

To understand the history of Ottoman urbanism and architectural patronage before Constantinople, it is especially important to consider the role of the previous capitals of Bursa and Edirne, which continued to be important sites of imperial patronage even after 1453. The development of these towns must be considered not only in the context of the region's architectural history, but also more broadly of the early Ottoman state and the society it represented. The present contribution aims to shed light on the role of these former capitals and some of their main structures in early Ottoman history, by placing the research of architectural historians in a broader historical context. More specifically, I will focus on the first two Ottoman capitals, Bursa and Edirne, their place in Ottoman history, and their relationship to one another in the tumultuous half century prior to 1453. This will provide insight into how these former capitals were presented in some of the narrative accounts of the time, as well as the political and cultural significance of some of their most important royal foundations.

Bursa and its multiple pasts

A city is more than its buildings, and a larger question to be answered as part of any investigation of early Ottoman urbanism, its antecedents and its aspirations is what did it mean for a city to be the main Ottoman capital during the period in question. As early as the 1330s, the Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta who travelled through Anatolia referred to the second Ottoman ruler Orhan as 'the Sultan of Bursa', while at the same time suggesting that no small part of Orhan's success came from the fact that he maintained a network of castles which he visited regularly.⁸ From this early remark, it is already clear that there was a main Ottoman capital associated with the ruler, but that it was also normal for the him to be frequently absent. This largely itinerant nature of the Ottoman ruler and his court, as well as the fact that there was nonetheless a main administrative centre which was initially Bursa, is confirmed by the testimony of Gregory Palamas, a Byzantine archbishop and intellectual who was captured in 1354 after the Ottomans took Gallipoli. Palamas spent most of his captivity in Nicaea, following an audience with Orhan and members of his court in a location somewhere in the mountains around Bursa.⁹ Returning to Ibn Battuta, it is clear from his description that a large part of Bursa's importance came from the fact

⁸ Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battūta*, 449–452.

⁹ For Palamas' own written account of the meeting, see Philippidis-Braat, 'La captivité', 146–151. The most famous aspect of the encounter is a debate arranged by Orhan and recorded by his Byzantine physician, in which Palamas discussed matters of theology with a group of wise men called the *Chionai* (text in Philippidis-Braat, 'La captivité', 168–185). The identity of these people has been the subject of scholarly controversy for some time; most recently, Ruth Miller has proposed a new theory that they may have come from Ilkhanid Iran (Miller, 'Religious v. ethnic identity', 40–41). While this has gained some acceptance in Ottoman circles, it is based on a weak understanding of the texts and Byzantine literary context. A detailed discussion of the evidence is beyond the scope of the present contribution, but will form the subject of a future study.

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that it had large and well-provisioned markets, mentioned by the traveller alongside its famous hot springs.¹⁰ By this time, the town had probably already emerged as a western terminus of the overland trade routes from Iran and the east (the so-called Silk Road).¹¹ Of course, it is also important to bear in mind that Ibn Battuta's account was only written down later in the fourteenth century, by which time the fame of the Ottomans and their capital city had increased, possibly colouring the traveller's earlier impressions. In the meantime, the dynasty had continued to invest in Bursa's markets and other buildings.

Particularly worthy of mention in Bursa are the Ottoman royal complexes (*'imāret/küllīye*),¹² which in addition to their founder's purpose-built tomb (*türbe*) included a central multifunctional building and other structures serving social, religious and educational purposes (madrasas, hospitals, baths etc.). These complexes would take much grander form in Constantinople, beginning with the already mentioned mosque complex of Mehmed II the Conqueror (*fātih*). Unlike Mehmed's foundation, however, the earlier complexes did not yet include Friday mosques (*cāmi*), which were still treated at the time as a different, parallel type of construction. Before 1453, the central buildings of Ottoman royal complexes (*'imāret*) were clearly multifunctional, and similar in purpose to dervish convents (*zāviye*, *hānkāh*) used for prayer, lodging, Sufi ceremonies and other social functions.¹³ In other words, the Ottomans were following precedents established by previous Muslim rulers of Anatolia, notably the Seljuks and Mongol-Ilkhanids. Over the course of the thirteenth century AD, despite the political turmoil of the period, members of the ruling classes of Muslim Anatolia had constructed many inns (*han*, *kervānserāy*), madrasas, hospitals, hospices and dervish convents, which can still be seen today in Konya, Sivas, Erzurum, Amasya, Kayseri and other towns. These construction practices were continued by the emirates (*beyliks*) of western Anatolia into the fourteenth century, including the Ottomans, who expanded them to the region around Constantinople and into the Balkans.

The early Ottoman response to the pre-existing urban fabric of Bursa reveals examples of straightforward re-use and others of re-deployment of Byzantine architecture for new purposes. One of the first such re-deployments was the use of a Byzantine monastic complex in the city's citadel for the burial of, first, the founder of the dynasty, Osman, and later his son Orhan, who probably conquered the city in 1326 right after his father's death.¹⁴ The first Ottoman palace was also located in the

¹⁰ Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battūta*, 450.

¹¹ For Ottoman Bursa's importance as a trading centre from the middle of the fourteenth century, see İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History*, 218–224.

¹² The term *küllīye* is a neologism dating to the nineteenth century; in early Ottoman sources, the entire complex is generally called *'imāret* ('foundation'), a term often translated today as 'hospice' or 'soup kitchen'. See the discussion in Dark and Özgümmüş, *Constantinople*, 87. In the passage already cited, Ibn Battuta mentions a hospice in Bursa, presumably that of Orhan (see below).

¹³ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 49–50.

¹⁴ Çağaptay, 'Prousa/Bursa', 52–62; Çağaptay, *First Capital*, 34–42, 60–61. It is also likely that Orhan's Friday mosque, famous for its 1337 inscription which has been the subject of much scholarly controversy,