the peninsula was by then the center of power complemented by the Hagia Sophia mosque. The Hippodrome, well known as one of the main stages for Byzantine emperors' interaction with the people, was being used by the sultans for their own celebrations, with the obelisks and the serpent column in the background. To the east, the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors lay in ruins, which were noticed by a few travelers. For example, they are visible in Pieter Coecke's woodcut based on drawings the artist made in 1533 (fig. 2)<sup>17</sup>. On the other hand, there are very few references to the south façade of the maritime wing known as the Bukoleon palace<sup>18</sup>.

Apart from official business, the staff of the embassy did not enjoy complete freedom of movement within the city, but there were times when these special guests were allowed to wander around and explore the various neighborhoods<sup>19</sup>. Beyond the old civic center, other sites preserved memories of imperial Constantinople: in the middle of the urban area, the Fatih mosque complex had taken the place of the former

14 For the route and the procession, see for example the description in: Fürer, *Reise* 376; for the Divan Yolu avenue, see Cerasi, *Urban*.

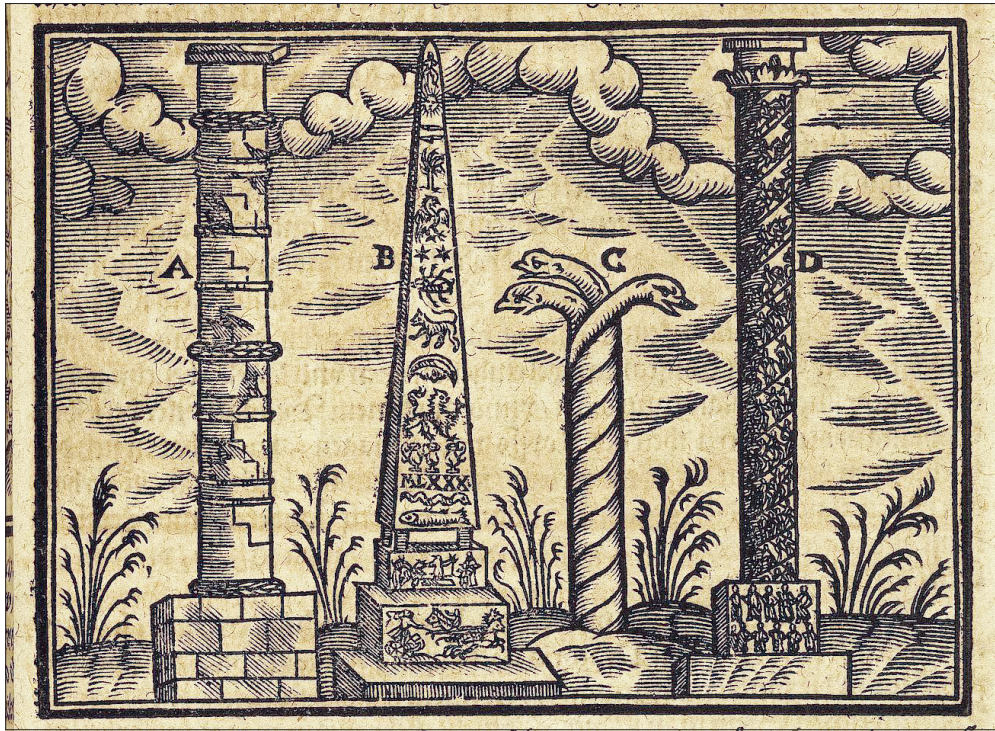
15 For the ceremonial topography of Byzantine Constantinople, see for example, Berger, *Imperial*; Bauer, *Urban*; Manolopoulou, *Processing*.

16 For the city's transformation in the wake of the Conquest, see in general Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*.

17 Born, Pieter Coecke van Aelst 113-124.

18 For example, in the travel account of Cornelius Schepper, dated 1533: Corneille Duplicius de Schepper, dit Scepperus, *Missions diplomatiques* 136.

19 See for example the account of Reinhold Lubenau 130-132, where the author describes his movement in the city upon his arrival.



**Fig. 3** Woodcut depicting the »Antiquities of Constantinople«. – (After Schweigger, Reiss Beschreibung 123).

imperial mausoleum of the Holy Apostles, in the southwest the Yedikule fortress had incorporated the triumphal entrance once marked by the Golden Gate and the northwestern Blachernai district had declined dramatically. Only remnants of the southern wing of the Komnenian and Palaiologan Blachernai palace were still visible, namely the Tekfur Sarayı, drastically modified to house the sultan's menagerie. Thus, to the travelers' dismay, there was not much of the Byzantine imperial heritage to see.

What was left were some remnants of public spaces, mainly a handful of columns dispersed around the city, reminding locals and visitors of the locations of the late Roman imperial fora and connecting the Ottoman urban layout with its Byzantine past. This concept of the »Antiquities« of Constantinople, which basically refers to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-century monuments, is recorded in Salomon Schweigger's selection of monuments that illustrates his account of the columns and obelisks in the city: the woodcut includes the columns of Constantine and Arcadius and the Obelisk of Theodosius and the Serpent Column from the Hippodrome (fig. 3)<sup>20</sup>. A similar assortment is found in the illustrated manuscript known as the »Löwenklau Album«, produced in 1586, whereby the monuments of the Hippodrome, together with the Column of Constantine and the Column of the Goths are spread over the two sides of folio 142<sup>21</sup>. The fascination with tall landmarks, columns, obelisks, and statues is matched by the curiosity about the domed mosques, mausolea, and baths of the Ottoman city, all of them commanding features of the

skyline. The map illustrating Salomon Schweigger's general introduction to his section on Constantinople clearly conveys this perception: the urban area defined by the walls is dominated by patterns of domes and vertical elements, namely the antique columns and the minarets of the mosques<sup>22</sup>. The same holds true of contemporary panoramic views of the city created by artists employed by the Habsburg delegation in Istanbul, particularly the series of drawings by Melchior Lorck (dated 1559) and the foldout miniature in the illustrated manuscript Vienna, National Library 8626 (from c. 1595) (fig. 4)<sup>23</sup>.

### Exploring the City, its Buildings, and Structures

Naturally, the Column of Constantine, across the street from the embassy, was the main focal point of the German travelers' topographical approach and the monument that received the most attention. From their windows, the delegates residing in the Elçi Hanı had a commanding view toward the column once bearing the statue of Constantine I. Humanist travelers were well aware of the column's connection with Constantine and were particularly drawn by the wreaths articulating the porphyry shaft at the joins between the drums and considered them signs of Roman victory, based on their presence on Roman coins, where they denote triumphant emperors (»wie man auff der alten romischen muntze die

20 Schweigger, Reiss Beschreibung 122-125.

21 Codex Vindob. 8615 in the Austrian National Library. On this manuscript, see Stichel, Nachtrag.

22 Schweigger, Reiss Beschreibung 102.

23 Westbrook/Dark/Van Meeuwen, Constructing; Babinger, Drei Stadtansichten.



Fig. 4 Panoramic view of Istanbul (right part). – (After Vienna, Austrian National Library, Codex Vind. 8615, c. 1595, fol. 160').

coronas»<sup>24</sup>. Artists who accompanied the delegation drew the column in meticulous detail; a drawing by Lorck may in fact be the only visual record of the decoration of the base, which is nowadays hidden in a later masonry structure<sup>25</sup>. According to this rendering, the pedestal was decorated with a bust of the emperor crowned by personifications of victories. Indeed, the column dominates the cityscape in the panoramic view by the same artist, where its disproportionately tall silhouette is shown larger than life in relation to the surrounding landmarks. Images of the Column were systematically included in friendship albums and costume books illustrating scenes of life in the Ottoman capital, considering it an indispensable feature of the urban landscape<sup>26</sup>. Although visitors were informed about the later history of the monument and its Komnenian repairs, they blamed the Ottomans for the destruction of the statue (although it had already collapsed in 1106), which served as a pretext for a general condemnation of Ottoman mistreatment of the antiquities of Constantinople<sup>27</sup>.

The most inspiring Roman imperial monument in the city proved to be the Column of Arcadius in the southwestern part of the city, in the middle of a bazaar, where the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century Forum of Arcadius once stood<sup>28</sup>. Of special importance were the reliefs adorning the pedestal and the spiral column with the characteristic Roman victories marked by the symbols of Roman power, military costumes, and official insignia, as well as the iconography celebrating Roman triumph over barbarians, including enemies from the east. Indeed, Hans Dernschwam who wrote down a detailed description of the monument consistently used vocabulary related to triumphs, war, and Roman-ness: regarding the figures of members of the court depicted in relief, he wrote: »die haben die remische tracht, so man togas nent, auff der achsel zugepunden lang und die rechte handt frej«, whereas the cross above the figure of the emperor is described as

»Über dem khayser ist ein runder zirkell, dorin ein Kreutz«. Dernschwam identified the subject of the decoration, unable to hide his fascination with Roman weaponry:

»alle die krigswaffen, so vor zeitten die romer und ire eroberte lender praucht, ausgehawen und also gestalt, als wan man sy alle durch ein ander geworffen hett, von schwertern, gros und klain handweren, handbogen, pfeyllen, kochern, huethen, hirnhauben, allerley leybs harnisch, vast wie man jetz praucht, auch armschin, fusharnisch, handschuch, spisse«<sup>29</sup>.

The column of Arcadius with its elaborate pedestal was by far the most popular monument among draftsmen and artists accompanying the imperial delegations. The well-studied Freshfield Album from 1574 includes three foldout representations of the monument (i.e., of the east, north, and south sides) with detailed drawings of the reliefs of the pedestal and of the spiral column (fig. 5)<sup>30</sup>.

Another site with imperial connotations easily accessible to the envoys was the Hippodrome with its Constantinian and Theodosian obelisks still in use by the Ottomans for tournaments and pageants<sup>31</sup>. This use is illustrated in the fanciful woodcut by Pieter Coecke van Aelst showing the sultan Süleyman marching through the late antique horse track with the ancient monuments in the background<sup>32</sup>. The Obelisk of Theodosius was one of the most popular subjects included in illustrations of travel accounts, as well as manuscripts, mainly friendship and costume albums. The image of the obelisk in the Freshfield Album includes a complete transcription of the Greek and Latin inscription on the pedestal, which mentions the emperor who gave his name to the monument by installing it in the Hippodrome. However, the imperial image of Theodosius and his court adorning the base, as well as the accompanying Greek and Latin inscriptions, received relatively

24 Dernschwam, Tagebuch 32-33.

25 Engemann Melchior Lorichs; Sodini, Images 45-46. The reliability of this drawing was questioned by Cyril Mango in: Mango, Constantinopolitana 306-313.

26 Stichel, Postament.

27 For example, Schweigger, Reiss Beschreibung 124-125.

28 Bauer, Stadt 209-211; Mayer, Rom 143-159; Konrad, Beobachtungen; Taddei, Colonna.

29 Dernschwam; Tagebuch 97-98.

30 Konrad, Beobachtungen 374-375. For the monument and its imperial iconography, see also Kelly, Column; Kiliç, Late Fourth Century 56-62; Grigg, Symphonian 469-482.

31 For the uses of the Hippodrome during the Ottoman period, see the various essays in Pitarakis, Hippodrom, vol. 2; Yelçe, Evaluating.

32 Born, Pieter Coecke van Aelst 116-120.



**Fig. 5** View of the east side of the Column of Arcadius. – (After Cambridge, Trinity College, »Freshfield Album« 1574, fol. 11').

little attention; what attracted audiences at the time were the apocryphal stories orally circulating about the esoteric meanings of the glyphs on the pharaonic obelisk allegedly foretelling the downfall of the Ottomans<sup>33</sup>.

Imperial presence was also detected in religious monuments. The Hagia Sophia, the greatest church of the East Roman Empire, was the subject of lengthy praises of its size, form, and marble decoration, but its use as a mosque was a major disappointment to foreign scholars<sup>34</sup>. The historical aspects of the building, primarily its construction under Justinian, were pointed out by several authors who claimed they saw portraits of Byzantine emperors, perhaps those in the south gallery depicting the families of Constantine IX Monomachos and John II Komnenos<sup>35</sup>. Analogous imperial overtones are encountered in descriptions of the monastery of the Virgin Pammakaristos, the seat of the post-Byzantine

Patriarchate. Here too, the scholars recognized the imperial background of the Byzantine monument when they saw the portraits of Byzantine emperors (apparently Andronikos II Palaiologos) once adorning the gatehouse that marked the entrance to the patriarchal building complex and copied the Greek texts of the accompanying inscriptions that identify them as emperors of the Romans<sup>36</sup>. The account written by Salomon Schweigger was also illustrated with a woodcut reproducing the image of the crowned emperor with his insignia, joined by his ornately dressed wife<sup>37</sup>.

## The Roman Heritage of Istanbul

Constantinople's roman-ness was an important component of the city's identity in the perception of the German scholars. Its role as New Rome is consistently emphasized in the texts and thanks to this role the city was deemed relevant to the Habsburgs' aspirations and their dealings in the Ottoman city amid the Byzantine ruins. The analogies between the two Roman capitals were duly stressed by writers such as Reinhold Lubenau who wrote that Constantinople is laid out on seven hills, just like Rome (»weil sie auch Sieben Berge hatt«)<sup>38</sup>. According to Salomon Schweigger, the antiquities of Constantinople were brought by »Constantino Magno« from Rome and other places when he made the city the imperial seat, echoing the belief that Constantinople was the reincarnation of Rome<sup>39</sup>. The transfer of power from Old Rome is a recurring theme in the descriptions of individual monuments as well: the travelers consistently relate that the column of Constantine was brought from Rome, as were most antiquities in the fourth century; thus, the column represented the idea of New Rome in the eyes of the Germans and this was accentuated by its form and iconography. However, there was widespread misconception about the no longer extant statue that used to surmount the column, which had been destroyed in Byzantine times. Some authors erroneously thought that it depicted the emperor on horseback, apparently based on the popular legends surrounding the equestrian statue of Justinian once in the Augusteion square, south of the Hagia Sophia, i.e., a few hundred meters to the east of the Column of Constantine<sup>40</sup>. Indeed, the image of Justinian had achieved legendary status on an international scale and was a familiar sight from woodcuts and drawings circulating in central and western Europe, including the widely read World Chronicle of Hartmann Schedel<sup>41</sup>. Regardless of the inaccurate identification and of the confusion

33 For example, in the long account written by Reinhold Lubenau 147-152.

34 For example, Dernschwam, Tagebuch 144, Reinhold Lubenau 142-146. For the Ottoman phase of the Hagia Sophia and its use as a mosque, see Necipoğlu, Hagia Sophia.

35 Mango, Materials 119-120; Reinhold Lubenau 142-146.

36 Reinhold Lubenau 172-176.

37 Schweigger, Reiss Beschreibung 121. These images are analyzed in Stichel, Vergessene.

38 Reinhold Lubenau 135.

39 Schweigger, Reiss Beschreibung 124-125: »Diese allezumal/wie zu erachten/seyn von Constantino magno dahin gebracht worden aus Italia/Rom vnd andern Orten/als er die Stadt zum Keyserlichen Sitz gewidmet«.

40 For the afterlife of Justinian's equestrian statue, see Boeck, Bronze Horseman 366-382.

41 Berger/Bardill, Representations 15-16.

between the two columns, which is also found in contemporary Ottoman sources<sup>42</sup>, this belief was consistent with the general fascination with equestrian statues that dominated Habsburg political imagery of the time<sup>43</sup> and may have been triggered by contemporary historians' willingness to trace its roots back to the first Byzantine emperor.

Other landmarks also conjured connections between the two Romes. The Egyptian Obelisk in the Hippodrome reminded the embassy's pharmacist Reinhold Lubenau (writing in 1587-1588) of the granite Obelisk at S. Peter's in Rome<sup>44</sup>. The same view was shared by Marcantonio Pigafetta, a member of the delegation in 1567-1568<sup>45</sup>. A few years earlier, the erudite merchant Hans Dernschwam had carefully observed the Column of Arcadius and characterized it as a »Roman Antiquity« (»schöne, wunderliche, kunstliche, alte romische antiquitet«), enthusiastically admitting that he hadn't seen anything like it in Rome itself<sup>46</sup>. Dernschwam even pointed out the similarities between the column of Arcadius and the spiral columns of Rome, apparently those of Marcus Aurelius and Trajan, thus drawing a direct link between the two capital cities<sup>47</sup>. Recognizing Roman victories on Byzantine monuments such as the Column of Arcadius must have served as an inspiration for the official delegates within the complex military and diplomatic dealings between the two empires. Among religious buildings, the Hagia Sophia also served as a reference point to Constantinople's late Roman past: Lubenau connected the sixth-century church with Rome by likening its domed silhouette to the Pantheon<sup>48</sup>.

In general, the writers under discussion adhered to the standard narrative of the Holy Roman Empire regarding the divide between the Western and Eastern Roman Empire and their respective successor states<sup>49</sup>. Thus, the Byzantine emperors, especially those of the post-Justinianic era, were almost always referred to as »Griechische Kaiser«. Members of the Constantinian and Theodosian dynasties, and even Justinian, were more likely to be called simply »imperatores« or even »Römische kaiser« than their Macedonian, Komnenian, or Palaiologan successors. Indeed, the encounter with the imperial images of the Palaiologan emperors and what was regarded as the tomb of Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) in the Pammakaristos (more likely to be identified with the sarcophagus housing the remains of Theodora Kantakouzene Komnene, died after 1390)<sup>50</sup>, had a rather negative impact on authors from the Reich. Salomon Schweigger, for example expressed his dissatisfaction with the poor workmanship

of the sarcophagus and its decoration, which he saw as a contrast to the mightiness of the Byzantine emperors: »verwundert daß die Griechischen Keyser in allen dingen mit iren Monumentis sehr prächtig gewesen unnd doch diß Begrebnus so gar schlecht ist«<sup>51</sup>. On the other hand, there was a special interest in identifying sites associated with the end of the Byzantine empire, perhaps concealing hopes for recovering the once Christian city: thus, the references to the fortifications, particularly the Theodosian Land Walls, were often supplemented by stories about the Ottoman siege<sup>52</sup>, whereas Gerlach stated that he was shown the spot where the last Christian emperor, Constantine XI, was killed on the day of the Ottoman assault, allegedly close to the Chora monastery (the Middle Byzantine building complex with Palaiologan additions now known as the Kariye Camii)<sup>53</sup>.

As a rule, the scholars were not interested in the medieval monuments of Constantinople; their primary aim was to learn and relate about life in the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the lengthiest passages in their travelogues are the ones describing in detail the order and discipline that characterized the sultan's court, especially when reporting on the delivery of the tribute by the delegates<sup>54</sup>. The perception of the center of power in the Ottoman capital revolved around the area that encompassed the Saray, the Hagia Sophia, and the Hippodrome, the latter two appropriated sites from the Byzantine emperors. This concept is also reflected in the drawing of the Hagia Sophia – Hippodrome ensemble in the Freshfield Album<sup>55</sup>. Indeed, the Topkapi Saray, the Ayasofya mosque, and the Atmeydanı (as the Hippodrome was known in Ottoman times) were consistently the most popular subjects of drawings and watercolors illustrating life in the Ottoman capital. It was within this triangle that the travelers witnessed the grandiose processions, led by sultans and viziers usurping the places where glorious Roman emperors used to tread; indeed, foreign viewers were able to visualize the presence of the Byzantine emperors in the Hagia Sophia, as well as the games once held in the Hippodrome, even if they had a vague idea of where the Byzantine Palace used to stand. In any case, the travelers were able to actually catch glimpses of the Byzantine court by witnessing the imperial iconography available in the remnants of the Byzantine public spaces, particularly the pedestals of the Obelisk of Theodosius and of the Column of Arcadius: the crowned emperors in military attire and courtiers clad in togas and chlamyses surely had a strong impact on viewers representing the Holy Roman Emperor<sup>56</sup>.

42 Niyazioğlu, *Into the Deep Past*.

43 Polleroß, *Romanitas* 208-211; Kohler, *Kaiserikonographie* 161-162.

44 Reinhold Lubenau 147-152.

45 Pigafetta, *Itinerario* 44.

46 Dernschwam, *Tagebuch* 97.

47 See the general survey of these historiated spiral columns in Becatti, *Colonna*; Krierer, *Konzept* 161-173; Arioli, *Trajan's Column*.

48 Reinhold Lubenau 143. For the impact of the Pantheon on Renaissance art and thought, see Nesselrath, *Impressions*.

49 See for example, Goez, *Translatio*; Aschenbrenner, *Contesting* 202-208.

50 On this tomb, see Melvani, *Donors* 84; Effenberger *Zu den Gräbern* 191-195.

51 Schweigger, *Reiss Beschreibung* 120.

52 For example, Schweigger, *Reiss Beschreibung* 133-134; Pigafetta, *Itinerario* 36-37.

53 Gerlach, *Tage-buch* 456; Ousterhout, *Sixteenth-Century* 123-124. For a discussion of the various locations identified as the place where the last emperor ended his life, see Philippides/Hanak, *Siege* 236-288.

54 For example, the long description by Reinhold Lubenau of the delivery of the tribute to Murad III in 1587: Reinhold Lubenau 9-13. See also Necipoğlu, *Architecture* 91-110.

55 For this image and the relevant topographical evidence, see the discussion in Westbrook, *Freshfield*.

56 For an assessment of the imperial iconography of these monuments, see Safran, *Points of view* 409-435; Mayer, *Rom* 115-127. 143-159.

As is most often the case with sixteenth-century humanism, it is unclear whether this interest in the early monuments of Constantinople was motivated by the desire to study antiquity or by a purposeful attempt to establish ideological connections with the East Roman Empire, or even by the active interest in early Christianity, namely the Greek fathers and the image of Constantine the Great as the first Christian Emperor. Indeed, the name and memory of Constantine I, founder of Constantinople, resonated differently with the members of the Habsburg delegations. The fact that they were stationed opposite the monumental column bearing the first Byzantine emperor's name struck them and served as an opportunity for long descriptions of Constantine's actions and his religious policy<sup>57</sup>. This approach can be traced back to Maximilian I's Roman idea, which applied mainly to his Italian policy, but apparently had repercussions in the sphere of the East Roman Empire as well<sup>58</sup>. The emphasis on Constantinople as New Rome and the concept of the transfer of Roman imperial power to the Bosphorus under Constantine are recurrent themes in the travel accounts. The authors were so obsessed with Constantine's name and attributes, that they recognized his presence in places not actually connected with him: thus, Reinhold Lubenau thought that the so-called Palace of Constantine (possibly named after Constantine Palaiologos, the son of emperor Michael VIII), as the Palaiologan building now known as the Tekfur Sarayı was consistently referred to in sixteenth-century travel accounts, was the residence of Constantine I. He also assumed that the mosaic portrait of Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) in the Hagia Sophia depicted the founder of Constantinople<sup>59</sup>.

## The Impact of Experiencing Byzantine Constantinople

Diplomats, scholars, and artists had a truly intense experience in the city that was once the heart of the former Byzantine Empire. The impact of these travels and of the tangible and intangible things that the travelers brought home with them is however difficult to assess. Manuscripts purchased in Istanbul and shipped to central European cities contained mostly works of classical literature and patristic texts, which were the genres that attracted the attention of contemporary humanists who generally had little interest in Byzantium<sup>60</sup>. Yet, books from Istanbul did play a key role in expanding knowl-

edge on Byzantium as well: two of the manuscripts used for the edition of Zonaras in the corpus of sources published by Hieronymus Wolf, the first reference work on the East Roman Empire, were brought to Augsburg by Hans Dernschwamm from Istanbul in 1555<sup>61</sup>. The title of this collection of printed texts »Corpus Historiae Byzantinae« was the first modern use of the term Byzantine to denote the East Roman Empire. Both Wolf and Dernschwamm were employed by the Fugger family enterprise of Augsburg and connected with the imperial circles of Habsburg Vienna.

However, Dieter Reinsch and Rudolf Stichel have shown that the growing interest in Byzantine history and imagery discernible among sixteenth-century travelers and scholars mainly served the purpose of learning about the Ottomans: for example, copies of the imperial portraits in the Pammakaristos were used to decorate Theodor de Bry's book on Islamic History<sup>62</sup>. Rediscovering Roman elements in Byzantium was certainly important, but most of them were already available in Rome itself; nevertheless, the most appealing aspect of the eastern capital was its status as New Rome, which was used as an additional argument in favor of claiming the geographical space of Eastern Europe against the Ottomans.

Moreover, orally transmitted stories reproducing locals' memories about the city considerably enhanced the experience of witnessing Constantinople and were contextualized against the backdrop of public discourse regarding the ongoing Türkenkrieg. This was expressed in the prophecies and apocryphal tales about the hieroglyphs on the Obelisk of Theodosius and about the magical properties of the serpent column<sup>63</sup>. Reporting on the destruction and ruination of Roman and Christian monuments lent a further emotional tone which struck a chord in the West. The role of the visual material produced during these trips was crucial in this process: it is no coincidence that two of the artists who designed ephemeral triumphal monuments to stage ceremonial triumphal entries of Holy Roman Emperors, Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Melchior Lorck, had spent time in Istanbul with the Habsburg delegations<sup>64</sup>. Perhaps the idea to juxtapose red and green columns in the arch of Maximilian II in Vienna in 1563 came from the colorful marbles of the Hagia Sophia, although similar arrangements were also practiced by the Ottomans, for example in the Süleymaniye mosque<sup>65</sup>. Apparently, the Byzantine legacy of Constantinople was an aesthetic experience shared by both rival empires claiming the thrones of Rome and New Rome.

57 For example, in Lubenau's account: Reinhold Lubenau 158-159.

58 Schnettger, *Saint-Empire*.

59 Reinhold Lubenau 143 (see also Mango, *Materials* 119-120 for the mosaics).

60 Gastgeber, Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq.

61 Reinsch, Hieronymus Wolf 203-204.

62 Stichel, *Vergessene* 91. See also Ilg, *Reisebericht* 190-191.

63 Stephenson, *Serpent* 205-240.

64 Dmitrieva, *Ephemeral*.

65 Schibille, *Hagia Sophia* 99-109; Morkoç, *Reading* 42-45.

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## Summary / Zusammenfassung / Résumé

### Byzantine Constantinople and Habsburg Global Aspirations: The Reception of the Roman Imperial Heritage in Ottoman Istanbul by Scholars from the Holy Roman Empire

The sixteenth century is known as the golden age of the Ottoman Empire, marking the peak of its international power and cultural development. The imperial capital of Constantinople/Istanbul was at the epicentre of this growth: since the Ottoman conquest of the city in 1453, the sultans of the ruling dynasty had begun to revive the glorious capital and restore it to its former splendour. At the same time, relations with the Habsburgs led to the regular presence of Habsburg ambassadors in Istanbul. Despite the decades that had passed since the end of the Byzantine Empire, the material remains

of Byzantine Constantinople were still present and visible in the context of Islamic Istanbul.

The paper focuses on travel accounts written by representatives of the Holy Roman Empire who visited Ottoman Istanbul in the sixteenth century and described the Late Roman/Byzantine imperial monuments they experienced in the city, as well as images produced by artists who accompanied the delegations. It examines: a. how the physical space and topography of the Byzantine imperial capital, its imperial buildings and imagery resonated with visitors and viewers from Vienna, b. how the encounter with the city contributed to the knowledge and reception of Byzantium in the German-speaking world, and c. how this knowledge influenced relations with the Ottoman Empire.

### **Das byzantinische Konstantinopel und die globalen Ambitionen der Habsburger: Die Rezeption des römischen imperialen Erbes im osmanischen Istanbul durch Gelehrte aus dem Heiligen Römischen Reich**

Das 16. Jahrhundert gilt als das goldene Zeitalter des Osmanischen Reiches und markiert den Höhepunkt seiner internationalen Macht und kulturellen Entwicklung. Die Reichshauptstadt Konstantinopel/Istanbul stand im Zentrum dieses Wachstums: Seit der Eroberung der Stadt durch die Osmanen im Jahr 1453 hatten die Sultane der Herrscherdynastie begonnen, die glorreiche Hauptstadt wieder zu beleben und ihren früheren Glanz wieder herzustellen. Gleichzeitig führten die Beziehungen zu den Habsburgern dazu, dass regelmäßig habsburgische Botschafter in Istanbul präsent waren. Trotz der Jahrzehnte, die seit dem Ende des Byzantinischen Reiches vergangen waren, waren die materiellen Überreste des byzantinischen Konstantinopels im islamischen Istanbul noch immer präsent und sichtbar.

Der Beitrag konzentriert sich auf Reiseberichte von Vertretern des Heiligen Römischen Reiches, die im 16. Jahrhundert das osmanische Istanbul besuchten und die spät-römischen/byzantinischen imperialen Denkmäler beschrieben, die sie in der Stadt vorfanden, sowie auf Bilder, die von Künstlern angefertigt wurden, die die Delegationen begleiteten. Es wird untersucht: a. wie der physische Raum und die Topografie der byzantinischen Reichshauptstadt, ihre kaiserlichen Bauten und Bildwelten bei Besuchern und Betrachtern aus Wien wirkten, b. wie die Begegnung mit der Stadt zum Wissen über Byzanz und zu seiner Rezeption im deutschsprachigen Raum beitrug, und c. wie dieses Wissen die Beziehungen zum Osmanischen Reich beeinflusste.

### **Constantinople byzantine et les aspirations universelles des Habsbourg: la réception de l'héritage impérial romain dans l'Istanbul ottomane par les érudits du Saint-Empire romain germanique**

Le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle est considéré comme l'âge d'or de l'Empire ottoman, marquant l'apogée de sa puissance internationale et de son développement culturel. La capitale impériale Constantinople/Istanbul était au cœur de cette croissance: depuis la conquête ottomane de la ville en 1453, les sultans de la dynastie régnante avaient commencé à faire revivre la glorieuse capitale et à lui redonner son ancienne splendeur. Parallèlement, les relations avec les Habsbourg ont conduit à la présence régulière d'ambassadeurs habsbourgeois à Istanbul. Malgré les décennies qui s'étaient écoulées depuis la fin de l'Empire byzantin, les vestiges matériels de la Constantinople byzantine étaient encore présents et visibles dans le contexte de l'Istanbul islamique.

Cet article se concentre sur les récits de voyage rédigés par des représentants du Saint-Empire romain germanique qui ont visité l'Istanbul ottomane au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et décrit les monuments impériaux romains tardifs/byzantins qu'ils ont découverts dans la ville, ainsi que les images produites par les artistes qui accompagnaient les délégations. L'article examine: a. comment l'espace physique et la topographie de la capitale impériale byzantine, ses bâtiments impériaux et son imagerie ont résonné chez les visiteurs et les spectateurs venus de Vienne, b. comment la rencontre avec la ville a contribué à la connaissance et à la réception de Byzance dans le monde germanophone, et c. comment cette connaissance a influencé les relations avec l'Empire ottoman.