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Adrianoupolis, or with its current name Edirne, was one of the most important cities of Thrace during the ancient era. Located in Eastern Thrace, in the area of the intersection of Hebrus River (Evros in Modern Greek, Meriç in Modern Turkish and Maritsa in Slavic languages), Arda and Tunca rivers, Adrianoupolis, during the Roman era, was located on the heart of Belgrade-Sofia-Constantinople military road and maintained close connections with the nearby — 250 km far away — Byzantine capital. The city, during the ancient times was referred to by the names of Uskudama, Orestiada or Orestian respectively. (Samothrakis 1963: 15) Included in the Roman Empire borders in AD 46-47, the city was re-established by Roman Emperor Hadrian in AD 127 and given its new name after its founder: Hadrianopolis or Adrianoupolis.

Adrianoupolis, before Christ was a small cut of settlement even though monuments of this period cannot be traced easily. Upon the entry into the Roman rule, during Diocletianus’ time, Adrianoupolis became the imperial capital of the state of Haimimontos. Although the city is frequently referred to as an important base to protect Constantinople against raids from the north, rarely is mentioned as an administrative unit. (Kazhdan 1991: 23) The Metropolitans of the state of Haimimontos was founded either in 325 or in 451 here. (Kiminas 2009: 46; Samothrakis 1963: 19) The Archbishopric of Adrianoupolis was in the 11th place in the church hierarchy. In the 7th century five dioceses and in the 12th century three dioceses depended from the Archbishopric of Adrianoupolis (Kiminas 2009: 47).
Strategically on the crossroads, the city witnessed frequent military attacks. Adrianoupolis was also one of the main centers of trade during the Roman period. Situated on the main military road between Central Europe and Constantinople, the Aegean coast, the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea were also easily reachable.

In the 4th century Constantine the Great defeated Licinius near Adrianoupolis. In the 6th century the Avars besieged the city but failed to conquer it. Adrianoupolis in the 9th and 10th century became an important center in the war against the Bulgarians. Krum and Symeon, albeit temporarily, succeeded in capturing the city. In the 13th century the city was seized by the armies of Nikea, Epirus, and the Bulgarian states. During Ioannis Vatatzes III era, between the years 1242-1246 Adrianoupolis was annexed to the city-state of Nikea and soon after in 1307 was taken over by the Catalans (Kazhdan 1991: 28). In 1346 the city has played an important role during the Byzantine civil war while Ioannis Kantakouzinos VI was crowned here. It is generally accepted that the city was conquered and taken over by the Ottomans in 1361 peacefully and local Greeks, were permitted to remain under the condition they would stay within the Castle area (Tosyavizade 1988: 25). Following the Battle of Maritsa in 1365 the Ottoman Emperor Murat I brought the capital of its empire to Adrianoupolis (Edirne) where it remained until the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

According to Bertrandon de la Broquiere, an eye witness traveler who visited the city in 1433 states that during the last period of the Byzantine Empire Adrianoupolis residents consisted of various nationalities: Greeks, Latins, Jews, Armenians and other nations made up the Anatolian city’s dwellers. Following the Ottoman conquest several churches were converted into mosques. In 1578 there were in total fifteen churches (Samothrakis 1963: 22). Until the end of the Balkan wars the city managed to keep its important and long lasting strategic position. However after 1913, as part its landscape was annexed to Greece and Bulgaria deprived the city from retaining its significant strategic importance and therefore largely lost its commercial and economic viability.
Adrianoupolis (Edirne) Castle

The city’s most impressive and important Roman-Byzantine work is the city walls. Even though today we cannot see many pieces of the old castle remains, during the Roman period the city itself was founded within the city walls as it is described in detail in several sources. Rifat Osman believes that the surface area of the castle is 360,000 square meters whereas Evliya Çelebi indicates that all-around the castle is 6,000 steps. (Tosyavizade 1998: 44; Kahraman and Dağlı 2006: 57) However, the castle walls resemble a parallelogram in roughly equal length. At each corner of the walls, 12-meters long four round towers were located. In the south-west corner of the coast river there was another small tower taking place. On the fortifications intervals there were in total fourteen rectangular bastions, each one 12-meters long. Six of these were taken place in the northern wall of the castle, four in the south, and the remaining four along the eastern wall of the castle. A total of nine gates spaced all along the city walls were established. According to Evliya Çelebi, previously there was a deep ditch surrounding the castle. In 1866, the remains of the city walls were in some cases used to construct public buildings and in other were simply demolished to provide income.

Collapsed walls of stone were used in the construction of barracks and hospitals. In response to damage caused to houses by the demolition of the city walls, the Governor of Edirne decided to allow the communities of Edirne to make use of the remains in order to build schools and other institutions. The Greek Zappeion High School for Girls of Adrianoupolis as well as the Greek Lycee were constructed with such materials. (Kurtidis 1928a: 39) Today, a portion of the north wall fortification, located in the northeast corner, known also as Macedonian Tower or Fire Tower, is still standing. Despite the several repairs and the recent restoration, the original features of this tower have largely been lost (Ousterhout and Bakirtzis 2007: 48; Nikolaidis 1993: 84; Tosyavizade 1998: 46).

Macedonia Tower, Kulle-i Kebire (Great Tower), Fire Tower, Clock Tower or as referred to by the Greeks of Edirne, Kantakouzinos or Tsimiskis Tower, is the only standing tower in the northeast of the castle. During the Ottoman period, it was also named as Tekfur Tower. In 1884 or 1886, on the top of this tower a third layer made of wooden material was constructed. However, due to earthquake and fire this floor was destroyed and rebuilt, by the Governor Haçır İzzet Pasha in 1894-1895, this time using only brick
material and a tower clock on top. On the top of the tower there was a quote from the Byzantine era written with brick in Greek language. (Küçük 1995: 76) Although Ahmet Badi Efendi states that the quotation on the Tower Clock belongs to Ioannes Doukas era, it is highly likely that the quotation was written by Ioannes Kantakouzenos following the restoration that took place after the earthquakes of 1353. (Nikolaidis 1993: 54; Küçük 1995: 77)

Byzantine Churches in Edirne

According to Bishop of Nazianzus, Ignatios Sarafoglou, who writes probably in 1760, inside the Castle of Edirne there was one church built in the Byzantine period that was still active, ten churches from the Ottoman period, four burnt 17th and 18th century churches and three church ruins converted into mosques. (Sarafoglou 1929: 69) On 29 August 1902 Georgios Lambakis, following his visit to Edirne, has visited three local churches and has taken related notes. Since Lambakis was interested mainly in the interior décor of the churches unfortunately has taken pictures only from within. Lambakis has firstly visited the Metropolitan Church of the Ascension. An 18th century building inside the castle, east of the northern walls, right next door to the walls. Lambakis indicates that in the church garden there are a number of marble inscriptions. (Lambakis 1911: 9) Lambakis, impressed by the interior of the Metropolitan church, indicates that it is a large and spacious building, filled with valuable icons and frescoes. By the photographs taken at the time it is clear that it is a three-aisled basilica, destroyed probably between 1923 and 1930. The second visited church by Lambakis is St. John the Theologian (Agios Ioannis Theologos). A small old church building according to Lambakis, who did not take any photos, but did record the marble inscriptions and the icons. The last church visit of Lambakis concerns St Panteleimon chapel. Although he records the icons of the chapel he does not explain its location. (Lambakis 1911: 9-10)

The Church of St. Sophia (Halebiye Camii)

The most important Byzantine church of Adrianoupolis was the Church St. Sophia (Agia Sophia) which was within the castle. It was probably the Metropolitan church during the conquest of the Ottomans. Lady Montagu
mentions of a church in ruins during her visit in 1717. Sarafoglou describes a mosque named Halebiye which was converted from a church and adds that Christ’s fresco could still be seen inside the dome. (Sarafoglou 1929: 70) Ahmet Badi Efendi locates the Mosque of Halebiye in the St. Nicholas neighborhood on the Keçeciler Kapısı street. He adds that it was a church and was converted to a mosque by Sultan Murad I initially after the conquest of the city, and with the orders of Sultan Mehmed II a religious school (medrese) was built nearby, changing its name to Halebiye after its first hodja. (Küçük 1995: 89) The church was destroyed badly with the earthquake in 1752, its materials were used to fortify the city by the governor Hakkı Pasha. (Peremeci 1939: 57)

The church had a cross-shaped plan with a dome of 14 meter in diameter. It was built in two periods: The main building was built during 5th or 6th centuries and in 8th century some additions were made to the main building. The church was entirely lost in the 19th century. (Ousterhout and Bakirtzis 2007: 59; Kazhdan 1991: 87; Eyice 1993: 54)

The Church of St. Ioannis the Theologian (Agios Ioannis Theologos)

This Byzantine church, also known as “Sinaitikon” had a Greek cross shaped plan. It was a metochion of the St. Catherine Monastery in the Mount Sinai. (Lekkos 1999: 44) It was the only Byzantine church in Adrianoupolis that was not converted to a mosque and remained open until 1922. Sarafoglou describes the church as a high-domed building, located very close to the Metropolitan church. (Sarafoglou 1929: 72) In the Turkish sources the church is mentioned as Turi Sina, Tur-u Sina or Nuri Sina Monastery. (Küçük 1995: 65; Kazancıgil 1992: 34; Tosyavizade 1998: 45)

While some scholars date the church to 9th or 10th centuries (Tosyavizade 1998: 52), others date it to 12th or 14th centuries (Ousterhout and Bakirtzis 2007: 43), even to 14th or 15th centuries (Lekkos 1999: 87; Konstantinidis 1943: 60; Sarafoglou 1929: 73). The church was a small building, with a dome of three meter in diameter. (Eyice 1993: 55) In the 19th century the St. Catherine Monastery in the Mount Sinai handed over the church to the Greek community of Adrianoupolis, and it was used as a chapel of the Metropolitan church. After 1922 it was destroyed completely. (Lekkos 1999: 88)
The Church of St. Basil (The Church Mosque)

The church was built in the Byzantine period and was converted to a mosque after the conquest. It was then called “Kilise Camisi” / “Church Mosque” and was in ruins already in 18th century. According to Sarafoglou it was close to the Jewish neighborhood, near to the Çukur Hamam (public bath). Çukur Hamam was also a Byzantine monument located within the castle. (Küçük 1995: 82; İlgürel 1974: 142; Peremeci 1939: 76) The church was destroyed in 1752 by an earthquake. It also had an agiasma (sacred spring) and was also called as “Panayır”. (Küçük 1995: 83) Its remains were used in the construction of Edirne Lyceum. (Peremeci 1939: 78)

The Church of St. Theodors (Agii Theodori)

According to Sarafoglou the third church that was converted to mosque was St. Theodors. It was opposite to the church of St. Sophia with a dome and columns. Lambousiadis who edited Sarafoglou’s article states that the church was completely destroyed in 1910s, and its materials were taken to be used in constructions throughout the city. (Sarafoglou 1929: 74)

The Church of Small St. Sophia

This church that was mentioned only by a Turkish source — Ahmet Badi Efendi — was another Byzantine monument that was converted to a mosque. It was within the borders of the castle. With the orders of Sultan Murad I it was converted to a mescid (small mosque) and was destroyed by the 1752 earthquake. (Küçük 1995: 56)

The Mosque of Yıldırım

The mosque was located in Yıldırım district, close to the castle. Gurlitt argues that the mosque was an 13th century church and was converted to a mosque in early 15th century and rebuilt in 18th century. Rifat Osman supports the idea suggesting that the church was named as Tris Ierarhes.
Peremeci argues that the church was converted with the orders of Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid. (Tosyavizade 1998: 46; Peremeci 1939: 79) Eyice who argues that the mosque belongs to a former period, suggests that it was a Christian building, built originally as a cemetery chapel dating back to 4th or 5th centuries. (Eyice 1993: 62) On the other hand Ousterhout and Bakirtzis say that although the mosque may be built on the foundations of a Byzantine building, it was definitely built as a zaviye (dervish lodge). (Ousterhout and Bakirtzis 2007: 45)

**Conclusion**

Today in modern Edirne, once an important religious and commercial city of Byzantine Empire, there is almost nothing to remind the Byzantine past of the city. From the five churches and one public bath that have certainly existed and mentioned in different sources that are outlined in this article, none continues to exist. While Edirne Castle — from which only a tower and walls remain today — is a Roman monument, the Byzantine origin of Yıldırım Mosque is still controversial. As Edirne was the center of a Metropolis and an important Byzantine settlement, it’s estimated that many Byzantine monuments ornamented the city.

Surely the absence of Byzantine monuments from modern Edirne is the subject of another article yet we may underline a few reasons of this phenomenon. Edirne was a constant battleground during Byzantine period. During the Ottoman period building activities, earthquakes and fires ravaged the city. By the devastating effects of the Russian occupation during 19th century and of the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars, Edirne lost its rich Byzantine heritage. In addition to all these factors we should also mention the neglect of all Byzantine heritage of the country, caused partly by the country’s central policy and partly by the coarseness shown towards cultural heritage -including the Ottoman monuments.

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ADDENDA

Picture 1. Proposed plan of St. Ioannis the Theologian (Agios Ioannis Theologos) or Sinaitikon by Gurlitt. (Nikolaidis 1993)
Picture 2. (above) The picture of St. Sophia (Halebiye Camii) taken by Lechine in 1888
(below) The plan of the church according to Choisy. (Papazotos, 1992-1994c)