# Constantinople as Center and Crossroad

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# Table of Contents

# Constantinople as Crossroad

*Some introductory remarks*

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How many cities have actually occupied the space of the narrow peninsula between the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara? Judging from recent urban histories, there have been at least three.[1] The Byzantines would perhaps have argued that they are but hypostases of one, but that does not compensate for the lack of a unifying term that can be comfortably used across its—or their—history. In common usage, Europe and Asia keep denoting both historical and geographical entities that are less than obvious; yet in the city that has straddled them for millennia even the graffiti sprayers are compelled to express their local patriotism by referring to the complicated formula *Byzantion–Constantinople–Istanbul*.[2] To some extent the path dependency of our metageography is to blame, since it favors terms that are already commonly used.[3] In addition to a particularly complicated metahistory, it makes for a Gordian knot that literally entangles not only Alexander the Great but anyone who has passed the same crossroad. Sharp, irreconcilable breaks characterize the way in which the history of the city is popularly imagined: Constantine I founding a new, Christian capital in an affront to Pagan Antiquity; Mehmet II conquering Eastern Rome in the name of Islam; secular modernity dethroning the seat of the Caliphate in favor of the parliament at Ankara.

This is all the more frustrating as the Late Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires did not only share the same capital, but also show a notable geopolitical continuity in terms of their core territories and wider zones of influence. It is as if the common space they ruled and the routes they inherited from each other would be overshadowed by the narratives they generated and the historical agents they claimed to represent. In fact, the mental reverberations emanating from this fissure are traceable far beyond their political frontiers: Western declarations of love and affinity for Rome, Athens, or Jerusalem have rarely extended to the city that ruled all three of them; and attempts to put Islam on the same map have added Mecca

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[1] B. Hughes, *Istanbul: A Tale of Three Cities* (London 2017), D. Kuban, *Istanbul, an Urban History: Byzantion, Constantinopolis, Istanbul* (Istanbul 1996 and 2010). Cf. also the BBC documentary by Simon Sebag Montefiore, *A Tale of Three Cities* (2013).

[2] O. Heilo & I. Nilsson, "Back to Byzantium: Rethinking the Borders of Europe," in M. Rosengren, A. Stagnell & L. Therkildsen (eds.), *Can a Person Be Illegal? Refugees, Migrants and Citizenship in Europe* (Uppsala 2017), 43–52, available at http://www.engagingvulnerability.se/urs/ (last visited 2018-10-01).

[3] M. L. Lewis & K. E. Wigren, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, CA, 1997). Many thanks to Charlotta Forss for this reference.

to the list rather than Istanbul, despite the fact that the Sunni Muslim and Arab world had been dominated by a political triangle between Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo, long ruled from the banks of the Bosphorus.[4] Borrowing a term from modern robotics, one feels tempted to liken the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits to an "uncanny valley" where presumed differences begin to resemble each other to the point that they cause stress for observers who try to keep them apart.[5]

The purpose of this volume is not to express concern or outrage at this state of affairs, but merely to divert attention from the metahistory and metageography of a city that we can—thankfully—refer to as Constantinople as far as the time focus of the contributions is concerned. We want to stress from the outset, however, that this is not a study of the Byzantine capital; it is a study of the space it occupies, the wider areas it connects, and the agents that have passed it from the Late Antique to the Early Modern era.

## Geography: transgressing borders

According to William Ryan and Walter Pitman, the history of how Europe and Asia parted at the Bosphorus begins with an apocalypse, a catastrophe so devastating that it has colored the earliest attested human perceptions of the end of civilization and all human life. Up to around 5600 BC, so we are told, the Black Sea was an inland freshwater lake, smaller than now and surrounded by prospering Neolithic settlements. Rising sea levels in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean gradually caused the Aegean Sea to pour itself into the Marmara Sea, where the water flows soon started digging a narrow gorge into the rocky sill that separated the Marmara from the Black Sea: the Bosphorus. When the sill collapsed, the authors tell us, hundreds of thousands of square kilometers of inhabited lands around the Black Sea were flooded in less than a year:

> The crashing through of the ocean at Bosphorus, permanently drowning all the fertile oases that had brought the assembly together, scattered the inhabitants like leaves in the swirling wind. Both the language tree and the genetic tree show a great fissioning event. With hardly any warning, the inhabitants abandoned homes, fields, possessions, and food to escape with family upstream or on the high seas. Little but knowledge and skill could be rescued. Ryan and Pitman believe that the Semites and Ubaids fled southward to the Levant and Mesopotamia; the Kartvelians retreated to the Caucasus; the LBK dashed across Europe, leapfrogging from one site to the next … [6]

The inhabitants, we are supposed to imagine, carried with them the memories of a catastrophe that would appear in the earliest literary works of mankind—the Biblical and Mesopotamian flood myths—thousands of years afterwards.

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[4] J. Habermas, *Zeit der Übergänge. Kleine Politische Schriften* IX (Frankfurt am Main 2001) 183; R. Brague, "Athens, Jerusalem, Mecca: Leo Strauss's 'Muslim' Understanding of Greek Philosophy," *Poetics Today* 19/2 (1998), 235–59. See also R. Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (New York 2004).

[5] M. Mori, tr. by K. F. Macdorman in N. Kageki, "The uncanny valley," *IEEE Robotics and Automation* 19/2 (2012), 98–100. Many thanks to Matthew Goldman for this reference.

[6] W. Ryan & W. Pitman, *Noah's Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries about the Event that Changed History* (London 1999), 213. LBK is an abbreviation for *Linearbandkeramik* (Linear Pottery culture), indicating a Neolithic culture flourishing c. 5500–4500 BC.

The Biblical connection granted the theory of Ryan and Pitman some popularity in the United States and it maintains a small fan base still as of today,[7] but it has been rejected by most geologists and archaeologists who—even if they admit that the connection between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean may have appeared in the wake of the last Ice Age—stress the slow pace of the rising sea levels and human migrations in the area.[8] As such, the deluge theory might deserve interest mainly because it shows a recurrent tendency of the topography around the Marmara to evoke images of sudden and dramatic changes, breaks, and boundaries. The Hellespont is named after a girl whose sole purpose in the Greek myth is to fall from the back of the golden ram to her demise in the first strait between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Later on in the same myth, when we first encounter the Bosphorus, it is not the sea that causes trouble but the land on each side of the narrow gorge: the *Symplegades* or "clashing rocks" guards the entrance and bars the way of Jason and the Argonauts to the mythical Colchis where the golden fleece is kept.[9] The name *Bosphorus* (Gr. Βόσπορος, literally the "Ox-ford") alludes to Io escaping here from the wrath of Hera in the disguise of a cow, whereas the Dardanelles might be best known from another story of forbidden love—that of Hero and Leander.[10] Irrespective of how, crossing the Straits seems to have been related to feelings of transgression, as perhaps best confirmed by the Trojan war, and—exchanging mythography for historiography —by the Persian king Xerxes when he orders his men to whip the disobedient waters of the Hellespont, manifesting the hubris that will ultimately go before his fall.[11] Christian and Islamic apocalypses alike echo the same feelings as they predict the demise of Constantinople.[12] And still in Ottoman times, the traveller Evliya Çelebi recalled how Alexander the Great, by filling the Bosphorus with rocks, had tried to shut out the evil forces of the eschatological invaders of Gog and Magog, but how demons had eaten themselves through the rocks, flooded the Black Sea and ended up buried beneath it.[13]

Modern knowledge about the factual inseparability of Europe and Asia has not deprived the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles of a paradigmatic allure, even if it has mostly been presented in a tongue-in-cheek manner. Lord Byron swam the Hellespont in imitation of Leander and wrote a self-ironical poem about it; Jules Verne imagined a headstrong Istanbul merchant who prefers to travel the whole way around the Black Sea to avoid the modern Ottoman taxes on transports across the Bosphorus; the Turkish Nobel-prize winning author Orhan Pamuk devoted an entire chapter in *The Black Book*—the ominously entitled "When the Bosphorus Dries Up"—to the gloomy future of an Istanbul that is no longer located at water, and which glaringly displays past crimes and tragedies.[14] In recent years, the inauguration of the Marmara metro tunnel and the third Bosphorus Bridge

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[7] See e.g. D. Dimitrov, *The Black Sea, the Flood and the Ancient Myths* (2004), available at http://www.io-bas.bg/noahproject/ (last visited 2018-10-01).

[8] L. Giosan, F. Filip & S. Constantinescu, "Was the Black Sea Catastrophically Flooded in the Early Holocene?," *Quarternary Science Reviews* 28 (2009), 1–6.

[9] R. Graves, *The Greek Myths* (London 2011), vol 1, 226–7, and vol. 2, 232–3. Graves' classic work was first published in 1955.

[10] See Ovid, *Heroides* 18, and Moschos, *Hero and Leander*.

[11] Herodotus, *History* 7.35.

[12] O. Heilo, *Eastern Rome and the Rise of Islam* (Abingdon 2016) 71–3.

[13] See the contribution of I. Kimmelfield to this volume, 152.

[14] E. Byron, "Written after swimming from Sestos to Abydos," *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, vol. III (London 1904), 13–14; J. Verne, *Kéraban-le-têtu* (Paris 1883); O. Pamuk, *Black Book* (2006), first published as *Kara Kitap* (1990).

have been met by caveats that they are straddling two tectonic plates, and the plans of president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to build a new, "second Bosphorus" west of the real one have been met with accusations of delusion and hubris.[15] Travel advertising never tires of describing Istanbul as a city where irreconcilable opposites are meeting—dangerous, alluring, subversive and seductive, beautiful and catastrophic at the same time.[16]

It cannot be denied that there is a grain of truth in all of this. The Marmara Sea does indeed straddle a tectonic fissure, and earthquakes have put scars on Istanbul like few other cities. The view from the famous hills is pleasant to the eyes, but the peaks divide the city into a number of disjointed zones that have been regularly scarred by devastating fires. Water is difficult to provide and for nutrition the city was historically dependent on provisions from distant provinces. The city is a node, but it is also a terminus.[17] This said, the disadvantages apply to the closest environs of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles but not necessarily the wider areas they connected and which cannot be ignored if one wants to understand why the city came to rule two empires that extended from the Danube to the Euphrates.

## History: transcending paradigms

Just like the deluge theory, the narratives about the smashing and cataclysmic paradigm shifts under Constantine I and Mehmet II conceal a slower and less spectacular transformation. The Roman Empire can be said to decisively gravitate eastwards—economically, culturally, and demographically—at least from the early third century, as seen in the rapidly rising number of emperors from the Levant (Syria and Libya) and the Balkans (Thrace, Lower Pannonia, Illyria, Dalmatia, and Dacia). The emperors of the Tetrarchy (293–313), including Constantine the Great, almost exclusively stemmed from the Balkans and resided in cities like Trier, Milan, Thessaloniki, and Nicomedia, rarely if ever visiting Rome. Hippodromes and monumental baths were prominent parts of the city fabric in all of these cities, as were mints, a number of the most important ones of which were established in the Balkans.[18]

The claim that Byzantion owes its initial transformation into an imperial residence city to Septimus Severus (193–211) is probably spurious,[19] but it was definitely no drastic departure from existing practice when Constantine made it his capital in 330. It was surrounded by cities like Thessaloniki, Adrianople, and Nicomedia (Izmit), that had all come to serve as imperial residences, for longer and shorter periods of time, during the tetrarchy. The paradigmatic term 'New

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[15] On this project, see http://www.megaprojeleristanbul.com/ (last visited 2018-10-01).

[16] To quote a Swedish travel magazine, "… here it seems as if Europe meets Asia before a final showdown. East against west. Chaos against order. The future against the past. Out of this almost shocking clash, Istanbul rises, triumphant and beautiful." (tr. from Swedish by R. Hedlund). See http://www.vagabond.se/artiklar/resmal/20060314/istanbul-stor-cityguide/ (last visited 2018-10-01).

[17] D. Goffman, E. Eldem & B. Masters, *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (Cambridge 1999) 137–38.

[18] E. Mayer, *Rom ist dort wo der Kaiser ist. Untersuchungen zu den Staatsdenkmälern des dezentralisierten Reiches* (Bonn 2002), 28–68 and 236; R. Hedlund *"…achieved nothing worthy of memory." Coinage and Authority in the Roman Empire, c. AD 260–295* (Uppsala 2008), 151–59.

[19] For an overview, see R. Guilland, "Études sur la topographie de Byzance," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 261–62. Septimus Severus might have been retroactively imagined in the role of a precursor of Constantine, as argued by G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale. Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris 1974), 13–19.

Rome,' which is so often encountered in narratives of the birth of a new imperial capital, is not attested until the late fourth century and the reign of Emperor Theodosius I (d. 395), by which time the city had definitely begun to grow into the most important city of the Roman and Christian world.[20] And still after that, church councils would take place in Nicaea and Ephesus, and the patriarchates in Rome and Constantinople would be balanced by those in Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The new capital was a product of the late Roman Empire as a whole—decentralized and still interconnected by roads like the Via Egnatia that connected the Bosphorus to the Adriatic, and waterways like those that provided it with a steady supply of grains from Egypt.

Dramatizing the importance of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople is just as misleading as overstating the shift of imperial power from the Tiber to the Bosphorus. The Ottoman rise to power began in Bithynia, where they made Bursa their capital in 1326. From there their expansion took the decisive step into Europe at the Dardanelles as early as 1354, and Adrianople—Edirne—became their capital in 1368. By the end of the fourteenth century, the lower Balkan area was already under Ottoman dominance and the Byzantine capital reduced to a symbolic remnant of an empire whose own dominance in the area belonged to a distant past. The conquest in 1453 was a symbolic event, but in practice it merely marked the stamp of confirmation of what had been reality for a century. The conquest might even have been secretly approved of by the Christian mercantile powers for which it facilitated trade in the Eastern Mediterranean area.[21]

The 1453 paradigm has proven persistent in other ways. It is still not un-common to find the Ottoman conquest depicted as a main incitement for the Age of Discoveries in the West, despite the fact that the Straits had already been under Ottoman control since 1354, and the Middle East was not conquered until the reign of Selim I (1512–17); in fact the Ottoman expansion in the wider Eastern Mediterranean area can be seen as a response to external pressure rather than the opposite.[22] With the acquisition of Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, the Ottomans did not only gain access to the historical core of the Islamic world, but politically re-united a zone of interaction that had been divided since the Islamic conquests almost a millennium before. In this concern, the empire of Süleyman I (1520–66) stands in geopolitical continuity with that of Justinian I (527–65). Perhaps it is justified to talk about a 'subcontinent' extending from the Danube to the Euphrates, uniting the Anatolian and Balkan peninsulas and the Mediterranean and Black seas at a common nexus around the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.

Without making too bold statements here, it can at least be said that mobility remains a main key to unlocking the space that Constantinople occupies. Para-phrasing the anthropologist James Clifford, what might seem like a frightening limit to someone who identifies with his *roots* marks a prolongation of the *routes* of someone else.[23] Rather than a border between irreconcilable opposites, the

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[20] The first use of the name *Nea Roma* is known from the acts of the church council in AD 391, canon 3; for an overview, see e.g. A. Berger, *Konstantinopel: Geschichte, Topographie, Religion* (Stuttgart 2011), 21–25, or A. D. Lee, *From Rome to Byzantium AD 363–565: The Transformation of Ancient Rome* (Edinburgh 2013), 70–78. See also J. Burke, "Inventing and re-inventing Byzantium: Nikephoros Phokas, Byzantine Studies in Greece, and 'New Rome'," in I. Nilsson & P. Stephenson (eds.), *Wanted: Byzantium – The Desire for a Lost Empire* (Uppsala 2014), 9–42.

[21] L. Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (London 1996) 37–90.

[22] P. Johnson Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (New York 1994) 24–45, 112–20 and 173.

[23] J. Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass. 1997).

Straits here mark a convergence point of various mobilities that did not always work in the favor of the city in their midst. This goes for the devastating sack in 1204, when Constantinople paid the price for its strategic importance to the Venetian trade in the East, but also for the development that led to the demise of the Ottoman Empire in 1908–23: the Anglo-Russo-German geopolitical rivalry over the Straits has come to the foreground in recent re-evaluations of the developments that led to the First World War.[24]

Shifting focus to larger zones of interaction like Central Asia and the Mediterranean does not negate the role of empires and capitals as political, cultural, and ideological agents.[25] Whereas the restless conquests of the Ottomans have romantically been explained from their nomadic origin or the ideology of Islam,[26] it is worth noting that a considerable number of Byzantine emperors also spent their time on the move and along the frontiers of their empire. What it should make us reconsider in this context is perhaps not so much imperial agency, but rather agency as such.

## Agency: translating subjects

The traditional history of Constantinople not only prioritizes the prerogative of paradigmatic events like the 330 'foundation' or the 1453 'fall'[27], but also the role of single individuals like Constantine the Great and Mehmet the Conqueror. It gives a slightly artificial touch to the history of the city for which the thousand-year period in between, unfortunately, seems to offer little remedy as long as it remains focused on wars and kings. However, not all historical agency is human. In the last decades, a number of theoretical approaches loosely termed as 'network studies' have studied societies as complex matrixes, consisting of various independent, but interrelated, actors. One influential such school developed most notably by Bruno Latour and usually referred to as actor-network-theory (ANT), studies not only people but also objects and places as actors in their own right, since actors co-operate and interact with them. This approach entails a wide range of possibilities for archaeologists and other students of past societies, for whom analyses of places or objects become paramount. In order to make its view of human and non-human agents clear, ANT prefers to speak of actants instead of actors, thereby defining the role of non-human actors as equal to that of human beings.[28]

This role can be illustrated with a number of examples. To take but one, during the so-called Age of Discovery in the early modern period, maps became keys to success for the power-hungry monarchs in Europe. As a consequence, people

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[24] O. Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade* (London 2010); S. McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, Mass. 2011); C. Clark, *Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London 2012); C. King, *Midnight at the Pera Palace: the Birth of Modern Istanbul* (London and New York 2014) xv, 31–45.

[25] Cf. S. F. Starr, *Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia's Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane* (Princeton, NJ, 2013); P. Frankopan, *Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (London 2015); P. Horden & N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford 2000); D. Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford 2011).

[26] Cf. J. Goodwin, *Lords of the Horizon: A History of the Ottoman Empire* (New York 1998), 53–54.

[27] Cf. O. Heilo, "When Did Constantinople Actually Fall?," in I. Nilsson & P. Stephenson (eds.), *Wanted: Byzantium – The Desire for a Lost Empire* (Uppsala 2014), 77–92.

[28] B. Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford 2005), 70–74.

making and keeping maps—who in any other situation would have been less significant—gained influence and importance.[29] Similarly, the medical revolution associated with Louis Pasteur is bound up with an intricate development involving colonialism, hygiene, and modern communications.[30] From such a perspective, an inanimate object can be an actant, and a building or a place can embody a whole network of actants, where the different structures and materials, even the individual bricks, interact to form the construction.[31] The key concept here is *mediation*: when an actant uses an object (i.e., enlists a non-human actant), the result deviates in unpredictable ways.[32]

Such unpredictable agency marks several stages of the history of Constantinople. When Constantine filled the new capital with statues and monuments gathered from all over the ancient world, it was not with the aim of creating a museum of inanimate objects; in the eyes of their contemporaries, these objects were animate and possessed very much their own agency. The same holds true for the precious relics of Christianity brought to the city in later periods. In fact, all these objects would increase the attraction that the city exerted on the world with which it was connected. Exactly the same maneuver would be repeated by the Ottomans when they gathered the foremost relics of the Islamic world in the Topkapi palace, where they have become a major site of pilgrimage to modern Muslims all over the world. They come to the place not as tourists interested in dead artefacts, but as believers asking for intermission from living objects of faith.

This sociology of translation—the term that Latour himself preferred over the more successful ANT terminology[33]—answers to both transfer and translation in the sense of adaptation. While concepts such as 'cultural transfer' or 'reception' tend to presuppose certain actants and thus overemphasize the active role of allegedly dominant individuals or empires, translation can be used to describe both the geographical displacement of objects and the uses and adaptations for their new locations or use. In early modern Europe, *translatio studii et imperii* was a prevalent topos with a long tradition, referring to processes of transferring learning and knowledge, power and prestige, both geographically and chronologically.[34] The contemporary sociology of translation thus, importantly, resonates with early modern concepts. And it must be noted that not only relics or pieces of art are at play here. Many objects have passed through Constantinople and the Straits

[29] B. Latour, "Visualization and Cognition: Drawing Things Together," in *Knowledge and Society* 6 (1986), 1–40.

[30] B. Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, tr. A. Sheridan & J. Law (Cambridge, Mass. 1984).

[31] M. Tait & A. While, "Ontology and the conservation of built heritage," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27 (2009), 721–37; M. Guggenheim, "Building Memory: Architecture, Network and Users," *Memory Studies* 2 (2009), 39–53.

[32] Latour famously describes this phenomenon by referring to the two slogans familiar from firearm debate in the US: "guns kill people" and "people kill people, not guns." In the second case, the gun is a mere tool, it adds or reduces nothing to the motives of the person. In the first case, however, the gun adds something, in a horrifying way, to the intentions of the actant. Here, like in ANT, the gun is a mediator: it mediates, distorts the intention of the (human) actant. The object, too, has become an actant in its own right. See B. Latour, "On Technical Mediation: Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy," in *Common Knowledge* 3/2 (1994), 37–42.

[33] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 106. On sociology of translation, see also M. Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieux Bay", in J. Law (ed.), *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge* (London 1986), 196–223.

[34] K. Stierle, "Translatio Studii and Renaissance: from vertical to horizontal translation," in S. Budick & W. Iser (eds.), *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between* (Stanford 1996), 55–67; U. Krämer, *Translatio imperii et studii: zum Geschichts- und Kulturverständnis in der französischen Literatur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Bonn 1996).

throughout the centuries, moved by human agents and also, at the same time, moving them. Likewise, the travelers have been affected by the space they have visited and the objects they have seen, and the city itself has been marked by their presence.

This kind of translation is at the core of the present volume. What did a coin or a sword do to the Viking who set out to the Byzantine capital, and what did it do to the environment in which it finally ended up? What did an Islamic artefact do to the Italian collector who used the trade networks with the early Ottoman Empire to add it to his collection at home? What did the city as such do to the people who came to inhabit it out of desire, necessity or against their own will? And how did their presence make an impression on the city itself? This is where we also come to the question to what extent space itself can be considered an actant, influencing inhabitants as well as temporary visitors. Surely, this must be true for the Straits located where Byzantion, Constantinople, and Istanbul all evolved.

## This volume as a crossroad of perspectives

The contributors to this volume explore the crossroads of Constantinople from various angles and through the lens of different scholarly fields. The variety of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches means that the reader is exposed to both different angles and ways of zooming in and out, depending on geographical, chronological, and cultural viewpoints.

We begin at the very center with the construction of an imperial cityscape in the early years of Constantinople, outlined and analyzed in Ragnar Hedlund's "Byzantion, Zeuxippos, and Constantinople: The emergence of an imperial city." Approaching the cityscape from the perspective of actor-network-theory and focusing on the early Byzantine Baths of Zeuxippos as a case in point, Hedlund shows how building complexes developed as the result not only of the builders' intentions, but also of the successive interaction between human and material actants. Hedlund thus argues that inscriptions and even space itself may function as actants, influencing the development of building complexes and, in extension, the cityscape of 'New Rome.'

While such a viewpoint presents an inside viewpoint of Constantinople, the following contribution turns to the question of mobility and the experience of travelling to Constantinople: In "Crossing the Straits in the Search for a Cure: Travelling to Constantinople in the Miracles of its healer saints," Grigori Simeonov examines the hagiographical depictions of journeys to the capital in the early and middle Byzantine periods. Simeonov's survey offers interesting portraits of men and women who would travel primarily by sea in order to meet the *Anargyroi* (saints who offered healing without expecting payment) of the capital. As noted by Simeonov, they were often involved themselves in maritime occupations, which would allow them to undertake such journeys. Arguing that the story elements employed in hagiographical Miracles to some extent reflect the lived reality of the time, Simeonov concludes that the ideological significance of this particular kind of pilgrimage is the expression of a firm Christian belief. Only such faith in the healing power of the saints would justify the risks and costs of the often troublesome journey.

In the following two contributions, our focus remains on mobility, but now the mobility of objects and ideas rather than human beings. Fedir Androshchuk

takes the reader on a long journey from Byzantine territory to the far North in his "When and How Were Byzantine *Miliaresia* Brought to Scandinavia? Constantinople and the dissemination of silver coinage outside the empire." The point of departure for Androshchuk's question is the curious distribution of Byzantine silver coins, which are found primarily in the North and especially on the Swedish island of Gotland, and not—as expected—in the former Byzantine territories. Androshchuk approaches the problem by carefully examining the hoards of Scandinavia and Rus, taking into account both geographical and chronological aspects of the collections. Based on that investigation, he argues that the distribution of coins can be explained by Gotland's position as an important trading center in the Viking world and, more specifically, the not merely economic value but also social prestige of Byzantine silver coins.

While Androshchuk's contribution takes us from Syria in the South to Scandinavia in the North, AnnaLinden Weller moves in an opposite geographical direction by turning to Armenia in her contribution entitled "Mediating the Eastern Frontier: Classical models of warfare in the work of Nikephoros Ouranos." Weller focuses on the cultural experience of being outside the capital and the comfort of things on the inside—here in the form of Homeric allusions and citations in the writings of Nikephoros Ouranos, *doux* (military commander) of Antioch around the year 1000. The continued use and translation (here in the literal sense) of Greek literature in Byzantine education is a well-known and often-studied aspect of Byzantine literature, but the ideological significance of such processes is often overlooked. Weller importantly argues that the use of a classical tradition that was common to Byzantine aristocracy could function as a cultural discourse that transgressed geographical space and, at the same time, functioned as a textual reflection of the lived experience of warfare on the frontier.

The next contribution takes us back to Constantinople and offers an image of the capital of the Byzantine Empire as not only the heart of Byzantine economy, but also the center of cultural and religious attractions. In "A Medieval Cosmopolis: Constantinople and its foreigners," Claudia Rapp describes the different groups of foreigners who visited and lived in Constantinople for longer or shorter periods throughout its long history. Italian diplomats, Russian merchants, Arab prisoners of war, and Jewish settlers—they were all part of the multi-ethnic and diversified social landscape of the city. According to Rapp, the way in which these groups were treated is indicative of an imperial policy that took their presence for granted: the cosmopolis needed them as much as they needed and desired the cosmopolis. The gaze of such a foreigner coming to Constantinople is analyzed in the following contribution, Mabi Angar's "Disturbed Orders: Architectural representations in Saint Mary Peribleptos as seen by Ruy González de Clavijo." Clavijo visited Constantinople in the fifteenth century in his capacity as ambassador of Enrique III, king of Castile and Léon, and the account of his experiences contains a unique description of a donor image in the church of the Peribleptos monastery, neither preserved nor described in any other sources. Angar approaches the description from a comparative perspective, showing how the visual vocabulary of Clavijo may belong to either Byzantine iconography or Western imagery, but most probably is a cross-cultural result of Clavijo's cultural background (in Castile) and visual experiences (in Constantinople).

Isabel Kimmelfield takes us beyond the Byzantine period and beyond the center of the city proper in her diachronic investigation of a Constantinopolitan suburb. In "Argyropolis: A diachronic approach to studying Constantinople's suburbs," Kimmelfield traces the history of this neighborhood from Byzantine times,

through the Ottoman period, and up to today's bustling Tophane. Her approach underlines the importance of diachronic perspectives for a city like Byzantion–Constantinople–Istanbul, but also the necessity of combining material and textual evidence in our search for information and then to complement that data with questions that concern intention and ideology. With Kimmelfield's contribution we thus enter the fascinating phase of restructuring the imperial city for new purposes and, at the same time, appropriating and translating certain elements of its past, architecturally as well as politically. A similar but different search for a lost neighborhood is presented in the following contribution, as Miloš Petrović turns to the traces of 'Belgraders' brought to Constantinople after the Ottoman siege of Belgrade (1521) in his essay "Belgrade Toponyms along the Bosphorus, from the Belgradkapı to the Belgrade Forest." Since most traces of the involuntary Serbian presence are long gone, Petrović turns to the partly anecdotal material of early travelogues in his quest for an explanation of the remaining toponyms. Such symbolic traces of history, he notes, can offer important witnesses of past events, and the experience of the Serbians brought to Ottoman Constantinople has forever been inscribed in place names still in use. As such they indicate not only the destiny of this particular group, but also the multidimensional and forever changing history of the city.

The fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans was a geopolitical development that changed not only the political situation in what is now Europe, but also the perception of culture and artefacts coming from 'the East.' Objects from the Middle East had previously most often been assimilated in their new Christian settings, for example as integral parts of church treasuries. This may be compared to the social status of Byzantine coins in medieval Scandinavia, discussed in the contribution by Androshchuk: coins that were pierced in order to be worn as ornaments did not primarily offer a link to the original setting, but rather represented a symbolic value of high standing. But in the seventeenth century, there was a decisive new interest in the provenance of Islamicate objects, evident in the stance of Italian collectors. Federica Gigante offers a survey of this interesting change in attitude in her contribution entitled "'New and Rare Items Coming from India and Turkey': The perception of Islamic artefacts in Italian seventeenth-century collections." Gigante shows how such objects were tracked down and acquired in the Ottoman areas, much like Byzantine manuscripts were in the same period, and how they were provided with provenances that underlined their exotic origin. This new emphasis on provenance, argues Gigante, should be seen in relation to the new enquiry into foreign cultures and religions: the objects were now seen as representatives of their civilization of origin.

This early modern tendency to look at the Ottoman Empire and other Eastern areas as primarily foreign—an attitude that was also to become the beginning of modern ethnography—strengthened the impression of a foreign and exotic East that stood in contrast to the modernity and advancement of what would eventually become Europe. That attitude marks political and cultural discussions to this day, in both Europe and the Middle East. Lee Beaudoen's essay closes the volume with an attempt to avoid the tendency to divide the Mediterranean region along such an East-West axis, and instead contextualize Constantinople and its history as part of a Mediterranean world. In his "A 'Mediterraneanizing' Approach: Constantinople as nexus at the crossroads," Beaudoen argues that several factors have impeded Ottoman scholarship's understanding of Constantinople as a nexus for exchange. Among others, the narrative heritage of Edward Gibbon's decline model, along with the conflicting Greek and Turkish nationalist histories, have

blurred the importance of the Straits and the city as nexus of commerce and cultural exchange.

The holistic understanding of the successive empires of the Eastern Mediterranean that Beaudoen advocates reflects the overall purpose of this volume. By assembling a series of contributions from the fields of ancient, Byzantine, and Ottoman history; archaeology; philology; and Renaissance Studies, we wish to offer an illustration of the complexity of the region in a diachronic and cross-cultural perspective. The successive agents-actants and the constant transportation and translation of objects, persons and ideas have left numerous and significant traces for scholars to examine and analyze.

It is certainly no coincidence that the multilayered history of the region has inspired numerous artists throughout the ages, compelling them to imagine what the Straits have witnessed in the past and might hide within their depths. Pamuk's essay on the Bosphorus, which forms the second chapter in *The Black Book* mentioned above, paints a post-apocalyptic image where Byzantium and an unknown future mix and blend:

> As this new civilization grows up amid mussel-encrusted Byzantine treasures, tin and silver knives and forks, thousand-year-old wine corks and soda bottles, and the sharp-nosed wrecks of galleons, I can also imagine its denizens drawing fuel for their lamps and stoves from a dilapidated Romanian oil tanker whose propeller has become lodged in the mud.[35]

No reader of Pamuk who visits modern Istanbul can resist the memory of that passage as they watch the large tankers passing through the Bosphorus or waiting for their turn at either end of the Straits. The Bosphorus entails constant movement and constant translation of goods, an endless series of passages and passengers. Bringing different people together, often out of pure necessity rather than an actual desire to coexist, the center and crossroad at the Bosphorus have stayed true to its complicated history of both conflict and coexistence.

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[35] Pamuk, *The Black Book* (translation M. Freely), 17.