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## Constantinople viewed by the Renaissance-era West

This study revolves around a reading of the main aspects of how Constantinople was depicted by Western scholars during the Renaissance. The illustrations considered as a semiotic system are bird's-eye views of the city in printed works, done from 1420 to the late sixteenth century. From a sizable specific documentary *corpus*, bird's-eye views were selected where the characteristics of the environment and buildings were easily visible. We consider the ways this major trade centre, the linchpin between East and West with frequent contacts with Genoa and Venice, was depicted. As for visual culture, the study draws an analysis – graphic and geometric, social and technical – of these illustrations chronologically, comparing them with other city images from the period, and maps, to comprehend the mechanism of urban depiction during the Renaissance. The relationship of similarity was considered to define the iconic system's operation in relation to the

real one. Depictions of Constantinople are taken as a paradigm of a form of communication typical of the time, when the city was the engine for activity of all kinds. Nor are the makers of these images neglected: cartographers, draughtsmen, early archaeologists, engravers, printers, artists and travellers – true protagonists in a season abundant in cultural manifestation.

Keywords:  
Iconography; Constantinople; Renaissance;  
visual culture; city images

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Medievale*, the entry *Città*, by Paolo Cuneo (1994), opens with a quotation from Book XV of Isidore of Seville's (560-636) *Etymologiae*, distinguishing *civitas* from *urbs*. To provide visual substance to the idea of society protected by walls, the various iconographical references include a miniature contained in *Prima Bibbia di Carlo il Calvo* (846 AD), depicting St. Jerome's journey from Rome to Jerusalem. In the central part, the specific image shows a polygonal belt of merloned, turreted walls seen from above, with a scene of monastic life taking place inside (fig. 1). This depiction, typical in concept to Roman classicism, can be found in a section of the bas reliefs wrapping around Trajan's Column in Rome (113 AD) (fig. 2). Taken in the conventional sense, this figurative expression was followed in the Middle Ages and beyond, adjusting to the needs of the times. This archetype – the bird's-eye view of the city – was never to be disregarded, as it was the form most illustrative for an aggregate of constructions and spaces.



Fig. 1 - Excerpt of the miniature, Bible of Charles the Bald: stories of St. Jerome, 846 approx (Archivio Scala Group, Firenze, id 0004383).

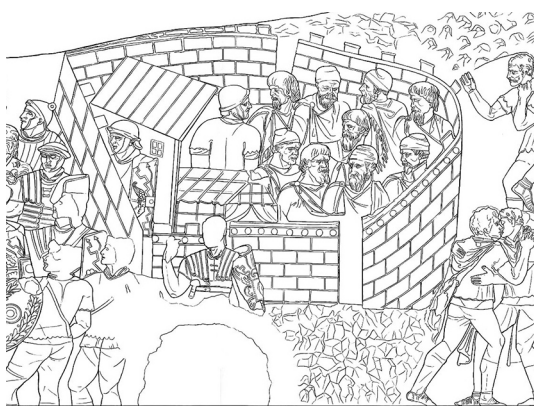


Fig. 2 - Trajan's Column (113 AD) excerpt of the graphic relief relating to the imprisonment of the Dacians (*Colonna Traiana. Corpus dei disegni 1981-2001*).

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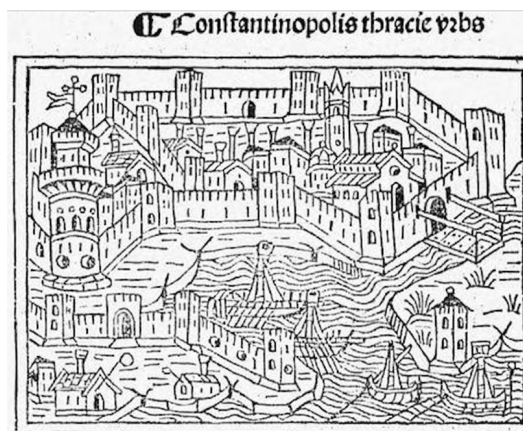


Fig. 3 - F. Foresti, *Supplementum Chronicarum orbis ab initio mundi*, Constantinopolis thracie urbs, Venetiis, 1486 (Bibliothèque nationale de France).

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"For centuries, and throughout the Middle Ages, the idea had taken root that the city was the centre of world domination, destined to last into eternity," maintains Chiara Frugoni (1984), and images were tasked with displaying the power of those who administered them. Their communicative function displayed two aspects: on the one hand, the ability to educate, and on the other the aptitude for acquiring more knowledge. Cartographers and miniaturists were thus the makers of new depictions – the former metrically defining state boundaries, and the latter illustrating cities as symbols of civilization and power. Juergen Schulz (1990) broke this production down into two categories: maps and layouts for cartographic-topographic purposes; and views and maps suited for teaching purposes. Of course, between the former, technical ones and the latter, artistic ones, a boundary is not always easy to draw, because, especially in the Middle Ages, historical and geographical elements were lost in an aura of symbolism. The outlined cultural landscape is interesting [1], and we draw from it the printed depictions of Con-



Fig. 4 - F. Foresti, *Supplementum Chronicarum orbis ab initio mundi* Citta de Constantinopoli, 1492 (Bibliothèque nationale de France).

stantinople disseminated during the Renaissance, a crucial time for this capital considered the linchpin between East and West. After eleven centuries of prestige, the “New Rome,” beautiful and rich, began its twilight phase, declining from Roman to Turkish power in the mid-fifteenth century.

## 2. EARLIEST PRINTED IMAGES OF THE CITY

The interest in classicism in the Renaissance led Italian culture to rediscover works such as Claudius Ptolemy’s *Geographia*, printed in Latin in Florence between 1406 and 1410, with the title *Cosmographia* (Bifulco, 2014). This work was brought to Florence by Byzantine humanist Manuele Crisolora when he arrived there in 1397 to teach Greek; Iacopo Angeli da Scarperia oversaw its publication.

The prized manuscript known also as *Codex Vaticanus Latinus 5699* includes, in its appendix after the maps, nine plans of cities of the East and West, featuring Constantinople [2]. Concise and symbolic, these depictions aim to underscore more their historic value than their topographical meaning.

In the printed text, the first depictions of cities appear in *Chronicon*, chronologically arranged historic narrations [3]. In Italy, *Supplementum Chronicarum orbis ab initio mundi* [4] by the Bergamo monk Giacomo Filippo Foresti, collects small-format images of cities of Europe and the Middle East. Also included is an early depiction of Constantinople (fig. 3) which, however, as we leaf through the volume, we find to be wholly approximative, since we find identical versions bearing the names of Epidaurus, Mytilene, Gaeta, Pisa, and other cities. In the fourth book, an oblique aerial view depicts *Constantinopolis thraecie urbs* as a dense, built-up area girded by turreted walls overlooking the sea. On the right, a drawbridge links it to a strip of land marked by a turret; on the left, the polygonal enclosure is strengthened by an imposing, multilevel circular tower, perhaps a lighthouse. In front, a portion of wall extends into the sea, forming a pier where two large vessels are docked.

These generic elements are meant to refer to

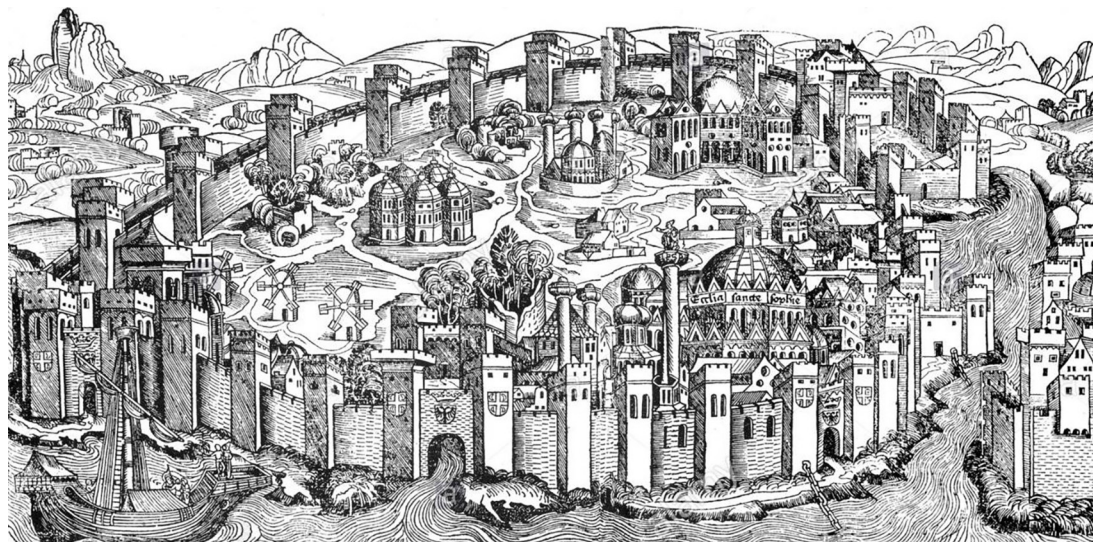


Fig. 5 - H. Schedel, *Liber Chronicarum*, Constantinopolis, Nuremberg, 1493 (Biblioteca Queriniana, Brescia).

Constantinople, but clearly lack its strength. They underscore the trading city’s importance with an imagined depiction comprising a vision common to many Italian cities. Supported by citations of ancient authors, the text mentions the “magnificentissima edificia Sacte Sophie templum Justiniani”; but the image does not show a domed construction whose traits might refer to the precious, imposing monument. Instead, we see a three-naved church with a roof that might be the one built by Theodosius II in 415, destroyed by fire during the Nika riots in 532. But although not very true to the text, the image expresses Isidore of Seville’s concept of the city, and the caption makes the subject. This is demonstrated by the edition printed in Venice in 1492 by Bernardino Rizzo; Foresti replaces that image with another in which the city of Constantinople (fig. 4), in an oblique aerial view, is virtually circular in shape, densely built up and gathered inside turreted walls. The surrounding barren, hilly landscape is dotted with small fortresses overlooking a corner of the marina on the

lower left of the picture. A small port with some vessels, it is unfortunately not enough to contextualize the city of Constantine, whether through buildings or the use of symbols.

It is also to be borne in mind that the image’s title, *Citta de Constantinopoli*, is still placed outside the frame of the view, and this device allowed it to be replicated and inserted elsewhere in the text to indicate another city. We rediscover it accompanying later additions, and in the extension to the *Supplementum Chronicarum*, printed in Venice in 1503 with the title *Novissime hystoriarum omnium repercussiones*.

As Rinaldi (1989) points out, the elements making the city recognizable are monuments, whose evocative *analogum* permits the recollection of events, a simulacrum whose equivalence to the original can contain “the material and symbolic truth.” But this does not occur with Foresti, whose images are only an interlude to lighten rather than document the text. But the little relation they bear to reality was not a relevant factor for the reader

at the time, for whom the image carried the connotation of a diagrammatic icon, a sort of simple “sign” placed for reference in the narration.

The following year, in 1493, German humanist Hartmann Schedel accompanied his *Liber Chronicarum* [5], printed in Nuremberg, with two images of Constantinople – woodcuts by Michael Wolgemut [6] – that were quite larger than the earlier ones. One comments upon Constantine’s work (fig. 5), while the other depicts when the city was conquered by the Turks in 1453. The two images do not actually differ greatly, although their formats are distinct and, at any rate, in the city’s clear recognizability, deviate from Foresti’s depictions. What was to live significantly over time was their way of giving its real elements to the fixity of the image.

The bird’s-eye view shows a large circuit of turreted walls opened at the centre by a city gate from which the Lykos river flows. Not far to the right is the Golden Horn [7], delimited by the shore of Pera. These two elements are our reference for defining the vantage point from which the city was depicted, and a nineteenth-century topographic map supports this. Here we see that the Lykos flows into the Sea of Marmara, quite far from the Golden Horn; we therefore deem the draftsman’s hypothetical vantage point to be the open sea, to the south. In actuality, since it is impossible to see the mouth of the Lykos and the Golden Horn simultaneously, a depiction from the east as supposed by Berger-Bardill (1998), imagined as from the coast of Bithynia, is not possible. We therefore believe it is not a portrait, which supposes direct observation, but a predetermined figuration done perhaps on the basis of the sketches made aboard a ship [8]. The image of Constantinople is thus considerably contracted in length and, given the vicinity of the Golden Horn, its “triangular” shape is missing [9].

Inside the walls is a slightly rugged territory marked by dirt roads and well characterized features: Hagia Sophia with its large dome set on a merloned octagon and topped by a lantern, the Column of Justinian beside it. Slightly to the left are the ruins of the old imperial palace, located



Fig. 6 - H. Schedel, *Liber Chronicarum*, De expugnatione Constantinopolis, Nuremberg, 1493 (Biblioteca Queriniiana, Brescia).

behind the sea gate from which the Lykos flows. Behind the ruins is the five-domed Church of the Holy Apostles, and on the right stands a building with two wings and a central dome behind the Palace of Blachernae or of Constantine. In the background outside the city are mountain reliefs; Pera with some towers may be glimpsed to the right, with a vessel with lowered sail on the left. Each element appears to take on a precise physiognomy in a balanced, proportionate figurative context. But it is a strange image if considered in geometric terms: although it is an aerial

view, the masonry curtain reinforced by numerous, imposing square towers is shown from below: neither the towers’ roofs nor the walkways between them can be seen. Starting from the central city gate, the towers on the left that, in succession, gird the rear portion of the city show a shaded front and a right side in the light, until reaching, on the upper right, the Palace of Constantine overlooking the Golden Horn. The other towers to the right of the gate are arranged facing the light, with the left side shaded. This way of shading the buildings provides the sensation



Fig. 7 - C. Buondelmonti, *Liber insularum Archipelagi*, Costantinopoli, Cod. Lat. X, 123, 1422 (Biblioteca Marciana).

Fig. 8 - C. Buondelmonti, Costantinopoli, 1480 (Düsseldorf Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, ms G.13).

Fig. 9 - C. Buondelmonti, Costantinopoli, 1422 (Bibliothèque nationale, Paris).



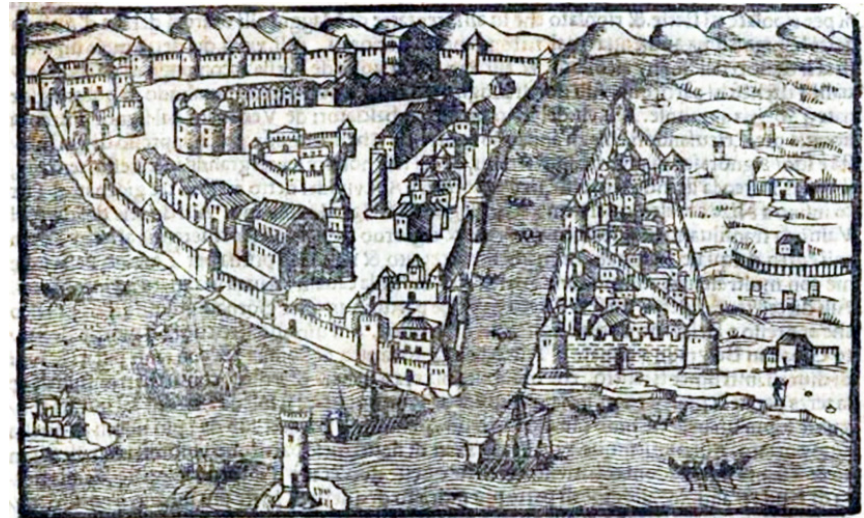
of three dimensions and arrangement in space. Moreover, the care given to details, both architectural and of context, distracted the draughtsman from defining the actual situation.

The second image (fig. 6) depicts the city in a more circular shape conditioned by the size of the nearly square engraving plate. This forced the artist to give more attention to the larger space of the countryside dotted with small villages set in relation to the big city.

The urban architectures are the same, and the type of representation is identical, although the graphic treatment is more approximative. In the former case, the graphics adopted for the walls clearly suggest a regular, brick texture, a detail

that surprised Ciriaco d'Ancona when he visited the city in 1418 [10]. Some buildings and ruins are now absent, and Pera is hardly more visible on the right, with its turreted wall enclosing within it several constructions as well as a barely noticeable domed building. Confirming the dearth of relationships of scale among the various parts of the composition, this second image merely restates what is in the previous figuration, but provides a sense of extreme calm, of the absence of commercial activities due to the lack of vessels. In both engravings, the artist's shrewd hand has intensified the graphic treatment in the lower part of the image, leading the observer's eye to dwell on the various details in spite of the upper portion

where the marks are lighter and sparser. As concerns the architectural quality expressed in the two images [11], we must also refer to what Berger & Bardill (1998) pointed out for religious buildings, which reflect "the pictorial conventions of the contemporary art of Western Europe." We may agree with this consideration, especially in that these images are not to be taken as a "source of architectural details." But we disagree with likening these figurations to that by Giovanni Andrea Vavasore, to be discussed below, since we find no explicit points in common. The great value they have is confirmed, since the first images of Constantinople adhere particularly to the reality of its places and to its topography and historical meaning.



### 3. PRECURSORS OF URBAN ILLUSTRATIONS

In 1403, Ruy González de Clavijo, ambassador of Henry III of Castile, significantly described the appearance of the capital of the Eastern Empire: “The city of Constantinople is well girt by tall, imposing walls and great, strong towers (...) and although a large, fortified city, it is not very populous because at its centre are many hills and valleys with fields planted with wheat and vineyards, and a host of vegetable gardens; these include the neighbourhoods of dwellings (...). This city has many large buildings and churches and monasteries, most of which in ruins, and it seems clear that in other times, when it was flourishing, it was one of the world’s noble cities. Between small and large ones, three thousand churches are said to be in this city (...)” (1859).

Clavijo’s words accompany Schedel’s images, providing specificity of use for better reading and outlining an overall picture. The large stretches of countryside farmed inside the walls appear to be the cause of the low population of some still inaccessible areas, in spite of the numerous houses of worship. However, what struck the ambassador at

first glance was the city’s fortified appearance, as stressed by Schedel.

Until the late fifteenth century, the image of Constantinople had no distinctive topographic or iconic character. Several depictions related to the Turkish siege in 1453, a disturbing event of great interest for political as well as economic reasons. And other rare, wholly approximative images may be found in certain manuscripts, like the Luttrell Psalter of 1325-1340, and the *codex Roma parte del cielo. Confronto tra l’Antica e la Nuova Roma* done by Manuele Crisolora in 1411 [12].

The starting point for a reliable depiction of Constantinople arrives with the Florentine Cristoforo Buondelmonti when, in 1415, he plied the Mediterranean, attracted by the Greek cities’ antiquities. His interests were certainly piqued by the classical, humanistic culture that was developing, as discussed, in Florence during that period, concurrently with the proto-archaeological climate that Ciriaco d’Ancona was helping to spur after his journeys in the Mediterranean [13].

Attributed to Buondelmonti or copied from his first depiction of Constantinople [figg. 7-8-9] is a series of drawings that Giuseppe Gerola (1931)

Fig. 10 - Paolino da Venezia, *Chronologia Magna*, Roma, ms Lat. Z, 399, 1346 (Biblioteca Marciana).

Fig. 11 - F. Foresti, *Supplementum Chronicarum*, Constantinopoli presa e saccheggiata da turchi, 1535 (Bibliothèque nationale de France).

states are similar but “clearly differ from one another”. Some are sufficiently complete, watercoloured, or left in pen strokes; others appear to refer to certain elements of the place, while neglecting many details.

We will not attempt a specific study of these drawings here; they deserve discussion of their own, as they are numerous and certainly interesting, also in light of recent studies. These views will be a reference for us, as concerns what was produced through printing.

A comparison of the engravings observed thus far with the views done by Buondelmonti and by the copyists for *Liber insularum Archipelagi* in 1422-1453 would yield numerous differences. First, the latter depict the extremity of the Balkan peninsula, Thrace, in its proper geographic orientation, with Pera north of the Golden Horn waterway, and the shores of Anatolia on the right of the image, as shown by Ptolemy in his map. The city,

as if an enlargement of that strip of land, is hurriedly drawn within the circuit of turreted walls, rather flat, surrounded almost entirely by water. In a sort of aerial view, it is dotted with various elements inside: Hagia Sophia, the Hippodrome, the Imperial or Blachernae Palace, five columns (two of which spiral columns), a few, scattered houses, and some churches and towers, with essential roads: buildings not always positioned with the same precision in the various maps, that are at times enriched with details, and at times disappear altogether [14]. For the northern area as well, the construction is in some cases intensified, and rather bare in others.

The depiction, whose origins lie in the aforementioned ancient iconography, refers to the images of Rome made in the fourteenth century, recalling that contained in Paolino Minorita's *Chronologia Magna* of 1346 (fig. 10). A perimeter of walls detaches a group of representative buildings, and some environmental details due to reliefs, from the rest of the world. Thus, in the depictions of Constantinople, a string of towers girds the extremity of the Balkan peninsula, in the shape of a considerably rounded triangle pointing east. To the northwest, it is connected to the territory by a small strip of land and thin bridges. On that side, a double wall is flanked by a large channel full of water, built by Theodosius to defend the city from barbarian invasions.

Roads are not always shown. The same may be said for the nomenclature accompanying the buildings. All the depictions lack perspective and foreshortening; the buildings are all of the same proportions, shown in an intuitive axonometry able to differentiate them by bulk and shape.

In this semiotic system, the images provide the historic appearance of the pre-existing ancient elements of Constantinople, rather than the geographic situation. These are ground plans upon which the three dimensions of the buildings are overlaid, simulating a sort of bird's-eye view providing an overall vision. For Alessandro Rinaldi (1989), illustrations of this kind show a "univocal and ingeniously content-based use," due precisely to the simultaneous presence of two, not wholly

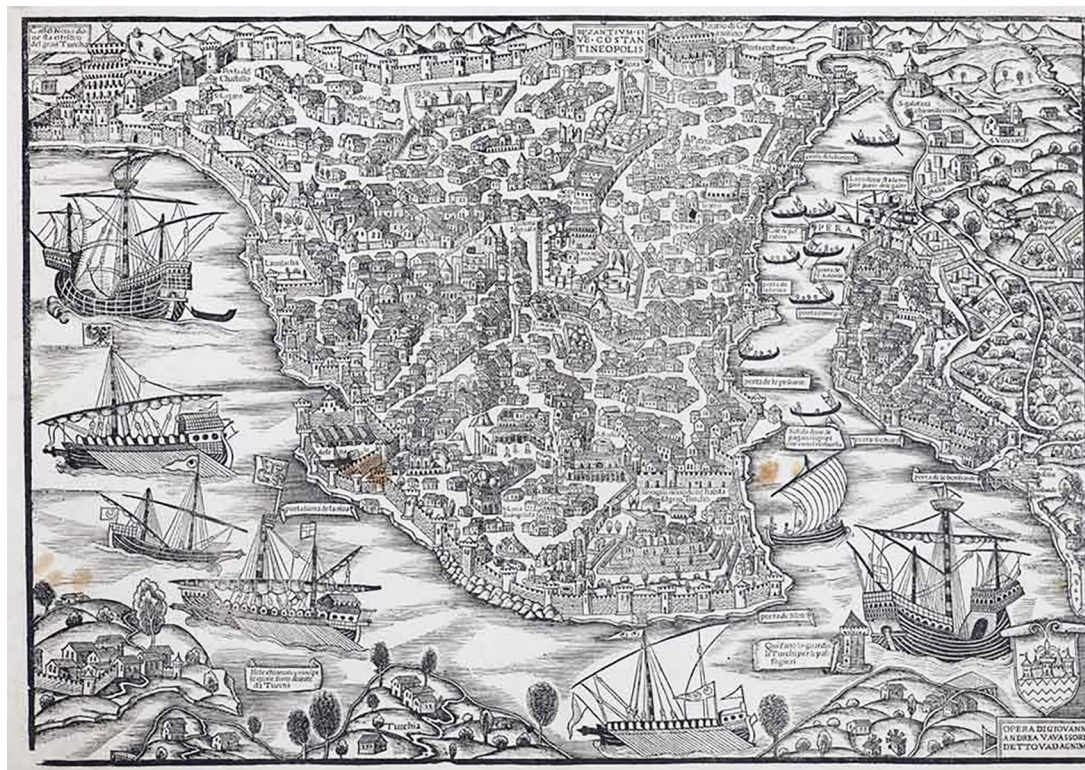


Fig. 12 - G.A. Vavassore, Bizantium sive Costantineopolis, 1535 approx (private collection).

compatible modes of depiction. A careful reading of the not inconsiderable number of reproductions raises suspicions of a lack of interest in the lived-in space, although the aim was to provide a reliable image of it. In fact, the main element is the peninsula's outline, close to the real one that may be traced in the maps made by Piri Reis in 1513. What is contained within the masonry wall, on the other hand, is almost disseminated, with no clear relationship among the various constructions, and lacking a proper structure. The only fixed elements are the Hagia Sophia with the hippodrome in front, at times incomplete, and the port of the Emperor's Palace. This means that every image

is a repertory of discrete units in which possible rules for producing meaning are found.

However, for the time, it is a unique and incontrovertible depiction: as mentioned, we find it included in Ptolemy's *Geographia* in 1469, in Codex Vaticanus Latinus 5699, and in Codex Urbinas Latinus 277 in 1472, demonstrating its iconic value and the urban figurations' great importance on the geographic landscape. Moreover, the various copies made by eye on the Buondelmonti "prototype" as early as 1428 [15] underscore the Western idea of documenting a complex historic reality (Manners, 1997). But this was not enough to take it as a model for later depictions - which, however, could not

neglect it. For Buondelmonti, the depiction of Constantinople was certainly the completion of the text, the window from which the vestiges of the ancient culture produced by the West could be admired.

#### 4. SIXTEENTH CENTURY ENGRAVINGS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

We leave handmade depiction, returning to printed images of Constantinople produced in Europe. It is again Filippo Foresti who provides a new image of Constantinople (fig. 11) in the 1535 edition of *Supplementum Chronicarum*.

In this small image at the bottom of the text, the city of “Constantinople seized & sacked by Turks” is shown from the east in the triangular physiognomy of the peninsula flanked by the Golden Horn waterway to the right. It is not a historic scene as the title indicates, but a tranquil, oblique aerial view concisely depicting the walls reinforced by towers, with few constructions inside. Its uniqueness or figurative novelty lies in presenting the tip of the peninsula in the position it would symbolically take at a later time. The Bosphorus is plied by vessels of varying cabotage, and there are even gondolas in the Golden Horn. The graphic treatment highlights the water with dense cross-hatching, in chromatic contrast with the white, inhabited territory. The illustration is closed by a chain of mountains near the upper edge.

It is an image decidedly at odds with what we have seen, and in certain ways quite close to the physical state of the places, in terms of general physiognomy. The cartographic representation has quickly travelled its path, acquiring many important experiences, also in the field of surveying [16]. And cartography, like that produced and updated by Piri Reis in the early sixteenth century, made it possible to see the territory differently in its specific nature.

In this case, however, the city does not present its typical constructions, and in particular it loses the domed emblem, the Hagia Sophia, replaced by a large church with a campanile. Many other historic buildings are also missing; only one of the columns remains. Roads – and above all the commingling of



Fig. 13 - G. Guérout, *Épitomé de la corographie d'Europe*, La ville de Constantinople, Lyon, 1553 (Bibliothèque nationale de France).

sacred and profane places – are lacking. One has the feeling of having acquired the right physiognomy of the city, to the detriment of the intrinsic traits that made it recognizable for its illustrious past. Geography almost appears to have undermined history, and space to have shaken off time. In any event, the Italians were to determine this image as representative, and to say it with Foucault (1978), it was to be the “marked form,” due to the similarity to the geographical place: the model for subsequent depictions of Constantinople. We find it seen to in minute detail in the larger engraving “Bizantium sive Costantineopolis” (fig. 12) by the Venetian Giovanni Andrea Vavassore (“Vadagnino”) during those same years. Some scholars date it to 1520, others to 1535, and still

others even later – an uncertainty that has made it impossible to define whether it was a reference to Foresti’s earlier engraving, or the other way around[17]. However, although their graphic and figurative quality differ quite greatly, the two images bear many similarities.

The city is now densely built up; the monuments do not predominate in the enclosure’s space; a series of writings in cartouches helps identify the places and buildings, as occurred for some of Buondelmonti’s images. Although the depiction of space has yet to acquire perspective, similarity makes things visible, and extremely precise in their details; Arne Effenberger (2016) in fact wonders: who had the opportunity to explore the city in all its points, even in places like seraglios that required



permission to gain access? There is currently no certain indication of the prototype's author. As the same scholar maintained, all subsequent copies of Vavassore's view show a series of licences or of "gratuitous elements" in various points of the city, typical of the Venetian engraver, that set it apart. It is a precious update of the city relating to what occurred after the Turkish conquest.

But with all its imperfections, it remains an excellently made document, and Constantinople attains its iconic image to be handed down for a long time, to which European writers, engravers, and publishers would adhere.

In 1550, Sebastian Münster inserted it into the fourth book of *Cosmographia universalis* with a long caption at the bottom. Differing only in its essential graphics was *La Ville de Constantinople* (fig. 13) by French typographer Guillaume Guérout, accompanying 1553's *Épitomé de la corographie d'Europe*.

In 1564, Antoine Du Pinet would frame this image with telamons and cartouches to occupy two pages of *Plantz, pourtrairt et descriptions de plusieurs Villes et Forteresses*, anticipating by two years the publication by the Venetian Giovan Francesco Camocio, who re-engraved the view (fig. 15), endowing it at the bottom with a compass rose and an ample, 60-entry alphabetical legend.

Paolo Forlani and Donato Bertelli worked at the Camocio printing house; we have two of their engravings of Constantinople virtually equal to the first: one used by Giulio Ballino for the collection *De' disegni delle più illustri città e fortezze del mondo* printed in Venice in 1569. Copies were included in 1570, in the Claude Duchet printing house, and in 1575 in Antoine Lafrery's production in Rome.

A relative update of Vavassore's view is in the monumental work *Civitates orbis terrarum* by George Braun & Franz Hogenberg in 1572, in which "Bizantinum nunc Constantinopolis" (fig. 15) no longer has a legend of names at the bottom, but twelve *tondi* with depictions of sultans, with Muhammed on horseback in between, surrounded by a group of janissaries.

That same year in Venice, Tommaso Porcacchi opened his *Descrittione di Costantinopoli* in *L'isole più famose del mondo*, with Girolamo



Fig. 14 - G.F. Camocio, *Isole famose, porti e fortezze*, Costantinopoli, Venetia, 1566 (Biblioteca Marciana).

Porro's engraving drawn from Duchet, without the legend (fig. 16).

We find Camocio's version, with the same graphics, fewer vessels, and a legend at the bottom in Simon Pinargenti's 1573 atlas *Isole che son da Venetia nella Dalmatia*. Lastly, a few variations would be introduced by the engraver Giacomo Franco in 1598, in order to include it in *Viaggio da Venetia a Costantinopoli per mare* by cosmographer Giuseppe Rosaccio (fig. 17).

Only in 1635 would the German Matthäus Merian produce a panoramic view of Constantinople extending over the Bosphorus.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The map creates a close link between man and a piece of the world. Evelyn Edson (1997) believes that in the Middle Ages, the Earth was perceived as an object the viewer had to grasp. Direct perception bears witness to existence, and Medieval figuration tells a story the individual takes part in. Doubtlessly, the various depictions of ancient Istanbul are a cultural construction, the key to defining, fixing, and transmitting its points of identity. Proof of this is the at times slavish repetition of its image, reinforcing the idea of power,

even at the cost of proving false or unreliable in comparison with actual, physical reality. But they clearly contain the cultural reality of the times when they were produced, passing from a conceptual to a realistic figuration, from the political power of the West to that of the East, although some signs of the former remain.

Seeing them in cross-section, we may grasp the rapid evolution of the urban depiction, the conceptions relating to the city and the ways of recording them. The symbolic city is now the measured city. In the Renaissance, accuracy and precision – requirements earlier irrelevant in iconic value – acquired, with perspective, the truthfulness of the image understood as *analogon*.

Filippo Foresti is to be credited with opening the printed text to the urban image, the attempt to give the reader another opportunity for knowledge and exchange. Buondelmonti, for his part, overcomes the eminently symbolic aspect of the urban image, supporting it with topographical knowledge, a tangible sign of the changed views in Western culture. And with Vavassore, Constantinople would attain its figurative recognizability, to be enlarged with the first panorama drawn in 1559 by the German Melchior Lorichs.

None of the images of Constantinople shows the city from inland towards the sea because, as occurs for other coastal cities, water is the distinctive and fundamental element, both visually and in terms of sustenance. Constantinople is reached not by land, but by sea.

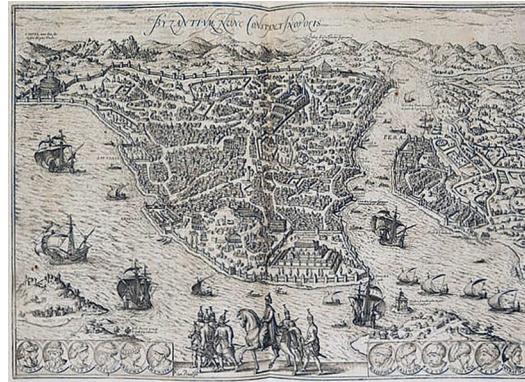


Fig. 15 - G. Braun, F. Hogenberg, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, Bizantium nunc Constantinopolis, Colonia, 1572 (Biblioteca Marciana).

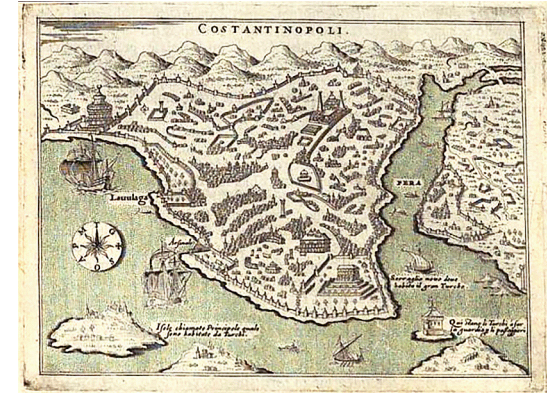


Fig. 16 - T. Porcacchi, *L'isole più famose del mondo*, Descrizione di Costantinopoli, Venetia, 1572 (Biblioteca Marciana).



Fig. 17 - G. Franco, Costantinopoli, in G. Rosaccio, *Viaggio da Venetia a Costantinopoli per mare*, Venezia, 1589 (Biblioteca Marciana).

NOTE

[1] We remember the contribution of Francesco Petrarca to the dissemination of ancient geography texts with important footnotes, as remembered by Sebastiano Gentile in *Umanesimo e scienza antica*, in *Il contributo italiano alla storia del Pensiero, Scienze, Treccani*, 2013. It is also worth mentioning the poet from Arezzo, an expert geographer and tireless traveler, *Itinerarium Syriacum* written in 1358, in which he says of Constantinople that the Greeks define it as a second Rome, greater in wealth and buildings. Also interesting is the attribution to the poet of the *Pictura Italiae*, cited by Flavio Biondo in 1474, a work discussed in the first half of the twentieth century by some scholars.

[2] See the image on the website [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.lat.5699\\_127v](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.5699_127v), consulted on July 10, 2020.

[3] This literary genre, originating with certain Mediterranean peoples in remote times, saw new life in the Middle Ages; the first handwritten texts include St. Jerome's, composed in Constantinople around 380 AD. In the second half of the fifteenth century, thanks to typesetting technology, this and other manuscripts, accompanied by miniatures, enjoyed greater circulation and were enriched with illustrations, a sizable number of which included cities.

[4] The book in folio, printed by Bernardino Benali in Venice in 1482, is a history of the world told chronologically in fifteen books.

[5] chapters called "ages." This subdivision originates from St. Augustine's writings in 400 AD; *Nuova Cronica*, written in 1322 by the

Florentine Giovanni Villani, was the literary genre of reference.

[6] The text was accompanied by 1,809 woodcuts also done by Wilhelm Pleydenwurff and by the twenty-year-old Albrecht Dürer, commissioned by the printer Anton Koberger in 1487.

[7] The Golden Horn was the safe harbour until the late nineteenth century. A distinctive element in the image, is the presence of two large chains anchored to the entrance of the waterway, and the other about halfway in. They were installed in 718 by Emperor Leo III to protect against the Arab siege. For centuries, Venetian and Genoese merchants who had settled the banks managed the Golden Horn. Galata – or Pera – on the northern bank was a Genoese quarter.

[8] It may be supposed that Schedel saw Ciriaco d'Ancona's sketches when visiting Veneto between 1463 and 1466. He certainly tapped *Commentaria* for a series of drawings. Cf. G.B. De Rossi, *Dell'Opus de Antiquitatibus di Hartmanno Schedel Norimbergese*, in *Memorie dell'Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica*, v.2, Lipsia: Brockhaus, 1865, p. 507.

[9] In *La città europea*, il Saggiatore, 2010, Cesare De Seta maintains that the image of Constantinople is the first reliable one, while Evelyn Edson (1997) deems the text a collection of stories on the great cities of the West and on the most important events.

[10] From the memoirs of Francesco Scalamenti written in 1464, ms I, 138 Biblioteca Capitolare di Treviso. During that visit, Ciriaco d'Ancona made many sketches which were quite likely taken as a reference by Giuliano da Sangallo around 1500,

and by Mantegna. Cf. C. Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo. Codice Vaticano Barberiniano lat. 4424*, Leipzig, 1910; M. Vickers, *Mantegna and Constantinople*, in *The Burlington Magazine*, v. 118, n. 883, 1976, pp. 680-687.

[11] In Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum* there is a third image of Constantinople that we do not take into consideration, because it does not wholly embrace the city. Another bird's-eye view, it shows the city after the devastating storm of 12 July 1490, as reported by Arne Effenberg (2016).

[12] The highly concise image depicts Rome within a polygonal wall with consider towers surrounded by a water-filled moat; beside it is Constantinople, depicted with triangular walls reinforced by towers, also surrounded by water.

[13] D'Ancona made his first journey to the Near East from 1412 to 1414. He visited Constantinople in 1417, thus during the same years when Buondelmonti was travelling in the Aegean and landed in Constantinople in 1422. Cf. M. Vickers, *Mantegna cit.* We also point out that D'Ancona penned numerous sketches of Constantinople in 1418, including an eloquent axonometric section and a prospect of Hagia Sophia from above.

[14] The interesting essay by Manners (1997) updates Giuseppe Gerola's research, comparing the study of other unpublished views of Constantinople by Buondelmonti.

[15] Gerola (1931) recalls that "six years after the work's end – the copy done at Chios is documented (currently at the Holkham Library), while another apograph (now at the Marciana)" bears witness to the work's great spread.

[16] It is worth recalling the interesting *Descriptio Urbis Romae* experience conducted by Leon Battista Alberti around 1450, whose numerical data, without image, are the first example of an urban reality translated into figures, so much so as to suggest a new culture of the image. Leonardo, on the other hand, as we know, in 1502 translated his numbers recorded on the city of Imola into a splendid map already mentioned by Danesio Maineri in 1473.

[17] On the initial model Vasasore is presumed to have drawn from, it has been thought it was a large-format engraving done in the early sixteenth century by the Florentine Francesco Rosselli, according to the inventory of the cartographer's assets. But this engraving never been found. Another hypothesis regards a large-format engraving by the Florentine Lucantonio degli Uberti done in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Cf. Effenberg, A. 2016.

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