

From the Shrine of Cosmidion to the Shrine of Eyüp Ensari

Nuray Özaslan

THE URBAN HISTORY of Constantinople, with a particular emphasis on the historical peninsula, has been a significant agenda of Byzantine studies. Despite the settlements spread outside the walls, the triangle-shaped and fortified core, bounded on two sides by water (the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara) and on the third by the Theodosian land walls, has shaped the image of the city. There has been a remarkable effort to explore its past, and hence a repository of information available in various sources and studies. In contrast, there has been limited attempt to investigate the historical, social, political, or architectural characteristics of its environs such as Sycea (Galata), Hebdomon (Bakırköy), St. Mamas (Beşiktaş) and Cosmidion (Eyüp). The small number of sources available on these surroundings underlines the indispensable need for further research, as well as excavations.

Cosmidion holds a particular importance not only because of its significance for the urban history of Constantinople but also for its transformation into a Muslim shrine after the conquest of the city by the Ottomans in 1453. After the conquest, a massive rebuilding effort began to reshape the city both physically and symbolically. Thereby the image of Constantinople as a sacred city of Christianity was converted to an Islamic one. This was not limited to the physical appearance of the city alone, but also involved the reshaping of its urban space. The newcomers were located in different parts of the capital. The site of today's

Eyüp was one of the new settlements, located just outside the land walls, along the Golden Horn, on the site known as Cosmidion.

Existing accounts of the site before the conquest and of its foundation by the Muslim Turks as a religious shrine are quite novelistic.¹ We must doubt both the sudden disappearance of reported constructions of the Byzantine period and the exaggerated narration of its Ottoman foundation. Therefore it is important to clarify the site's historical topography through a meticulous analysis of its urban past. This would contribute first to the image of the urban structure of Constantinople as a whole, and further would clarify the physical situation of Cosmidion before the Ottomans. This study aims to illuminate the characteristics of transformation during the critical time in its history: the conquest by the Ottomans. It would also help to initiate and plan the archaeological study of the area.

The Shrine of Cosmidion

Some sources associate the site with other places of the city such as Blachernae (Ayvansaray)² and St Mamas (Beşiktaş).³ The 14th region of Constantinople, that of Blachernae, is

¹C. E. Arseven, *Eski İstanbul* (Istanbul 1989); M. N. Haskan, *Eyüp Tarihi I* (Istanbul 1993).

²Gilles, who was at the city from 1544 to 1550, was not sure where to locate the 14th Region and relied on the *Notitia*: "The fourteen ward ... is looked upon as part of the city. Yet, because it is divided from the other wards by an intermediate area of land and enclosed with its own walls, it resembles a small city by itself": Pierre Gilles, *The Antiquities of Constantinople*, transl. J. Ball (1729: New York 1988) 185.

³The site of Eyüp is also associated with the suburb and monastery of St Mamas, which is supposedly located somewhere between the palace of Blachernae and the church of Sts Cosmas and Damian: A. Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople, The Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites* (London 1899) 89–90 (hereafter VAN MILLINGEN). In *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople* (London 1912) 106 n.5, he retracts the claim that St Mamas stood near Eyüp and accepts J. Pargoire's detailed study of St Mamas placing it at Beşiktaş, the European shore of the Bosphorus opposite Scutari: "Le Saint-Mamas de Constantinople," *Transactions of the Russian Archeological Institute in Constantinople* 9.1–2 (1904).

described briefly in the *Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae*: “the fourteenth region of the city, which stood on the sixth hill, was defended by a wall of its own; so as to appear a distinct town” (Van Millingen 119). The exact line of its walls is not known, except that they run for some distance due north from Tekfur Sarayı.⁴ Van Millingen (120–121) argues that the western spur of the sixth hill had been already fortified when the emperor Theodosius II built the new land walls on their present location. Thus, the city land walls were completed by the simple expedient of uniting the new works with the old. Mango agrees that the Theodosian walls were made to abut a pre-existing fortification.⁵ Apparently the site was a self-contained fortified suburb, but its name referred to a wider area. In the attacks on the city in the 620s, Avars and Slavs entered the church of Sts Cosmas and Damian at Blachernae and also that of St Nicholas, which both stood outside the walls (*Chron.Pasch.* pp.165, 180 Whitby). But there is no mention of much danger for the palace of Blachernae, which was possibly protected by its defence walls. The geographical borders of Blachernae would cover the sixth hill, the walled suburb, and also its vicinity which may have included Cosmidion as well (see *fig. 1*).

It is generally accepted that Cosmidion is located on a safe bay, just south of the northern extreme of the Golden Horn and outside the city land walls of Istanbul. The favorable ecological conditions of the site—appropriate topographic structure, climate, access to water, and fertile soil—provide a habitable environment where people could well have lived in pre-

⁴W. Müller-Weiner, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen 1977) fig. 275.

⁵C. Mango, “The Fourteenth Region of Constantinople,” in *Studies on Constantinople* (Hampshire/Brookfield 1993) VIII 1–5, at 3.

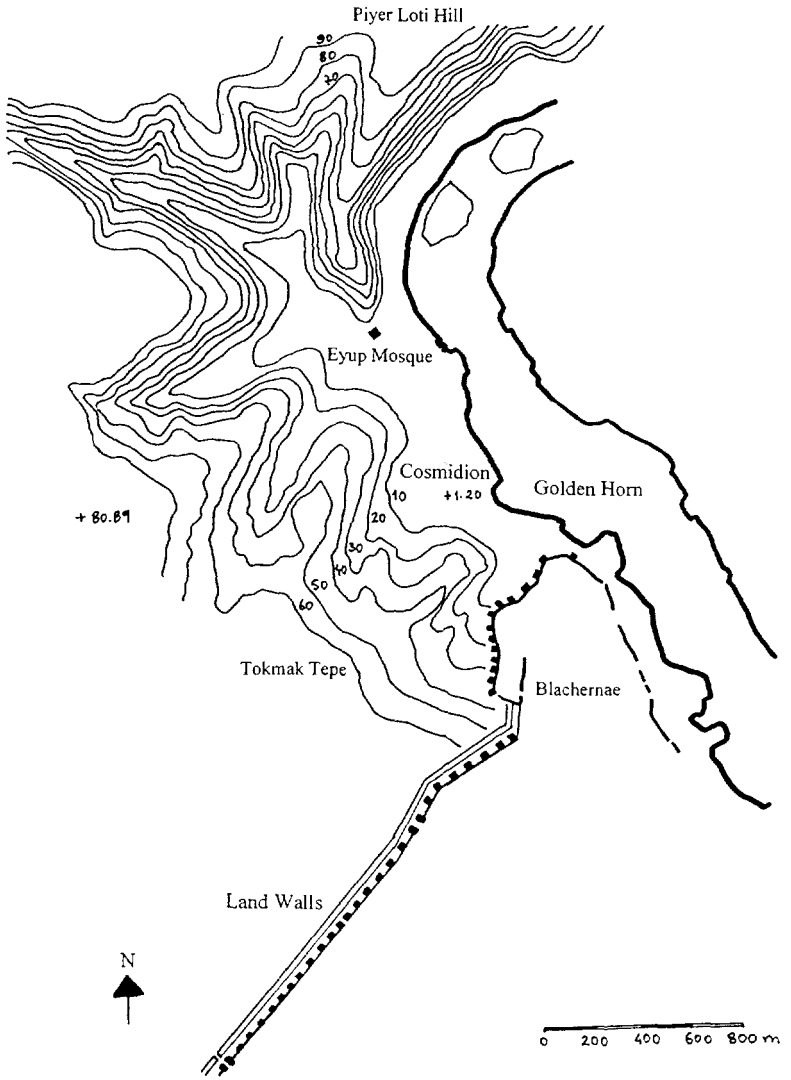


Fig. 1: Topographic map of Cosmidion/Eyüp
Drawing by the author

historic times.⁶ This however must remain hypothetical until sufficient archaeological remains are discovered to establish proof. As Gilles understood (193), citing Dionysius of Byzantium (p.9 Güngerich), the Golden Horn in ancient times was a beautiful place with clean water, green slopes, and inlets. It was a natural harbour protected from the sea and wind. A marshy area on its northern extreme received the muddy waters of the two streams Barbyses (Kağıthane Suyu) and Cydaris (Alibey Suyu).

The limited archaeological finds demonstrate the existence of some buildings, possibly an altar, from about 200 B.C., at the confluence of these streams and very close to the site of Cosmidion.⁷ In 1949 some remains of statues were found during the construction of a small building at Silahtarağa at the northern end of the Golden Horn. This led to further excavations which resulted in the discovery of the ruins of a Late Roman building and pieces of some sculptures dated *ca* 300 A.D.⁸ But from Cosmidion there was little archaeological evidence except for some parts of buildings and the burial chambers found during the construction of the bridge over the Golden Horn in 1972–73. But these important finds were not published. The lack of archaeological data forces us to concentrate on the literary evidence to draw a picture of the place.

The Monastery of Sts Cosmas and Damian

Early information on the site indicates the existence of a church dedicated to the two saints Cosmas and Damian; it seems to be the only significant building at the site. The saints were doctors famed for their medical knowledge and their free healing. Brought to the emperor Carinus, they cured him through

⁶ M. Özdoğan, "Tarih Öncesi Dönemde İstanbul," in *Semavi Eyice Armağanı-Istanbul Yazıları* 39–54 (1992), at 39.

⁷ S. Eyice, "Tarihde Haliç," in *Haliç Sempozyumu*, December 10–11, 1975, 263–287, at 264.

⁸ Z. Başak, "Silahtarağa Kazısı," *IstArkMüzYıll* 5 (1952) 51–55, at 51.

prayer (Malalas p.167 Jeffreys). But during an absence of the emperor their enemies killed them. These saints thus were not in fact executed by the state. The fame of the miracles attributed to the two saints spread through the Christian world across a wide span of time, from the sixth century into the eleventh. They were "medical missionaries," and a full retinue of priests and attendants administered their sanctuary. The cult was important, and the promise of healing and the fame of the site brought pilgrims and sightseers from great distances. The fortunes of the monastery varied with the changing fortunes of Constantinople.⁹

The monastery perhaps was built in the fifth century; in the sixth it became a popular healing place, with a dormitory and baths.¹⁰ The saints had lived and were martyred at the end of the third century; their cult centre was in Syria in the region of Cyrrhus. The cult was spread to other parts of the Empire over the next century, possibly by enterprising Syrian emigrants. It is found in Cilicia, Antioch, Thessaloniki, Rome, and Ravenna. The cult of the saints arrived in Constantinople in the second half of the fifth century most likely through a prominent family of Syrian origin. Theophanes (p.77 Turtledove) states that Paulina built the church of the holy *Anargyroi* (Sts Cosmas and Damian). This was not the friend of Theodosius II, as claimed by Janin and Van Millingen:¹¹ Mango has demonstrated that the church was founded by a woman Paulina of Syrian origin, and

⁹J. Seiber, "The Urban Saint in Early Byzantine Social History," *BAR Suppl.* 37 (1977) 5, 170. The phenomenon of the urban saint is peculiar to Byzantium and to the early period, and was linked to the fortunes of the urban society. The pillar site of a saint usually was located at some distance from the city, at the same time providing a focal point for the saint as protector and overseer of the city's destiny from outside. The activities of such saints were essential to the life and continuity of the cities in or outside of which they functioned. The monastery of Sts Cosmas and Damian would have been one of the significant urban sanctuaries for Constantinople because of its location and continuing popularity with visitors.

¹⁰See Mango (*supra* n.5) 4.

¹¹R. Janin, *La Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin* III (Paris 1953) 296; Van Millingen 170.

no later than 480.¹² The pilgrims, both male and female, had access to the healing tombs, brought their own bedding with them, and established themselves under shaded porticoes at the Cosmidion shrine.¹³ Gradually it became one of the essential urban facilities and a focal point of worship and pilgrimage.

Procopius, writing in the 550s, describes the site (*Aed.* 1.6.5–8; transl. Dewing): “At the far end of the bay, on the ground which rises steeply in a sharp slope, stands a sanctuary dedicated from ancient times to Saints Cosmas and Damian.” At a time when the Emperor Justinian was seriously ill and near death, “these saints came to him here in a vision, and saved him unexpectedly and contrary to all human reason and raised him up.” The emperor in gratitude changed and remodelled the previous building, which was not significant and not worthy of being dedicated to such powerful saints. Thus, when people are sick and in despair they get into flat-boats and travel up the bay to “the one hope left to them”; “as they enter its mouth, they straightway see the shrine as on an acropolis.”

From these statements we can understand that the church was situated on a height and remained outside the walls. Yet topographic conditions of the site preclude certainty about its location. The narrow plain along the shores of the Golden Horn is surrounded by hills of varying height. Janin proposes to locate the sanctuary on a height with steep slopes at the eastern end of Eyüp on the hillside above the Golden Horn. Eyice identifies it with the present site of today’s Eyüp Mosque. Mango however suggests that the church is closer to Blachernae and places it on the height just outside the Blachernae walls, a hill (today’s Tokmak Tepe)¹⁴ now traversed by the motorway leading to the

¹²C. Mango, “On the Cult of Saints Cosmas and Damian at Constantinople,” in *Thymiama ste mneme tes Laskarinas Boura* (Athens 1994) 189–192, at 191.

¹³A.-M. Talbot, “Women’s Space in Byzantine Monasteries,” *DOP* 52 (1998) 113–127, at 116.

¹⁴Janin (*supra* n.11) 299; S. Eyice, “Türkler İstanbul’u Alınca Yeniden Iskan ve İnşa Ettiler,” *Çağdaş Şehir Kent Kültürü Dergisi* (June 1987) 54–55; Mango

new bridge over the Golden Horn. In his view the church was founded slightly later than the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Blachernae and very close to it. They were both located outside the land walls until the subsequent extension of the Blachernae walls which separated the two shrines. They probably shared their functions, as they were both famous for their healing and baths. The bath was situated downhill from the church of Sts Cosmas and Damian in the direction of the Golden Horn and had a vaulted room as well as a pool of water.¹⁵

Another early indication of the monastery of Sts Cosmas and Damian appears in accounts of the Avar attacks in the time of Heraclius (610–641). A contemporary chronicler says of the siege that the men of Chagan of the Avars “charged and entered the Long Wall ... plundered all whom they found outside the city from the west as far as the Golden Gate ... they entered SS Cosmas and Damian at Blachernae” (*Chron.Pasch.* p.165). He later states that in the vicinity of the walls the Slavs set fire to many suburbs and burnt both the church of Sts Cosmas and Damian and the church of St Nicholas (p.180). The church of Sts Cosmas and Damian was subsequently rebuilt. It remained outside the walls, and continued to be the object of military attacks down to 1453. In A.D. 813 under Leo V, Krum, leader of the Bulgars, attacked the city with his forces. He “paraded before the walls from Blakhernai to the Golden Gate” (Theophanes p.181). He then began a systematic destruction of everything outside the walls including palaces, churches, houses, and men (pp.181–182).

For Constantinople, as a target of various nations throughout its history, the protection of the city and its suburbs was always an important issue. The Long Wall failed to serve its

(*supra* n.12) 189–190. Tokmak Tepe had been an important necropolis until the construction of the bridge in 1972–73. This was the cemetery of the Muslim martyrs who died during the siege of Constantinople in 1453.

¹⁵Mango (*supra* n.12) 191; A.-M. Talbot, “Epigrams of Manuel Philes on the Theotokos tes Peges and its Art,” *DOP* 58 (1994) 135–165, at 156.

purpose because of the difficulties of maintaining it and also of providing soldiers. It was already attacked and penetrated in the Avars' assault in A.D. 626. The environs of Constantinople were exposed to repeated destruction and plunder. This must have included Cosmidion. It was also an appropriate location for attackers to encamp, with level ground very close to the city walls. It was possible for them to use the monastery of Sts Cosmas and Damian as a fortress.¹⁶

During the Fourth Crusade (1203–1204) the Latin army camped outside the walls and looted and burned the buildings in the city's suburbs. The crusader eyewitness, Geoffrey Villehardouin, states that some abandoned buildings such as houses, churches, and monasteries came under Latin control. He says that crusaders passed over the bridge that spanned the Barbyses (Kağıthane Suyu) and set up a camp on a hill crowned by an abbey named the "Chateau de Bohemond," enclosed by walls.¹⁷ This abbey was surely the monastery of Sts Cosmas and Damian, which was granted to Bohemond by Alexius Comnenus during the First Crusade and consequently known as the Castle of Bohemond. According to the topographic description of the camp, the crusaders settled on a hill bordered on the northeast by the sea (the Golden Horn) and on the southwest by a plain which ended on the south at the city's land walls.

Moreover, Odo de Deuil, one of the crusaders, praised the wonderful view over the harbour and the city from the top of this hill: "It gives its inhabitants a threefold pleasure, for it looks over sea, meadow, and city."¹⁸ This report raises some doubt about Mango's suggested location of the monastery. The hill that he suggests, Tokmak Tepe, does not have such a view of the city over the Golden Horn, owing to its location and its height. It is almost certain that the sanctuary was on a height,

¹⁶Van Millingen 170–171; Janin (*supra* n.11) 298.

¹⁷*La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. E. Faral (Paris 1961) 165.

¹⁸E. Bradford, *The Great Betrayal: Constantinople 1204* (London 1967) 82.

but which hill? I suggest another steep hill, today's Piyer Loti Tepesi, rising just behind today's Eyüp Mosque, where the terrain matches the description of Procopius and Villehardouin as well as the expression of Odo de Deuil.¹⁹ It is the highest of all the hills in the area and looks over the entire Golden Horn to Asia in the distance.

After fifty-seven years of Latin occupation, Michael VIII Palaiologos made his entry into Constantinople and surveyed the ruinous condition of the city. He commissioned the repair and restoration of the city's edifices. Essential urban facilities such as walls and the principal churches for worship and pilgrimage were repaired and reconstructed. Buildings in the capital were also commissioned by aristocratic patrons or members of the imperial family, one of whom, Theodora Palaiologina, restored the church of Sts Cosmas and Damian, clearly a significant building for the religious life of the capital.²⁰ A variety of evidence indicates the survival of the cult of the Sts Cosmas and Damian until the fifteenth century. Andronicus II Palaiologus (1282–1328) ordered the fortress (possibly the monastery) to be dismantled, lest the Catalans use it.²¹ This information is significant, for it shows that there was a standing building at the site until the end of the thirteenth century, suit-

¹⁹The same view can be seen from the hill on which the touristic Piyer Loti Cafe House is located today. Several travellers who visited the city during the Ottoman period speak similarly about the view from this particular hill: J. Pardoe, *The Beauties of the Bosphorus* (London 1838) 9; R. Walsh, *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor* (London/Paris 1839) 50; E. Amicis, *Istanbul*, transl. B. Akyavaş (Ankara 1981) 447.

²⁰A.-M. Talbot, "The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII," *DOP* 47 (1993) 243–261, at 257.

²¹Van Millingen 170, citing Pachymeres. The political and economic problems of the empire caused military weakness, and Andronicus II sought help. The leader of the Catalans offered his services, and they arrived in 1303. After a time there was a falling out, and the Catalans began to plunder the domain of Byzantium. To prevent them, the emperor ordered that "all the country between Selymbria (Silivri) and Constantinople should be evacuated and the crops destroyed." As a result, refugees came into the capital from all sides and the suburbs were turned into a desert (D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453* [London 1972] 140–141).

able for a military base for besiegers, which therefore had to be destroyed.

But some parts of the building must have survived to keep and display the relics, such as the gold-covered heads of the saints, which were seen by a number of Russian pilgrims in the fourteenth century. They visited first the robe of the holy mother of God and part of her girdle at the Blachernae Church, which was in the northwest corner of the city with the imperial palace, protected by its own land walls. From there they went farther outside the city to the monastery of Sts Cosmas and Damian in Cosmidion. One of the Russian pilgrims, Stephen of Novgorod, visited the monastery in 1348 or 1349: "we went farther outside the city to a field near the sea. The large monastery [there] is in honor of Cosmas and Damian. There we kissed their heads very artfully covered in gold."²² Another pilgrim, Alexander the Clerk, who visited Constantinople between 1391 and 1397, and the Russian Anonymous also saw the monastery near Blachernae; the Russian Anonymous states that relics of the saints, their gold-covered heads, were regularly displayed at their monastery at Cosmidion.²³ The latest reference to a structure at the site of the monastery derives from Angiolello, who was in the city in the 1470s.²⁴ At the site of the monastery here proposed he noted a tower, which possibly was a remnant of this monastery. No other traveller who visited Constantinople in the first half of the fifteenth century provides further information about the place.

The sources that imply an earlier structure or at least some remains on the plain of Cosmidion are generally Arabic narratives of the death of Eyüp Ensari while fighting for Islam

²²G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travellers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington 1984) 44.

²³Majeska (*supra* n.22) 332, 150.

²⁴S. Yerasimos, "Giovan Maria Angiolello ve Istanbul'un Fethinden Sonraki ilk Tasviri," in *Tarih ve Toplum* 58 (1988) 34–41.

during the siege of the city in 669. Ibn Sa'd (d. 845) is the first to tell the story of Eyüp Ensari. However, Ibn Kutayba (d. 885) is the first to say that he was buried in front of the land walls of *Konstantiniyya*: the commander of the Arab army, Yezid, buried the body of Eyüp Ensari somewhere outside the walls, and horsemen rode over it to obscure the site. The emperor realized the importance of the grave and threatened to destroy it. Yezid in turn threatened to plunder the whole country. At this the emperor permitted the grave, which later became a respected and holy site for the Byzantines as well. Al-Maqdisi (d. 967), Kazvini (d.1283), and Ibn Haccar (d. 1449) repeat the same story.²⁵ Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali b. Abu Bakr al-Harawi (d. 1215), another Arab traveller, knows it as well.²⁶ But it is striking that the famous traveller Ibn Battuta, who visited the city in the fourteenth century, does not mention such an important place.²⁷ The Spanish traveller Clavijo, who was in the city at the beginning of the fifteenth century, went to the palace of Blachernae as the guest of the emperor Manuel. Despite being so close to the alleged tomb of Eyüp Ensari, he does not give any hint of this holy burial place.²⁸ Pero Tafur was in Constantinople in 1437 and visited the architectural monuments of the city including the Blachernae church, which, he says, was burnt and could not be repaired; yet he too does not say anything about the burial site.²⁹

Discovery of the Grave of Eyüp Ensari

Contemporary chronicles of the conquest do not mention any

²⁵S. Yerasimos, *Konstantiniyye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri* (Istanbul 1993) 175–185.

²⁶*Guide des lieux de pèlerinage (611/1215)* (in Arabic) (Damascus 1953) 56; transl. J. Sourdel-Thomine (Damascus 1957) 127.

²⁷*The Travels of Ibn Battuta, AD 1325–1354* ed. H. A. R. Gibb (Cambridge 1962).

²⁸G. Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane 1403–1406* (London 1928).

²⁹P. Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435–39*, edd. E. D. Ross and E. Power (London 1926) 142.

earlier grave or the miraculous discovery of the body.³⁰ Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari, the friend of the Prophet Mohammad, had participated in the siege of Constantinople in 669. He died in the battle and was buried somewhere outside the city walls.³¹ Some eight centuries later the grave of Eyüb Ensari was “discovered” during the siege of 1453 (Latifi 61; Evliya Çelebi 278). However, contemporary historians of the siege such as Tursun Bey, Aşıkpaşaoğlu, Kritovoulos, and even the sixteenth-century historian Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, despite mentioning the construction of the tomb and the *külliyeye*, are silent about this miraculous discovery.³² Moreover, none of the missives sent by Sultan Mehmed II to the Muslim world, or his letter to Mecca, contains any word of this discovery.³³ The similarity of the narratives of Latifi and Evliya Çelebi about this mysterious discovery leads us to suspect a creation of a legend seventy years after the conquest. Yet the initial information about the foundation of the first buildings at the grave site derives from accounts of the siege. According to Tursun Bey (72), who was

³⁰The sixteenth century chronicler Latifi says that when Sultan Mehmed II laid siege to the city, Akşemseddin, the teacher of the Sultan, found the body of the blessed saint covered with blood. He immediately informed the Sultan, who ordered that a mausoleum be built at the site befitting the saint's dignity (*Evsaf-ı İstanbul*, ed. N. S. Pekin [Istanbul 1977] 63). A similar but much extended narrative was given by Evliya Çelebi in the seventeenth century: when Mehmed was besieging İstanbul, “seventy-seven attendant saints searched for the grave of Eba Eyüb. At last Akşemseddin exclaimed, Good news my Prince, Eba Eyüb'ü Ensari is buried here.” They dug and found an ancient square stone on which was written in kufic letters, This is the tomb of Eba Eyub-u Ensari: “they lifted up the stone and found below it the body of Eyyub wrapped in a saffron-coloured shroud, with a brazen ball in his hand, fresh and well preserved.” They replaced the stone and laid the foundation of the mausoleum amidst the prayers of the army (*Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, ed. M. Zillioğlu [Istanbul 1975] I 278).

³¹S. Saleem, *Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari* (London 1986) 45.

³²Tursun Bey, *Tarih-i Ebu'l-Feth*, ed. A. M. Tulum (Istanbul 1977); Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi* (Istanbul 1970); Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, transl. C. T. Riggs (Princeton 1954); Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, *Tacut't—Tebarih III*, ed. I. Parmaksızoğlu (Istanbul 1979).

³³See A. Ateş, “İstanbul'un Fethine Dair Fatih Sultan Mehmed Tarafından Gönderilen Mektuplar ve Bunlara Gelen Cevaplar,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 4 (1953) 11–50.

present at the siege, the sovereign of Islam had respect for *ehli-iallah* and therefore built a tomb on the grave of Ebu Eyyub el-Ensari and also a medrese and a bath. Aşıkpaşaoğlu (156) and Kritovoulos (83) also witnessed the siege and imply that the building of the tomb and the *külliyeye* was one of the earliest constructions in the conquered city. Only Angiolello, who was in the city in the 1470s, describes the site: "at the head of the harbour towards the mainland there was another old, small church, which had a dome (*fatta in vaulto*) in which the Turks keep the body of St Giopo; and the Grand Turc out of the devotion to this place has erected for the saint a fine temple."³⁴ This account of Angiolello, Yerasimos claims, actually describes an earlier structure than the present tomb built after the conquest, and the well inside must be originally the *hagiasma*. He supports the claim with the Arabic sources, most of which repeat Ibn Kutayba's narrative and similarly maintain that the Byzantines built a dome for the grave where there were also spring waters.

In fact today there is a well just next to the coffin, attached to the inner wall of the tomb. An Arabic inscription on a marble placque above it states that this is spring water like that in Mecca (*zemzem*) and that the well originally was dug by the Arab warriors during the burial of Eyüp Ensari. It was repaired and renovated by Sultan Ahmed I in 1607.³⁵ A false-well inside the burial chamber is connected to the actual one; it is two meters below the ground level, and a shaft 20 cm. in diameter connects them. It is accessible through a staircase just behind the *sebil* built by Sultan Selim III in 1800. The well is situated in a cellar whose height is about 1.25 m. and whose width varies from two to five meters. A channel in the corridor transfers the excess underground water to the Golden Horn. Strikingly, it had a significant folkloric and religious function during the Ottoman

³⁴Yerasimos (*supra* n.24) 41.

³⁵Haskan (*supra* n.1) I 183.

period, for pilgrims to Eyüp believed that diseases could be cured by drinking water from this well.³⁶ Thus it resembles in function the sanctuary of Sts Cosmas and Damian. At present, however, dirty water can be seen clearly in the well, possibly from the Golden Horn and from the nearby hills. It may be that this structure was in fact built to control the underground water, for an excess would be harmful to the tomb. However, it is equally possible to take this source of spring water as strong evidence of an earlier structure, which might have attracted the Ottomans to build the tomb, the mosque, and the bath around it. It is interesting to note that the bath of the Eyüp complex was situated downhill behind the tomb, as was the bath of Sts Cosmas and Damian.

Significance of the Discovery of the Grave

Every society, through its cultural codes and its interpretation of the existing architectural environment, has an impact on the formation of the architecture of a city. So it was that the great imperial city of Byzantium with its glorious past and later decay in the fifteenth century was to be transformed into the Ottoman capital. The new capital was not created from scratch: the existing urban and architectural structures largely determined the new features of the city. Apparently the first stage was to legitimise the Islamic-Turkish character of the city and establish a physical, functional, and cultural relationship between the new spaces and the newcomers through architecture. The construction of the tomb and the mosque in Eyüp realised this function in the same way that Sultan Mehmed II converted the Church of St Sophia into a mosque. This, in sum, was the political and religious seal of the conquest, at the beginning of

³⁶R. Akakuş, *Eyyub Sultan ve Mukaddes Emanetler* (Istanbul 1991) 125; P. Mansel, *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire, 1453–1924* (London 1996) 29.

the momentous changes in which the foundation of Eyüp was an important step.

For centuries the conquest of Constantinople had been the major goal of Islamic nations, on the basis of a *hadith* (saying of Prophet) that made it the principal objective of Islam.³⁷ The city was an object of desire for its location, which received the wealth of the earth. Nevertheless, religious reasons were used to motivate the army to fight against the “infidel.” The effective speech of Sultan Mehmed II after the miraculous discovery of the Muslim saint strengthened the faith and encouraged the soldiers to fight the enemy in the siege of Constantinople (Tursun Bey 70–71). Thus the “discovery” of the grave of Eyüb Ensari bespeaks a political and symbolic connection between the conquest and the memorial tomb. Although the authenticity of these graves is doubtful and most likely fictitious, they played an important role in legitimising Islam in the new lands. The motive for the “discovery” of such tombs is political. “At the back of the mind of the conquering race lies the idea of substantiating a prior claim to the conquered soil.”³⁸

Such “discoveries” are common features in both the Muslim and Christian worlds. This is seen in other Ottoman conquests. At the siege of Baghdad under Suleyman the Magnificent in 1534, the grave of the orthodox (Sunni) doctor Ebu Hanifa was “discovered” under the walls of the heretic (Shi’i) town. Before the Ottomans, a similar attitude can be seen during the Seljuk period in Anatolia. Many Arab warriors died in Anatolia during the raids in the seventh and the eighth centuries. Their burial places became important tomb-sanctuaries for the Seljuks and later for the Ottomans. One of the saints was the historical Abd Allah Abu ‘l-Husain el-Antaki, el-Battal’, or in Turkish Seyyid

³⁷F. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, ed. W. C. Hickman (Princeton 1978) 84.

³⁸F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans II* (Oxford 1929) 714.

Battal Ghazi, whose mausoleum is attached to the convent bearing his name, at the south of Eskişehir. He took part in the Arab raids of the eighth century and was killed in a battle at Afyon, many miles to the south of today's sanctuary. Years later, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, his grave was discovered at today's site thanks to a revelation to the mother of Sultan Alaaddin. She erected the tomb in his name at his supposed resting-place, which gradually developed into a major cult centre in Anatolia.³⁹

After the ninth century, the veneration of tombs of holy persons became popular especially in eastern Islam, even though the worship of saints is blasphemy according to Islamic orthodoxy.⁴⁰ Most of the towns in Central Asia, as in Anatolia, had a corona of early Islamic saints who were companions of the Prophet and his relatives and who died in the service of Islam.⁴¹ The "discovery" of their resting-place by a revelation helped to legitimise the conquest and also provided a religious symbol for the newcomers. The mausoleum of a great saint became the centre of a large shrine: Mazar-ı Sharif in Afghanistan,⁴² Masshad in Iran,⁴³ Shah-ı Zindah in Samarkand⁴⁴ are

³⁹Hasluck (*supra* n.38) 716, 702.

⁴⁰D. Kuban, "Muslim Religious Architecture, Part II," in *Iconography of Religions XXII.3* (Leiden 1985) 27-28.

⁴¹L. Golombek and D. Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan I* (Princeton 1988) 51.

⁴²Mazar-ı Sharif is situated to the east of Balkh. According to the legend one of the governors had a dream in which angels took him to the grave and showed him the undecayed body of the caliph Ali. Accordingly a magnificent mausoleum was erected there. The town grew around this holy place to become the main city of Afghanistan (W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, transl. S. Soucek, ed. C. E. Bosworth [Princeton 1984] 29).

⁴³The city of Masshad originated around the tomb of Imam 'Ali b. Musa al-Rida, which became the principal Shi'i sanctuary of Iran (Barthold [*supra* n.42] 105).

⁴⁴The Shah-i Zindah complex is located north of the city; the grave of the Muslim saint Qusam b. Abbas is the focal point. He was the son of the Prophet's uncle and came to Central Asia during the seventh century. He died a martyr's death and was buried either in Samarkand or in Yaqut. His burial place was "discovered" by one of Timur's governors, and an intensive building effort was made at the shrine by the Timurid aristocracy (Golombek/Wilber [*supra* n.41] 233-234).

well-known examples of such towns. The oldest and most venerable pilgrimage centre of Europe, Santiago de Compostela in Spain, is a similar case.⁴⁵ The town developed around the tomb of St James, which functioned as a symbol of the faith and solidarity against the Muslims.

The discovery of the grave of the patron saint Abu Ayyub el Ansari and the other *sahabe* (a Muslim who met and talked to the prophet Mohammed) was similar in character to these examples. There are twenty-seven tombs of *sahabe* in Istanbul, and most of them are located around Eyüp.⁴⁶ It is assumed that they were martyred during the Arab siege of Constantinople and buried outside the land walls. After the conquest of the city in 1453 their graves were discovered and tombs were erected in memory of their names.⁴⁷ For example the mausoleums built for Ebu Şeybeti 'l-Hudri, Hamidullah el-Ensari, Ahmed-ul Ensari, Hz Hafir, and Ebu Derda became important pilgrimage sites of the city. However, some of these tombs must hold commemorative graves rather than the actual ones. For example the tomb of Ebu Derda, who certainly died in Damascus in 652, still stands on Zalpaşa Road in Eyüp.⁴⁸ In this way a pious fraud, Eyüp Ensari, could be used to establish a symbolic and (with the construction of the tomb) a physical relationship between the conquered land and the newcomers.

Conclusion

While it remains difficult to form a definitive picture of the site because of the meager evidence, some major points can be

⁴⁵The burial place of the apostle James was discovered near the city of Iria Flavia, now Padron, in 813. It was indicated by the miraculous appearance of a star, and his body was brought to nearby Compostela. Numerous buildings were erected around the church, and gradually the city of Santiago de Compostela flourished around it (E. A. Gutkind, *Urban Development in Southern Europe: Spain and Portugal* [New York 1967] 128).

⁴⁶M. Hocaoğlu, *Istanbul'daki Sahabe Kabirleri* (Istanbul 1987) 140.

⁴⁷S. Ünver, *Istanbul'da Sahabe Kabirleri* (Istanbul 1953).

⁴⁸Hocaoğlu (*supra* n.46) 123.

drawn from this investigation. First, there is today no visible indication of a settlement or group of buildings on this site. Apparently the frequent attacks on the city by various nations made it difficult to defend any settlement outside the city walls. Yet traces of Sts Cosmas and Damian remained until the fifteenth century. If it was located on the height of Tokmak Tepe as suggested by Mango (*supra* n.12), it is hard to imagine how the building could have resisted the several sieges of the city laid along the land walls. But if it was on the steep hill rising behind the Eyüp Mosque, the distance between the walls and the hill (approximately 1 km.) provides enough space for the armies. Thus the monastery could survive until the Ottomans, as it was not in the way of the troops.⁴⁹ But it seems that the Ottomans built the first significant building on the plain along the Golden Horn, the tomb and the complex of Eyüp Ensari, which developed into a sacred and picturesque town. Ebu Eyyub became the patron saint of Ottoman Constantinople. The cult centre of the friend and standard-bearer of the prophet Mohammad became the holiest pilgrimage site in Istanbul and the most significant for the Ottoman dynasty. The Eyüp *külliyeye* was the principal place for ceremonies of various events such as the Girding ceremony, the Friday prayer, and the ritual circumcision.⁵⁰ Here on their accession to the throne the Ottoman sultans were girded with the sword of Osman, a ceremony

⁴⁹In the course of the second half of the fifteenth century and the sixteenth many monasteries and churches in Constantinople were converted into Islamic convents (*tekke*), and there were many in Eyüp. On the same hill behind the Eyüp Mosque a Bektashi dervish (Horasani Karyağdı Seyyid Mehmet Ali Baba) who came from Central Asia founded Karyağdı Tekke. It could have been built over the remains of the Sts Cosmas and Damian, but this is only a hypothesis, which would need to be supported by archaeological excavation. The *tekke* was abolished in 1826 together with the all Bektashi *tekkes* and was devastated by a fire in 1978.

⁵⁰C. Kafadar, "Eyüp'te Kılıç Kuşanma Törenleri," in *Eyüp: Dün/Bugün Sempozyumu*, December 11–12, 1993 (Istanbul 1994) 50–61, at 51.

equivalent to coronation.⁵¹ Thus its political and symbolic importance continued through Ottoman history.

Selection of this particular spot to build the tomb would have been affected by significant remains belonging to the earlier period. But the urbanising policy of the Ottomans may have been a major factor in constructing the tomb and the *külliye*, to be a nucleus of a new settlement outside the old city to attract newcomers.⁵² The expansion of the Ottoman state towards the west was realised in successive conquests. The settlements of newcomers in the conquered land were an important political and social concern of the state. The local population generally continued to stay in their original place, in the walled city. The state provided lands and built the basic structures for the immigrants outside of the old city. As the city grew new neighbourhoods (*mahalle*) took shape around a nucleus, which generally was formed by a *külliye* including a mosque, a school (*medrese*), a bath, and a soup kitchen (*imarethane*) erected by pious foundations (*vakıf*). Several nuclei were created outside the walled city in this process of urbanising the newcomers. A mutual expansion and articulation of these nuclei toward the old city and one another shaped the Ottoman city.⁵³ This led to a semi-rural urban texture in the built environment that developed around the historic core.

The motives for the foundation of Eyüp would share the same

⁵¹Naima Mustafa Efendi, *Naima Tarihi*, transl. Z. Daruşman (Istanbul 1967) I 386–389; Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, ed. M. İpşirli (Istanbul 1989) II 682–683.

⁵²After the conquest Eyüp was populated by Turks brought from Bursa: D. Kuban, "İstanbul'un Tarihi Yapısının Genel Özellikleri," *Mimarlık Dergisi* 5 (1970) 26–48, at 30.

⁵³D. Kuban, "Anadolu-Türk Şehri Tarihi Gelişmesi, Sosyal ve Fiziki Özellikleri Üzerinde bazı Gelişmeler," *Vakıflar Dergisi* 7 (1968) 53–73; U. Tanyeli, *Anadolu-Türk Kentinde Fiziksel Yapının Evrim Süreci 11–15 YY* (D.Phil. İstanbul Teknik Üniv. 1986); S. Aktüre, "Anadolu Kentinde Türkleşme-İslamlaşma Süreci, Mekansal Yapı Değişimi ve İslam Mimari Mirası," in S. Yıldırım, ed., *İslam Mimari Mirasını Koruma Konferansı, April 22–26, 1985* (Istanbul 1987) 19–38.

characteristics of the urbanisation strategies that the Ottomans, well before the conquest of Istanbul, had applied in other cities such as Bursa and Edirne. Clarification of the exact site of the monastery of Sts Cosmas and Damian will be of great help in creating a more accurate picture of the northern part of the Constantinople. This will aid our understanding of the transformation of the city from a Christian capital to an Islamic one. But more precise topographical information must await archaeological work in the region beyond the land walls, the region called Cosmidion after the shrine.

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Anadolu University
Müh.-Mim. Fakültesi
26470 Eskişehir, Turkey
nozaslan@anadolu.edu.tr