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and the neighborhood. Those policies had "street-level" impact, as attested by Choniates' persistent mention of them.

That bridge between the high and the low is discussed in the chapter offered by Johannes Koder (chap. 2), who usefully raises some of the challenges of crossing the gap. I am confident that, with additional research, we will be able to do so, especially once we understand better how state institutions worked in relation to the polity's demography, common values, and economy, topics on which Koder himself has made many advances in the past.

**Conclusion**

In sum, the volume under review presents a picture that is quite common in Byzantine scholarship: the papers are excellent and stimulating when it comes to the particulars of their arguments, but conceptual chaos reigns when it comes to higher-order concepts such as "Byzantine political ideology," "imperial" and "empire," "border identities," "ecumenical," and other chimeras, in addition to "the Byzantines," "Byzantium," and "the Greeks." The editor is to be commended for soliciting papers that cover a wide spectrum of identities and ideologies, from ethnicity and politics to literary personae and archaeology. However, the editor failed to solicit definitions of key terms in many chapters. Such imprecision and reliance on misleading and undertheorized modern concepts have been the norm in Byzantine studies to date, unfortunately. For now,zintellectual defenses, work up from the sources, and insist on conceptual clarity.

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1 Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2019), ix–xii.

2 For military manuals, see, for example, Leon VI, *Taktika*, passim, but especially the introductory sections; Psellos, *Chronographia* 6.154.

3 See the references, analysis, and other similar passages in Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 94–97.

4 Some of the sources are cited in Kaldellis, "Civic Identity and Civic Participation in Constantinople," in Cédric Brélaz and Els Rose, eds., *Civic Identity and Civic Participation in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2021), 106.

5 When Cheynet discusses the episode of Lake Pousgouse (p. 240), he turns the historian Choniates' reference to the Romans' common *genos* and religion into a common language and religion.

6 Kaldellis, "Ethnicity and Clothing in Byzantium," in Koray Durak and Ivana Jevtić, eds., *Identity and the Other in Byzantium: Papers from the 4th International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium* (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2019), 41–52.

7 For example, see John Haldon, "Res publica Byzantina? State Formation and Issues of Identity in Medieval East Rome," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 40, no. 1 (2016): 4–16, https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2015.2.

8 Ioannis Stouraitis, "Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107, no. 1 (2014): 175–220, https://doi.org/10.1515/bz-2014-0009; cf. Kaldellis, "The Social Scope of Roman Identity in Byzantium: An Evidence-Based Approach," *Byzantina Symmeikta* 27 (2017): 173–210.

9 Clifford Ando, "Religiöse und politische Zugehörigkeit von Caracalla bis Theodosius," in *Religiöse Praktiken in der Antike: Individuum – Gesellschaft – Weltbeziehung*, ed. Leif Scheuermann and Wolfgang Spickermann (Graz: Zentrum Antike, 2016), 61–73.

## Sarah Bassett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Constantinople*. Cambridge Companions to the Ancient World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. xx + 413 pages, 31 figures. ISBN: 9781108632614

The study of Byzantine civilization and its history has witnessed a proliferation of companion volumes and handbooks over the past decade, signaling that this established field keeps evolving into a dynamic and diversified research area. One noteworthy addition to this growing body of handbook literature is *The Cambridge Companion to Constantinople* by Sarah Bassett, released in 2022 by Cambridge University Press. To tackle such a multifaceted subject, the editor employs a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together international experts in various fields, thus making the companion a valuable resource for anyone seeking a comprehensive understanding of Constantinople's rich history—often compared to a palimpsest, with layers of history coexisting, waning, and reemerging.

Coincidence or not, the publication of the volume is preceded by Shirine Hamadeh and Çiğdem Kafescioğlu's *A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul* published by Brill in 2021 (reviewed by James Grehan in *YILLIK* 4 [2022]). Both companions contribute to the scholarship of Byzantine and Ottoman studies respectively—having the exploration of the imperial capital at their core—but they also correlate and could be explained by two noticeable phenomena: Constantinople/Istanbul fascinates, and its long and transient history is significantly reconceptualized across the Byzantine and Ottoman fields. Current scholarship is moving away both from a traditional focus on the city as the imperial center and a top-down approach (i.e., focusing on the role of the elites) to a much richer understanding of its urbanity as shaping and being shaped by a myriad of human experiences. These recent methodological and conceptual shifts give a new slant to the studies of Constantinople and Istanbul, whose multidisciplinary research and exponential bibliographies rightfully deserve companion volumes. Furthermore, these two volumes arrived on the academic scene at a critical moment when Turkey was grappling with politically charged cultural heritage issues, such as the reconversion of the Hagia Sophia and Kariye Museums into mosques in July and August 2020. Clearly, the Byzantine and Ottoman cultural heritage and past of Istanbul do not concern only historians and scholars. They are relevant to the current political situation in Turkey as well as to contemporary discussions surrounding the reshaping and erasure of cultural memory in many other changing and conflicting politico-religious contexts around the world.

While Byzantine studies and research on Constantinople have seen substantial growth over the past decades, there are still gaps in our understanding of the city's complex historiography, its urban fabric, and the current state of the Byzantine remains in Istanbul. A handful of monuments have been preserved and well-studied, but we know a great deal only about certain aspects of life in the city. Much of the valuable documentation has disappeared. For instance, surviving Byzantine inscriptions do not amount to more than three hundred and this is just one among the many other instances of erasure and disappearance—material and human—that marked the city over time. On the other hand, many sites, buildings, and materials have second lives through perpetual reuse, and repurposing, resulting in their dislocations and transformations into new contexts. For these reasons, there have been only a few systematic studies of Constantinople, summing up what is gathered from material and textual evidence, and providing a bigger picture of the city as a whole. *The Cambridge Companion to Constantinople* takes on this challenge and explores the city from late antiquity to the early modern period. Furthermore, the volume goes beyond a narrow focus on the built environment and topography. It considers the interplay between urban infrastructures and various institutions, including administrative, social, religious, and cultural aspects, which collectively breathed life into the Byzantine capital. The companion considers, for instance, visitors' encounters with the city's urban reality and its place in the imagination. But these encounters extend beyond the medieval world and include the afterlife of the Byzantine city in early modern Europe and Istanbul. Thus, by assembling in a comprehensive way the topics that are rarely treated together, the companion provides us with a much-needed synthesis and an overall picture of the city's development during the Byzantine era. As such, it appeals both to the general public and scholars working on ancient, Byzantine, Islamic, the larger medieval world, and the Mediterranean.

Sarah Bassett's role as the editor of the companion is noteworthy. Her prior work, namely, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*, has been particularly influential in the study of the role of ancient sculpture in shaping the late antique urban context of the Byzantine capital. Her background in this field makes her an excellent choice for leading this collective volume. Constantinople is a gripping subject to which one can devote a lifetime as shown in the volume's dedication to Ruth Macrides and her scholarship on Byzantine history and Constantinople.

The companion opens with an insightful introduction where Bassett gives an overview of the long historiography of the Byzantine capital, with major figures and research trends that shaped the scholarship on the city from the sixteenth century to the present day. To understand how our knowledge and perception of the city changed over that span of time, Bassett underlines the shift from traditional text-based research to contemporary and current archaeological/material culture-based approaches in the study of Constantinople. Evolving theoretical and conceptual perspectives (brought by spatial, urban, and environmental studies) are equally important as the Byzantine capital is increasingly explored through intersections of people and place—understood as the natural and the man-made environment—and contextualized within the broader framework of ancient and medieval Mediterranean life. The result is a much more engaging understanding of the city that opens up space for new lines of inquiry.

Constantinople as an urban organism stands out because of its uninterrupted, centuries-long duration. Two dates define the history of the city and the Byzantine Empire—the foundation of Constantinople in 324 and its fall to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. All discussions of the Constantinopolitan past are built upon this chronological line and the Cambridge companion makes no exception to that rule. As the authors of the chapters pursue their topics along this time frame, they trace aspects of continuity, disruption, or revival. Thus, they make the reader realize that the millennium-long history of the Byzantine capital was not a straightforward line but rather a dynamic process of resiliences, ruptures, and cycles of adaptive responses that all transformed Constantinople from an ancient to a medieval city. The modern periodizations of Byzantine history may be difficult to bypass, but the companion shows that periods are just constructs, as Bassett remarks in her introduction.

The story of Constantinople is organized around five thematic clusters aiming to depict the city as a vibrant urban center and capture the complexities of human experiences that unfolded over a thousand years. Each part addresses a specific aspect or sector of the city's life and development that is relevant not only for a better historical understanding of Constantinople but also resonates with many of our present-day concerns around cities and urban living in general.

The first section, "The Place and Its People," for instance, introduces the environments (natural and built) and the people who interacted with them. It thus sets the stage for the city's geographical and historical context, infrastructure development, and diverse population. Thomas Russell underlines in the first chapter that the relation to the Bosporus—from myths about it to its financial exploitation—was vital for the pre-fourth-century history of Constantinople. It was the control and use of the natural advantages of the strait that would take the history of old Byzantion into a new development with Constantine I and his successors from the fourth century onward. Albrecht Berger condenses in the second chapter key aspects of the urban development of Constantinople from ancient Byzantium to the fifteenth century, derived both from textual sources and material remains. He shows that the changing built environment—its heydays and declines—represented responses and adaptations to changing social needs and political contexts. Anthony Kaldellis attempts to answer the million-dollar question of how many people lived in Constantinople and

who they were ethnically. Foreign mercenaries, prisoners of war, diplomats, and transient merchants of different nationalities were among the population, so scholars often depict Constantinople as a "cosmopolitical" or "multiethnic" city. Kaldellis observes that the use of these terms is not justified when we consider closely how foreigners were allowed to live in the city and other evidence about their presence. In his words, it is likely that modern scholarship has projected the image of the Ottoman city back onto the Byzantines whereas Constantinople was overwhelmingly Greek-speaking between 400 and 1204. The city was, nonetheless, attracting a constant influx of people—visitors and settlers, insiders and outsiders—making Constantinople a city of immigrants; a conclusion that strikes a familiar chord with questions of immigration and integration in the global cities of today (Istanbul being one of them).

The second part, "Practical Matters," moves from the protagonists of Constantinopolitan history to practical aspects that are vital to urban living. Jim Crow and Eric McGeer provide new perspectives on the water supply and defense, topics that many readers may already be familiar with. The long-distance water supply stretching deep into Thrace and the use of water in the Byzantine capital were exceptional achievements of late antique engineers. As shown by recent surveys and archaeological investigations, it is the maintenance of water channels and cisterns—the most numerous surviving structures from Byzantine Constantinople—that resourced and sustained the city into the Middle Ages. Massive land and sea walls safeguarded Constantinople, save for one interruption. But other factors such as geography, land, and naval forces, adequate supply of water, and provisions for the miraculous tutelary powers residing in the God-guarded city, were all at play in the city's defense.

Diet, feasting, and nutrition are compelling topics in current scholarship. Yet, as Raymond Van Dam underlines in his chapter about the supply and consumption of food in Constantinople, they deserve much more consideration in Byzantine studies. Feeding the capital was the largest enterprise in the Byzantine Empire, with infrastructures assuring the acquisition, transportation, storage, and distribution of food. The whole enterprise was more than a fiscal or commercial issue. It also served to define the authority of emperors and the contours of the empire. Enrico Zanini points out that the organization and administration of urban building, the maintenance, and the legislation behind it, represent another overlooked aspect of the city's long life. He observes that Constantinopolitan construction in the first two hundred years of its history can be seen as a single undertaking leading to a radical change from a minimally urbanized territory into a concentrated urban center. This concentration of buildings determined the survival of the urban organism in the following centuries and provided Constantinople with the infrastructure necessary for the survival and operation of a city as an urban and administrative center essential to the functioning of the Byzantine Empire.

The third cluster, "Urban Experiences," focuses on four different yet interconnected spheres of life, including residential life, imperial residences, commercial activities, and religious experiences. Paul Magdalino opens the section and examines imperial Constantinople, offering a closer look at imperial residences—urban and suburban, all seats of government and centers of power while the emperor was in residence—with a discussion of their implications for life in the capital, namely the politicization of public space. A chapter where Albrecht Berger and Philipp Niewöhner examine residential Constantinople follows. The authors consider what is known about domestic architecture throughout the entire Byzantine era from written sources and material remains. They discuss the various social groups of urban populations and underline different housing solutions available to them, observing how the makeup of the residential city and its components changed over time despite institutional continuity. Koray Durak offers a fascinating overview of commercial activity, its participants and venues, and the ways in which such activity shaped the urban experience in both physical and social terms and made Constantinople the commercial capital of the Byzantine Empire. Three final chapters of this section address the spiritual and sacred experiences of Constantinopolitan life. Ecclesiastical buildings featured prominently in Constantinople's urban landscape for most of its history. Vasileios Marinis offers insights into the relationship between church building and ecclesiastical practice—namely, prescribed rituals that took place inside the churches. He outlines the ways in which architecture accommodates and responds to the exigencies of ritual both on a practical and symbolic level, reminding us that a Byzantine church is more than the material context for the Divine Liturgy's celebration. Dirk Krausmüller focuses on the Constantinopolitan monastic experience (encompassing both the extreme ascetic practices of the "holy men," and the communal living of the coenobitic tradition) and shows how monasticism became integral to the city's identity. Mark J. Johnson approaches the questions of death and burial practices in Constantinople that largely echoed those found in the Greek and Roman worlds and then in other Christian communities from the fourth to the fifteenth century. It is very unfortunate, he rightfully points out, that relatively little material evidence of these practices remains for a city of this size and importance. The story of Constantinople would have been much richer if its necropoles and cemeteries had been preserved and investigated.

The chapters in the fourth thematic cluster, "Institutions and Activities," explore urban administration, social services, philanthropy, education, and entertainment, providing a holistic view of the city's institutions and activities. Constantinople enjoyed a unique administrative regime during its entire Byzantine history according to Andreas Gkoutzioukostas. This can be well understood in the history and administrative structure of one specific, imperially appointed, governor—the prefect/eparch of the city—whose responsibilities and the office evolved over time in constant adaptation to the

ever-changing historical conditions of the empire. Timothy S. Miller shows how various social welfare and philanthropic institutions in the city represented essential elements of the capital's urban life, offering a wide range of services to both the rich and poor. Ancient Byzantium had produced its modest share of poets and orators, yet Niels Gaul underlines how the imperial pull (practically and ideologically) made Constantinople not only an attractive place to teach and study but also a rival to ancient centers of learning. In his words, "Medieval Constantinople's 30,000 hectares brimmed with learning" (p. 263) whereas in the later period, figures like Theodore Metochites (though busy with running the state) turned education into scholarship. Marcus Rautman looks into how various civic ceremonies, public celebrations, commercial entertainment, and endless diversion in the streets and at home made Constantinople a great city to live in. He observes that many of the local pastimes were still known in Ottoman times pointing out this interesting continuity in the entertainment traditions.

The final section "Encountering Constantinople" examines the views and expectations of outsiders. Nike Koutrakou delves into the wonders of medieval travelers that the Byzantine capital attracted from around and beyond the empire. Similar to New York, Paris, or Istanbul today, Constantinople saw a steady flow of visitors who were coming to experience it from various stations in life and in myriad ways. Their interaction with the city offers valuable insights into how the outsiders perceived the Byzantine capital. Annemarie Weyl Carr devotes her chapter to pilgrims who were flocking to Constantinople throughout the Middle Ages. She observes that few recorded their experiences: all were from outside Byzantium, and their accounts center on the visitation of holy relics. For medieval Rhomaioi, pilgrimage did not assume arduous distance as it did for Europeans and Russians, and the travel account did not become a literary genre in Greek. Paradoxically, foreigners convey information about Constantinople's holy sites so their texts must also be read to reveal the Byzantines themselves. The volume concludes with the emerging early modern historical appreciation of Constantinople from Western and Ottoman perspectives. Sean Roberts shows that the city loomed large in late medieval and early modern European imagination in his exploration of the nascent antiquarian interest in the lost Byzantine capital. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European writers, artists, and their interlocutors invented and reinvented Constantinople in efforts to reconstruct an ideal, ancient vision of the city, thus increasing the discrepancies between Constantinople's true state and its representation. Their admiration for a lost antiquity came to be juxtaposed against not only the present inhabitants of Greece but equally against the products of a more recent past. Çiğdem Kafescioğlu's chapter about Ottoman approaches to the Constantinopolitan past closes the volume. It opens, at the same time, new perspectives on how the city's multiple temporalities—ancient, late antique, medieval, both visible and imaginary—continued to live in early modern Istanbul.

The companion provides a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to understanding Constantinople's multifaceted past. Chapters offer insights into the ways in which people, their activities, and institutions were intertwined within its urban context thus making the volume an essential resource for scholars and anyone interested in the complex and dynamic history of the Byzantine capital. Further readings, provided at the end of each chapter, and the collective bibliography at the end of the volume are particularly valuable additions. One wishes, however, that the volume was more profusely illustrated. Few updated maps and plans are provided and, together with more engaging visuals, they would have enhanced the reader's experience and understanding of this fascinating subject. Such material would be easily available thanks to digital tools and online resources developed in numerous projects and research initiatives about Constantinople/Istanbul.

The volume could not provide answers to all questions. Among topics that could have been covered are, for instance, the rich artistic traditions and life of the city and how they were intertwined with the history and the inhabitants. The absence of discussion on the place of visual arts in public and private spaces is a considerable lacuna. The role of natural disasters—namely, earthquakes—or pandemics in shaping the collective identity would have been another welcome addition together with questions of urban riots and political violence as engines of social change. It would have also been beneficial if more space was given to connections of the city with its hinterland—the Anatolian side, the Black and Marmara Seas, the road systems, and maritime infrastructures.

The volume is the work of an international team of experts but predominantly Anglophone and it reflects Anglo-American scholarship. The absence of French or Slavic scholars who also contributed significantly to "all things Constantinopolitan" is surprising. Byzantine studies are made of different scholarly traditions and languages whose inclusion would give a more colorful and richer tone—methodologically and conceptually—to the volume.

I also observe a certain distance from the present-day Istanbul, where teams of scholars (archaeologists, conservators, restorers, museum practitioners) and institutions work on uncovering, studying, and safeguarding Byzantine remains at this very moment. Authors know their sources and material well but, with few exceptions, they are detached from what is happening in Istanbul (such as new excavations, restorations, projects, and publications). I believe that without that connection there cannot be any real new inquiries about the Byzantine past of the city.

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