

International (Online) Symposium

Koç University Sevgi Gönül Center for Byzantine Studies (GABAM)

20-21 June 2025

The Heaven of Firdevs:

Architecture and Topography of Byzantine, Genoese and Ottoman Galata



PROGRAM & ABSTRACTS



KOÇ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SEVGİ GÖNÜL
MERKEZİ

KOÇ UNIVERSITY
SEVGİ GÖNÜL
CENTER FOR
BYZANTINE STUDIES



*Bağlamaz firdevse gönlünü Kalâtâyı gören
Servi añmaz anda ol serv-i dilârâyı gören*

*Whoever sees Galata longs no more for the heaven of
Firdevs. Whoever sees its heart-adorning cypress thinks
no more of the cypress of heaven.*

Avnî (Sultan Mehmet II, the Conqueror), poem 61

PROGRAM*

* The symposium will be held in Turkish and English with simultaneous translations.

20th of June 2025, Friday

10.30 Welcoming speech

Engin Akyürek

Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger

Chair: Nicholas Melvani

10.45-11.15 *Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger* (Bochum): The city walls of Galata: New observations

11.15-11.30 Discussion

11.30-12.00 *Grigori Simeonov* (Vienna): Historical topography of the environment of Galata: Relocating the undesirables to the “other side”

12.00-12.15 Discussion

12.15-12.45 *Philipp Niewöhner* (Göttingen): Galata before the Genoese. The case of St. Benoît

12.45-13.00 Discussion

13.00-14.00 Break

Chair: Philipp Niewöhner

14.00-14.30 *Hasan Sercan Sağlam* (Istanbul): Decoding the Galata Tower: Architecture and function of the monument

14.30-14.45 Discussion

14.45-15.15 *Arne Effenberger* (Berlin): The Castle of Galata/Kastellion in written and visual sources

15.15-15.30 Discussion

15.30-16.00 *Luca Orlandi* (Istanbul): The Palazzo del Podestà: A forgotten Genoese heritage between preservation and speculation

16.00-16.15 Discussion

Registration link for 20 June:

https://kocun.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_lwED8rQ5Q8-p5WFKUVetwA

21st of June 2025, Saturday

Chair: Hasan Sercan Sağlam

10.30-11.00 *Rafal Quirini-Poplowski* (Jagielloński): Former Dominican church in Pera
(today's Arap Camii in Beyoğlu)

11.00-11.15 Discussion

11.15-11.45 *Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger* (Bochum): Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Paşa Camii
and San Antonio Church: New observations

11.45-12.00 Discussion

12.00-13.30 Break

Chair: Luca Orlandi

13.30-14.00 *Nicholas Melvani* (Mainz): Some Greek churches in Galata in the 15th and 16th
centuries

14.00-14.15 Discussion

14.15-14.45 *Kerim İlker Bulunur* (Sakarya): Neighborhoods in Ottoman Galata (16th century)

14.45-15.00 Discussion

15.00-15.30 *Ayhan Han* (Istanbul): City walls of Galata in Ottoman sources

15.30-15.45 Discussion

15.45-16.15 Break

Chair: Ayhan Han

16.15-16.45 *Mustafa Barış Harmankaya* (Istanbul): Archaeology of Beyoğlu and its vicinity

16.45-17.00 Discussion

17.00 *Merve Özkılıç* (Istanbul): Galata city walls: A brief representation of the second part of
the Istanbul City Walls Project

17.30 Closing remarks

Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger

Registration link for 21 June:

https://kocun.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_MqPeds9dRTGT5Cjk65Fuvvg

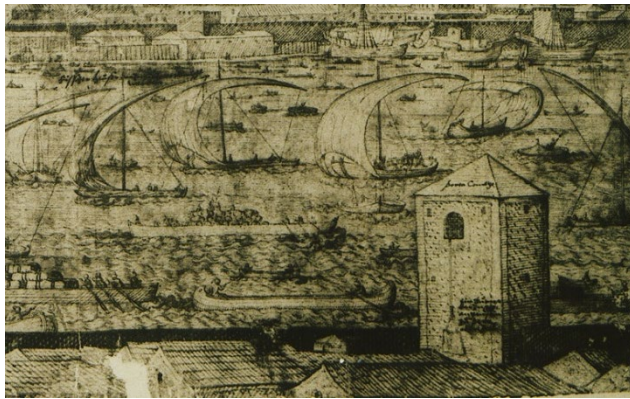
ABSTRACTS

Neslihan ASUTAY-EFFENBERGER

(Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

The city walls of Galata: New observations

The fortification of Galata, surviving only in fragments, is not the result of a well-thought



military concept, but was built over time.

Both its construction phases and its architectural features have been the subject of several studies so far, but there are still some unanswered questions with respect to these topics. Furthermore, it seems that scholars make some mistakes in terminology. My paper will focus on some

of these problems, comparing extant remnants with visual and written sources.

Neslihan ASUTAY-EFFENBERGER

(Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Paşa Camii and San Antonio Church: New observations

Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Paşa Camii stands in the district of Karaköy, adjacent to some remains of the city walls of Galata. It is generally associated with the Genoese Church of San



Antonio and is thought to have been converted into a mosque by Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Paşa in 1642. There is no detailed monograph of the building, which has undergone many changes over

time, and the evidence, to a great extent, points to the fact that the present building is neither related to the Genoese church nor to the first mosque. The presentation will discuss the construction phases of the mosque and its relationship with the Church of San Antonio in light of new observations.

Kerim İlker BULUNUR

(Sakarya University)

Intramuros Neighborhoods in Ottoman Galata (16th century)

Following the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II in 1453 and subsequent reconstruction and settlement activities, the population of the city began to increase, and the first neighborhoods of the Ottoman period were established. This process in Galata was a comparable development, albeit with some differences. The 1455 survey and the Fatih endowments are the main sources used to determine these first Ottoman neighborhoods in Istanbul and Galata. However, there are significant discrepancies between the numbers and names of the neighborhoods in Galata in these sources. In addition, very few of the



neighborhoods seen in these sources were able to survive into the 16th century. On the contrary, the Galata neighborhoods that appear in 16th century sources largely maintained their existence in the following centuries. In my paper, this situation, which shows that there were significant and permanent changes in the settlement of Galata and the formation of its quarters, will be analyzed

in light of other important sources: the Galata court records (*şer'iyye sicilleri*). They namely provide (from the 16th century onward) valuable information about the neighborhood and settlement situation of the district using specific reference points such as religious and public buildings, city walls, city gates, towers and moats.

Arne EFFENBERGER

(Freie Universität Berlin/Bode-Museum Berlin - retired)

The Castle of Galata/Kastellion in written and visual sources

Written sources from Byzantine and Ottoman times provide valuable information about the history of the Castle of Galata (6th century) and its several functions in different periods. The



building was depicted diversely in visual sources, which are known from 1422 onwards. A

considerable part of this Byzantine edifice was used as an imperial magazine soon after the

Ottoman conquest and since 1752/56 houses a mosque in its basement known as Yeraltı or

Kurşunlu Mahzen Camii. Although many scholars

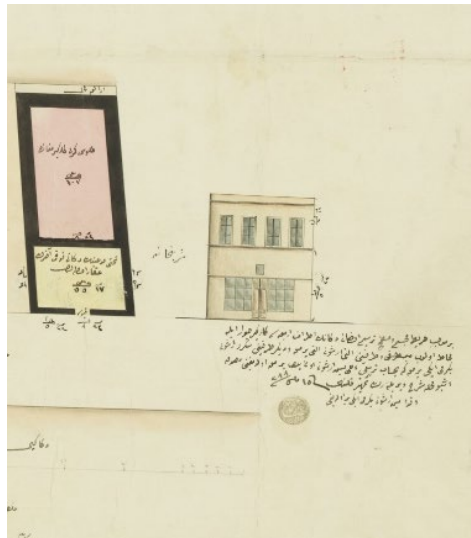
repeatedly use the same ancient floor plan, the preserved parts of the edifice suggest that this old plan is not accurate in many details. In my lecture I aim to examine the plan of the edifice by using extant remains, written or visual sources and some drawings in the Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü in Istanbul.

Ayhan HAN

(Nişantaşı University)

City walls of Galata in Ottoman sources

Despite being directly related to the urban context of Galata, no comprehensive study has yet been conducted on the history of the Galata city walls during the Ottoman period. Compared



to studies on the city walls of Istanbul, we have limited data and knowledge on fundamental topics such as the architectural features of gates, the characteristics of wall repairs, and the integration of the city walls into the urban space of Galata. My paper examines the Ottoman sources in this respect. Through newly uncovered archival records, this study first highlights the key characteristics that preserved the integrity of the city walls of Galata for more than four centuries via periodic repairs funded by both state and private initiatives.

Secondly, it offers fresh insights into the retrofitting of the architectural components of the walls within the urban context.

Mustafa Barış HARMANKAYA

(Istanbul Archaeological Museums)

Archaeology of Beyoğlu and its vicinity

In order to understand the multilayered history of Galata, the excavations conducted in Beyoğlu and its vicinity under the supervision of Istanbul Archaeological Museums and the data obtained for the



Roman, Byzantine, Genoese and Ottoman periods are very important. The siteworks at Casa Garibaldi, House of Camondo, Taksim Mosque, Golden Horn Metro Bridge, İmalât-ı Harbiye Usta Mektebi at Tophane, Karaköy parking structure and Taksim Square, etc., unearthed many mobile and immobile finds, dating the history of the area to a much earlier era while demonstrating a continuity of cultural

strata. This presentation will concentrate on the recent excavations by the Istanbul Archaeological Museums in Beyoğlu district and the discovered artifacts brought to the museum.

Nicholas MELVANI

(Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)

Some Greek churches in Galata in the 15th and 16th centuries

The Genoese settlement of Galata interacted closely with Byzantine Constantinople during the late Middle Ages; the coexistence of these two



worlds on the Bosphorus resulted in intense economic activity and cultural fermentation. In addition to its contact with the Byzantine element across the Golden Horn, Genoese Galata itself included a vibrant Greek community, especially from the 15th century on, when the neighborhood of Lagirio expanded toward the east. The Greek community of Galata developed into a vital part of the multi-cultural environment that emerged after the Ottoman Conquest, which consisted of a mixture of Muslims, Venetians, Armenians, and Jews. In fact, Galata became one of the main nuclei of Greek activity

in 16th century Istanbul alongside the lay and ecclesiastical elites revolving around the Patriarchate in the northwest of the historical peninsula. This paper will focus on a group of Greek churches attested in the 15th and 16th century sources (Greek, Ottoman, Italian, as well as travel accounts written by visitors from Western Europe) and their role in the social and religious life of Galata and Istanbul and the transition of Galata from a Genoese settlement to an Ottoman borough.

Philipp NIEWÖHNER

(Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

Galata before the Genoese. The case of St. Benoît

The prosperity of Genoese Galata has mostly obliterated any earlier Byzantine settlement. On first sight, the Monastery of St. Benoît seemed to be a case in point. According to Genoese sources, the complex appeared to be a Latin foundation. Only its art and architecture would have shown otherwise, but the relevant buildings and features had mostly disappeared by the later 20th century. Fortunately, some of what is lost today was recorded on various occasions during the earlier modern period. In hindsight, when studied with today's art-historical methods and knowledge, these earlier records reveal that the foundation of St. Benoît must have preceded the Latin dedication by a century or more. The monastery turns out to have been built in the late Byzantine period, when it was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and served a Greek Orthodox community outside the Genoese possession. This is remarkable also because it makes St. Benoît the only monastic estate in all of Istanbul to have survived intact and undivided, while all other such institutions were disbanded sooner or later after or even before the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople.



Luca ORLANDI

(Özyeğin University)

The Palazzo del Podestà: A forgotten Genoese heritage between preservation and speculation

This study examines the history and current condition of the Palazzo del Podestà in Galata, one of the most significant remnants of Genoese presence in Istanbul, now at risk due to real



estate speculation and a lack of cultural recognition. Built in the 14th century, the palace served as the administrative center of the Genoese colony, which had established a thriving trade hub along the Golden Horn, strategically positioned between Europe and Asia. The Genoese fortified Galata with massive walls, towers, and diplomatic agreements that allowed them to control commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean. Despite their influence, much of their architectural legacy has been neglected, with the “ghost” of the Palazzo del Podestà standing as a rare but overlooked testimony to this era.

Through historical-archival research and an on-site inspection conducted with restoration experts, this paper traces the architectural transformations of the building from its medieval origins to the present.

Rafal QUIRINI-POPLAWSKI

(Uniwersytet Jagielloński)

Former Dominican church in Pera (today's Arap Camii in Beyoğlu)

The church, dedicated to St. Dominic (St. Paul) is, in fact, the only Latin church built in any Genoese outpost around the Black Sea and in the Eastern Mediterranean with large parts of its



original architecture intact. Although the building preserved the basic traditions of Italian mendicant churches, it is a bit ambiguous in its stylistic expressions, with many basic issues remaining unresolved. The former statement is even truer for its architectural decoration and over 120 tombstones that are mostly stored at the Istanbul Archaeological Museums.

Although there are Latin inscriptions, coats-of-arms and figural motifs of the Western character on these slabs, many of them, as well as the architectural decoration, bear ornaments typical of Byzantine reliefs. These features look similar in the fragments of the extensive painting and mosaic decoration, probably created in stages in the 14th century and

discovered mostly between 1999 and 2010. Despite the domination of Byzantine iconography, scenes or elements of Latin origin were also present. They provide evidence of the vivid intercultural “Latin-Greek” exchange in Pera, in which mendicant centers played a significant role.

Hasan Sercan SAĞLAM

(Koç University - GABAM)

Decoding the Galata Tower: Architecture and function of the monument

The Galata Tower, a prominent landmark of Istanbul's historic skyline, holds a multifaceted architectural history that reflects the layered urban and political dynamics of the Galata (formerly Pera) district. Besides, the tower's strategic positioning, integral to the defensive network of Galata's city walls, underscores its function as a critical fortification during the



Genoese occupation and beyond. One of the most problematic points of the research is its erroneous identification as the “Tower of Christ”, rooted in historical misinterpretations of a certain mural inscription. Through a synthesis of primary sources, archaeological data, and architectural analysis, my paper provides a comprehensive narrative of the Galata Tower's enduring role as both a physical and symbolic

element of Istanbul's urban fabric. It aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on urban continuity, heritage preservation, and the historiographical challenges of interpreting long-standing monuments in a layered urban context. This analysis revisits archival sources and inscriptions to clarify its original nomenclature as the “Tower of the Holy Cross” and symbolic associations as well.

Grigori SIMEONOV

(Universität Wien)

Historical topography of the environment of Galata: Relocating the undesirables to the “other side”

Medieval Constantinople is often considered an urban agglomeration that included three major points: first, the city itself; second, the Asiatic suburbs of Chalkedon and Chrysopolis; and third, the region known as *pera*, which literally means “beyond”. This area on the other



side lay along the northern shores of the Golden Horn just before the connection of the inlet to the Bosphorus. Throughout the centuries it bore the names Sykai, Ioustinianai, Pera, and Galata. Some minor settlements like Elaia and Argyroupolis were also integrated in the life of the area. Although the *regio Sycena* was included into the urban tissue as the thirteenth district of Constantinople, according to the *Notitia urbis Constantinopolitanae*, and possessed a forum, a theater, baths, bakeries and other facilities, the most significant edifice there during the middle Byzantine period seems to be the castle supporting the iron chain that closed access to the Golden Horn. Moreover, one can trace a certain tendency with pre-

Constantinian roots that turned the region of Pera/Galata into a district where particular groups of people, who were not welcome to the citizens of the city itself, were removed too. In the time of pagan Byzantium, it was the Christians who founded their parishes there. Later, the imperial government resettled the Jews to Pera. Another group represented sick people, especially lepers, whose leproseries were built there. Finally, the Byzantine authorities tried to relocate to the north some of the foreign merchant quarters. The paper will thus aim to present the history of medieval Pera with a focus on these groups of people or activities that were not welcome in the city itself.

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Fâtih Divânı ve Şerhi (Dîwân of Sultan Mehmed II with Commentary), ed. Muhammet Nur Doğan, trans. Michael D. Sheridan (İstanbul: T. C. Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2023), 446 (Tr), 449 (En).

Illustrations

Abstract/Program: Detail from *Liber insularum archipelagi* of Cristoforo Buondelmonti. Dusseldorf University Library, MS-G-13. Wikipedia, public domain and detail from *Beyân- ı Menâzil-i Sefer-i Irakeyn-i Sultan Süleyman Han* of Matrakçı Nasuh, Istanbul University Library, MS 5964 fol. 9a, Wikipedia, public domain.

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Mustafa Barış Harmankaya: Istanbul Archaeological Museums, Golden Horn Metro Bridge Excavations at Beyoğlu.

Nicholas Melvani: 20th century mosaic, Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate, Istanbul, Wikipedia, public domain.

Philipp Niewöhner: St. Benoît bell tower, author.

Luca Orlandi: Palazzo del Podestà, author.

Rafal Quirini-Poplawski: Arap Camii minaret (bell tower), Dick Osseman.

Hasan Sercan Sağlam: Galata Tower, David Hendrix.

Grigori Simeonov: Detail from Christophoro Buondelmonti copy, Paris Bibliothèque National de France. Nouv. Aqu. Lat 2383, fol. 34v Wikipedia, public domain.



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