

Invisible Parentheses: Mapping (out) the city and its histories

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Diploma of Architect Engineer
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 18, 2000 in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Architecture Studies

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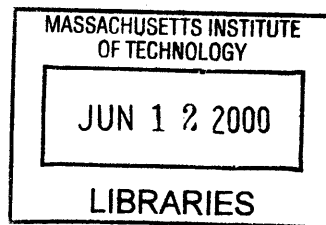
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Abstract

In theory as much as in practice, “history” and “design” have been traditionally regarded as distinct and even opposite spheres of investigation; however, the space of the city, itself a product of both, manifests the overlapping between the two fields. Contrary to modernism’s evolutionary model, in which the past is there only to be surpassed, and to postmodernism’s revisionist agenda, in which history simplistically becomes material for the future, this thesis proposes that both history and design are dynamic “projects,” synchronically and in equal parts shaping urban space. The case study is Thessaloniki, a port-city of major significance but also complex identity, which has developed through centuries as a common ground for parallel cultural and ethnic histories, located as it is at a multinational crossroads between the Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula. The capacity of urban space to historically integrate multiple imprints of external influences and at the same time emerge as unique and integral formal entity, conditions any attempt to design in it as well as the writing of urban history itself. The objective is to explore and highlight the continuous shifts in meaning of the city’s tangible space, its fabric and artifacts, through the intertwined operation of design intention and historical inevitability.

Thesis Supervisor: Mark Jarzombek

Title: Associate Professor of History and Architecture

This thesis would not have been possible without my patient readers and enthusiastic advisor. A sincere thank you to Prof. Ellen Dunham-Jones, for her support and constructive criticism, to Prof. Julian Beinart, whose profound knowledge and passion for cities have been a true inspiration for me, and especially to Prof. Mark Jarzombek, who was willing to take on this cross-categorical challenge the project turned out to be.

As a concept, this thesis evolved slowly throughout the two years of my studies here, with the invaluable, enlightening influence of several people, who made my experience a truly learning one. I would like to thank: Leila Kinney, David Friedman, and Michael Dennis, professors at MIT; Francesca Rogier and Robert Ousterhaut, both on faculty at the Graduate School of Design during 1999-2000 academic year; and my friends and colleagues, Glaire, Heather, Kathy, Kiran, Kristin, Marianne, Nandini, Nicola, Panayiota, Sabina, Teresa, TJ, and Tom.

I am grateful to my friends in Thessalonike, Anna Papadamou, Paraskevi Kourti, and especially Vana Tentokali, professor at the Aristotelian University, whose enlightened teaching has accompanied me in this project, too. As always, I am indebted to my loving parents, and to Erotokritos, Alessandra, and Yiannis. And to Yiorgos, who waited.

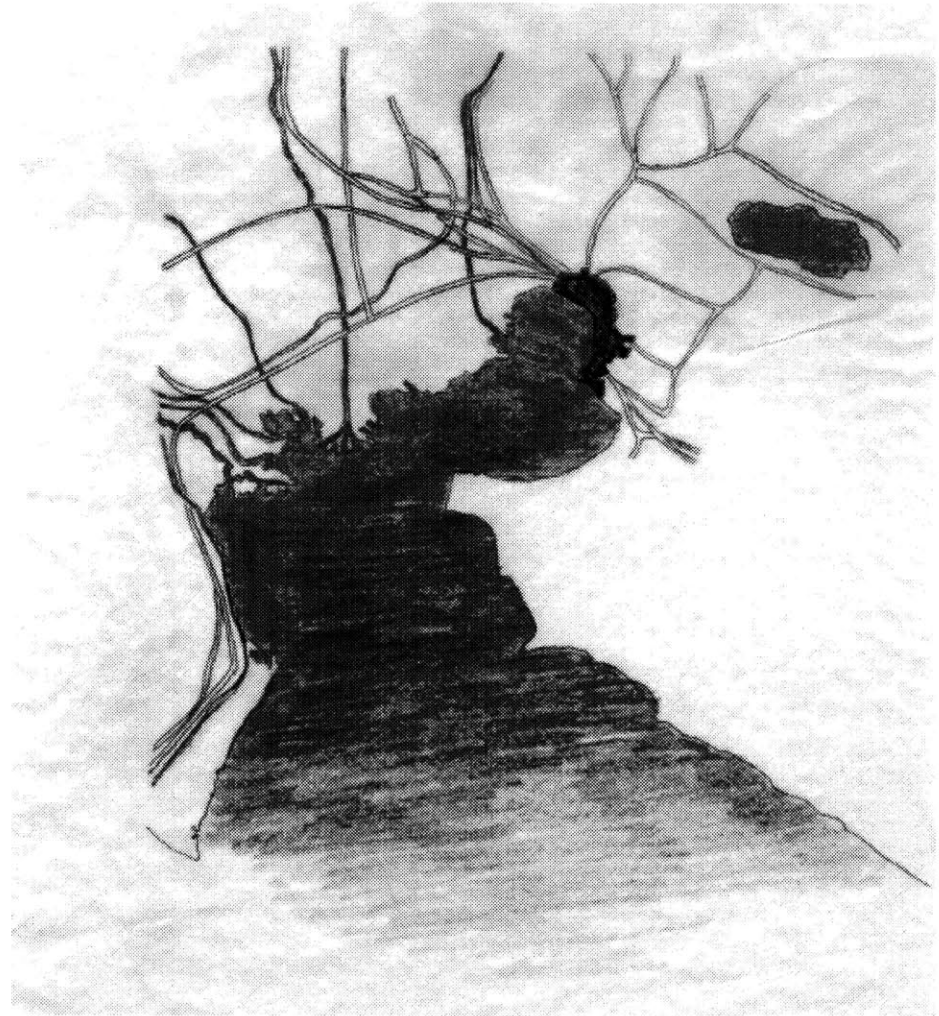
Acknowledgments

To the memory of my grandmother, Yiannoula Bazaka.

Table of contents

9	Introduction
21	Notes on methodology and organization of content
25	City Index
27	Alexandria
39	Ankara
49	Athens
54	Auschwitz
61	Berlin
67	Cannes
73	Constantinople
81	Durazzo
91	Florence
99	Istanbul
107	Jiddah
117	Kiev
125	Kosovo
131	London
139	Malta
143	Milan
153	Palermo
159	Paris
167	Pisa
175	Rome
185	Smyrna
191	Sofia
199	Spalato
207	Stuttgart
217	Toledo
227	Vienna
235	Warsaw
241	Index of cities
245	Conclusion
249	Bibliography
261	Sources of illustrations

Introduction



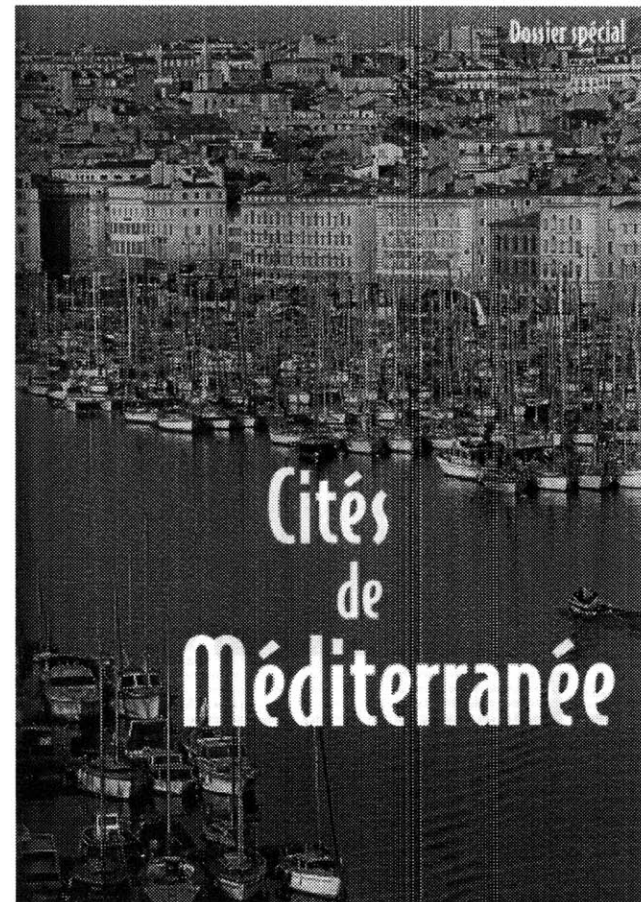
This thesis is about Thessalonike, a city-port of the Eastern Mediterranean, which today, with about one million inhabitants, is the second largest urban center in Greece. Strategically located on the crossroads of the Aegean Sea and the Balkans, the city, an ancient foundation, has led a troubled history literally “between East and West.” Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and (from 1430 to 1912) Ottoman, in the 20th century, Thessalonike has been “westernized,” quite like all of Greece. In fact, in 1997, it was the “Cultural Capital of Europe,” an important annual institution of the European Union, which brought much attention to the city.¹

The historic core of Thessalonike, built on a hill, like an amphitheater, faces the northern Aegean Sea and Mount Olympus on the opposite shore. One of its most prominent sites is the waterfront area, known as “Old Quay,” that flanks the historic center on its south side; in a peculiar lack of transition, it merely consists of a narrow road separating the masses of buildings from the open sea. Apart from the physical characteristics of the site, the sea-front of Thessalonike, as of all city-ports, carries a powerful symbolic meaning, being the “space of receipt” of the “other,” of people, ideas, and merchandise from faraway places.

The idea of travel, of departure and arrival, was actually part of the design program in this thesis: one of the initial ideas was to design a pavilion, a platform, a small building, a piece of Thessalonike that could leave the city, travel, and anchor in other city-ports. Included in Braudel’s seminal work on the Mediterranean, I found in a portolan chart of the 16th century an evocative conceptual diagram of a network of cities connected to my city.

At the same time, I came across an article about the city in a recent issue of *Qantara*, the official periodical of the *Arab World Institute* in Paris. Thessalonike was presented in the special dossier on “Mediterranean Cities,” and there I read that “in 1912, when the city became, after almost five centuries of Ottoman domination, again Greek, the Greek community of the city, was third in population after the Jewish and the Muslim one.” This came as a great surprise, for although I suspected that many aspects of the Ottoman history of the city are misrepresented in Greek historiography, this argument appeared to me too subversive to be true. I found out, however, that it was based on official demographic data of the Greek State. On the other hand, a closer look at the condition of the few Ottoman monuments surviving in the city, derelict and abused as in the case of *Hamza Bey Djami* (which, dating from 1467, was the oldest mosque of the city), complied with the projection of the city as “Hellenic.” Significantly, this projection, based on the elevation of its ancient and Byzantine past and the simultaneous conscious neglect of Muslim and Jewish artifacts, fitted in the framework in which I had been educated so far, Greek as I am. And it was maybe necessary for me to distance myself from what in my mind is “home” to rediscover it in a new and unprecedented manner.

As the author of the *Qantara* article was stressing out, one could say that in the Greek conscience and historiography of the city the whole Ottoman period has been treated as a “sad parenthesis.” The metaphorical use of the word “parenthesis” to describe a historical period can be compared with the definitions of parenthesis in its literal sense. Parenthesis, according to Webster’s Dictionary, is “a qualifying or amplifying word, phrase, or sentence inserted within written matter in such a way as to be independent of the surrounding grammatical structure; a comment departing from the theme of discourse, a digression; or, an interruption of continuity, an interval” (my emphases). The dictionary provides an example of literary use of the last definition: “the long parentheses of nothing” – Margaret Atwood. In addition, according to OED, a parenthesis, is both “an explanatory or qualifying word, clause, or sentence inserted into a passage with which it has not necessarily any grammatical connection” and a rhetorical figure, “a passage introduced into a context with which



it has no connection, a digression;” a figure defined by Puttenham as a “figure of tolerable disorder.”

It was Husserl who, in his *General introduction to a pure phenomenology*, talked about the conscious act of “parenthesizing” or “bracketing”:

The same material of being cannot be simultaneously doubted and held to be certain. In like manner, it is clear that the *attempt* to doubt anything intended to as something *on hand* necessarily *effects a certain annulment of positing* and precisely this interests us. The annulment in question is not a transmutation of positing into counter-positing; of position into negation; it is not a transmutation into uncertain presumption, deeming possible...; nor indeed is anything like that within the sphere of our free choice. *Rather, it is something wholly peculiar. We do not give up the positing we effected, we do not in any respect alter our conviction* which remains in itself as it is as long as we do not introduce new judgement-motives: precisely this is what we do not do. Nevertheless the positing undergoes a modification: while it in itself remains what it is, we, so to speak, “put it out of action,” we “exclude it,” we “parenthesize it.” It is still there, like the parenthesized in the parenthesis, like the excluded outside the context of inclusion.²

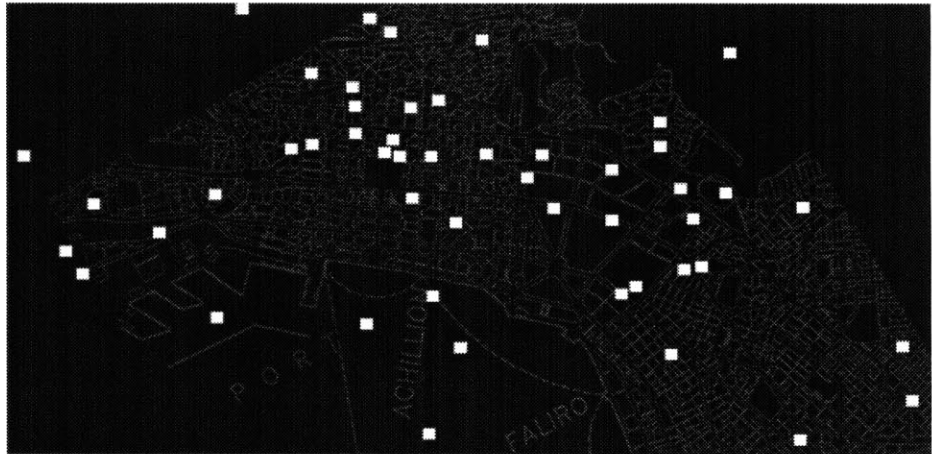
Confronted, in my readings, with the complexity and polyvalence in the various discussions of the city’s physical artifacts, all too often contradictory to each other, I found the concept of the parenthesis instrumental for my project. For any city, the presence of the outsider, the other, is an interruption, a digression – a “parenthesis.” In a like manner, a quote, inserted in this thesis, can be regarded as a parenthesis, taken out of its context. It can be read independently of my commentary, it has a structure of its own, and it is often in disjunction with other quotes – but this is perfectly in accordance to its operating as a “figure of tolerable disorder.”

Thus, the thesis is based on a selection of quotes about the history of Thessalonike which point out connections between it and other cities. However, to use Husserl’s words, this prime material “on hand,” is not regarded as “being there”; rather, with the conscious act of “bracketing” it inside my commentary, it is used to take my argu-

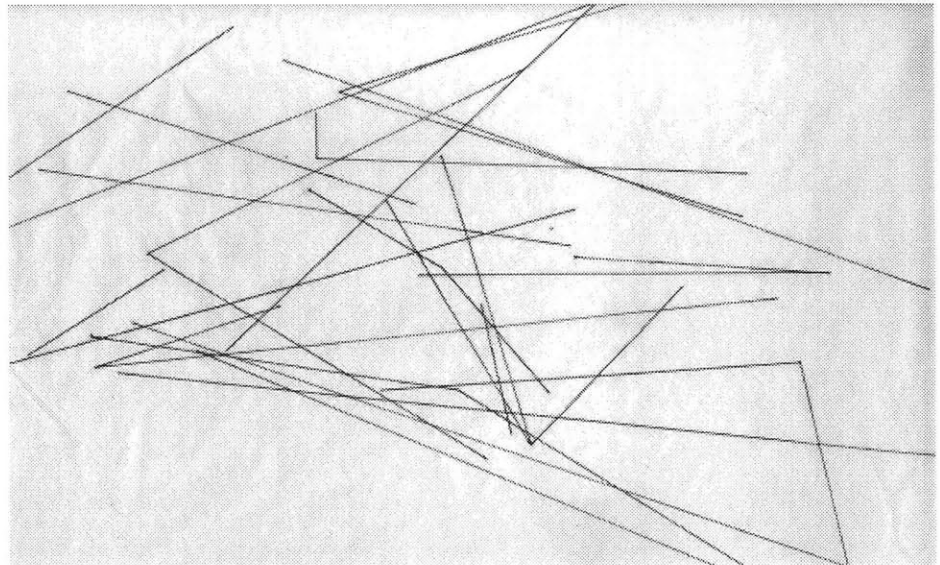
ments somewhere else. On the other hand, as the ensemble of the different histories of the city converges into a salient feature, its “obligation and privilege,” to attract the stranger and the outsider, Thessalonike and its urban space is looked upon (as if) with the eye of a stranger. This means that the focus is not on its internal, self-referential, linear history, but instead on what seem as small episodes that have left physical imprints of the “other city” on Thessalonike’s fabric. As a palimpsest of all these names, the city map consists of an itinerary of foreign sites; in this inverted image, the “other,” the absent, the effaced (the parenthesis), has taken control over the dominant local urban (grammatical) structure.

1 Under the aegis of the *Organization of Thessalonike – Cultural Capital of Europe*, there were many architectural and urban competitions, which attracted international interest. The related publications, in English, are included in the bibliography.

2 Edmund Husserl, *General introduction to a pure phenomenology* (The Hague and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), p. 58. Originally published in German in 1913.



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

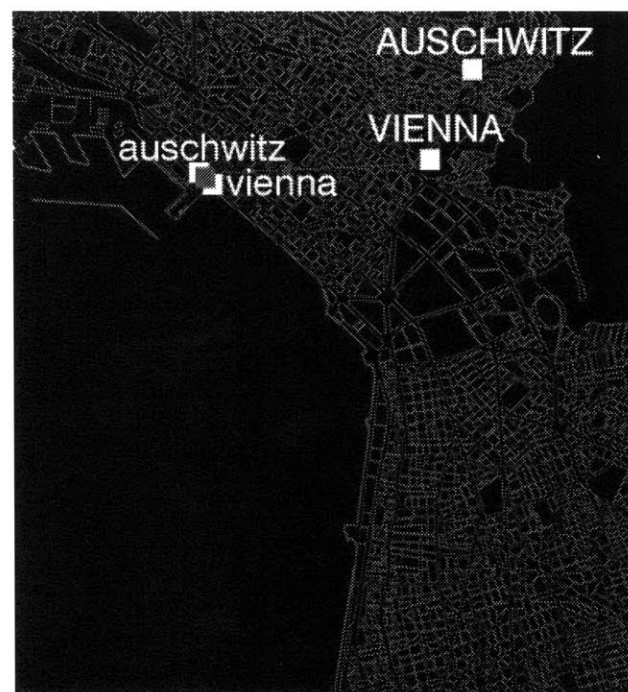
Notes on methodology and organization of content

The introductory diagrams illustrate the method of mapping/indexing (on) the two fields of research, the physical city, the map of Thessalonike, on one hand, and the abstract or virtual world, the network of cities connected to my city, on the other. On the city map, the locations evocative of other cities are marked with the other city's name. On the map of Europe, the names of other cities found in the historiography of Thessalonike are highlighted. Subsequently, with the superimposition of the map of Europe over the map of the city, the result is a set of arbitrary, erratic imprints of city names on the fabric. Since, however, the "real" sites connected with the other cities have also been mapped, there is a duality of imprints. Each actual position of a city's imprint can be connected to its "random" position, thus creating a diagram as complex and incomprehensible as a portolan chart. In this way, the city is transformed into its geographical sphere of influence; in an inversion of the initial idea of departing from the city for other cities, this process has brought the "elsewhere" *in* the city itself.

This process, condensed in the diagrams, is unfolded and thoroughly described in the book itself, which is a register of the cities/sites, organized in 27 chapters. Each chapter is entitled after a city's name and begins with a page from the "*City Index*," the inner part, which is in fact a citation index, and consists of a quote from the bibliography pointing out the connection between a site in Thessalonike and the other city. The quote is annotated with a photograph of the building or area in Thessalonike that the quote is referring to, and also a map indicating where this site is. With the conscious act of "bracketing" the *City Index* inside my commentary, I use this prime material to take my arguments somewhere else. From the quote, I depart to unravel episodes of history, show connecting threads, but also point out dislocations or acts of effacement, and often this process involves a cross-section in time. The relationship between the site and the city is almost never exclusive; often there are multiple imprints of one city, and also cases of "cross-referentiality" between cities themselves. Also, at the end of some of chapters, I make my own proposals, which are diverse and dissimilar in scale, ranging from a programmatic level, to urban design intervention, to putting up a new plaque outside a monument.

It would be better if one reads the entire *City Index* first, without my commentary, focusing on the inner book. This will provide a comprehensive overview of the issues at stake. In consequence, the reading of the book can start from any of the 27 chapters, each named after a city (that is, from any page that has a *City Index* page in it). There is also an index of cities at the end, where not only the cities that have entire chapters, but also all other city names found in the thesis, can be tracked down. The order of the chapters is alphabetical in regards to the city name, since this random registering system is maybe the only one that guarantees erratic and unplanned – thus scientifically objective – results. Since the order is not chronological or thematic, each “site” of the thesis can be read and understood separately from the others, like in the case of a city travel guide. Having read the *City Index*, one is familiar with the context; in fact, the reader should feel free to go back and forth, and at times, (s)he is urged to do so, when there is a reference to another page of the *City Index*; this is indicated with the name of the foreign city in italics (for example, “see *Spalato*”).

Since the city and its region were and are inhabited by various language communities, it is to be expected that place-names should vary from community to community. Thus the Greeks talk about Thessalonike, (pronounced “The-ssa-lo`ni-kee”) where the Turks talk about Selanik, the Sephardim Jews about Salonica, and the Slav-speaking Macedonians refer to Solun. Alongside Salonika, also Thessalonica, Salonica, Saloniki, and Salonichi are names that have been used for the city in English. We will also find it as Thessalonique or Salonique (in French) and as Salonicco (in Italian). I have chosen to write its name in English as Thessalonike, contrary to the vast majority of contemporary Greek translators, who have been using “Thessaloniki.” Although Thessaloniki is perhaps the simplest transliteration, it fails to take into account that the name of the city, a feminine one in Greek grammar, is a composite word, from “Thessalon” and “nike (= “victory”), which has always been written in English as “nike.” In resonance with its Greek etymology, “Thessalonike” is the most appropriate version, in my opinion. I have changed to “Thessalonike” all “Thessaloniki” I found in texts that are translations from Greek editions except, of



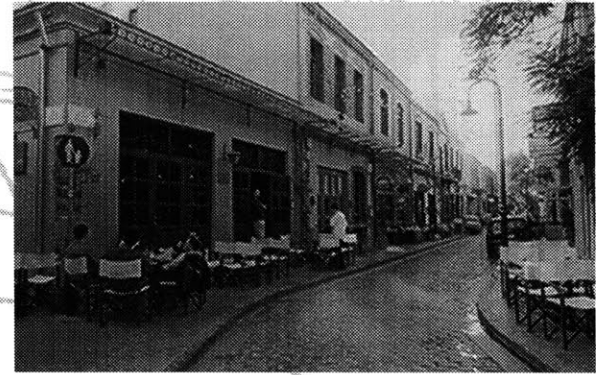
course, in the case of titles of bibliographical references. I have kept, however, all other English versions of the name that are included in original English sources, in order not to suppress the pluralism existing in the historiography.*

* The translations of all non-English quoted sources are mine, unless otherwise noted. I have also translated (and not transliterated) the Greek titles, so that they are comprehensible to the reader. In the bibliography, however, I indicate clearly which of the sources are in Greek, and therefore their English titles (my translations) would not appear in a bibliographical search.

An aerial photograph of a city grid, showing a dense network of streets and buildings. The image is in black and white with a halftone texture. A large, solid black triangular shape covers the bottom right portion of the image, creating a dark background for the text.

city index

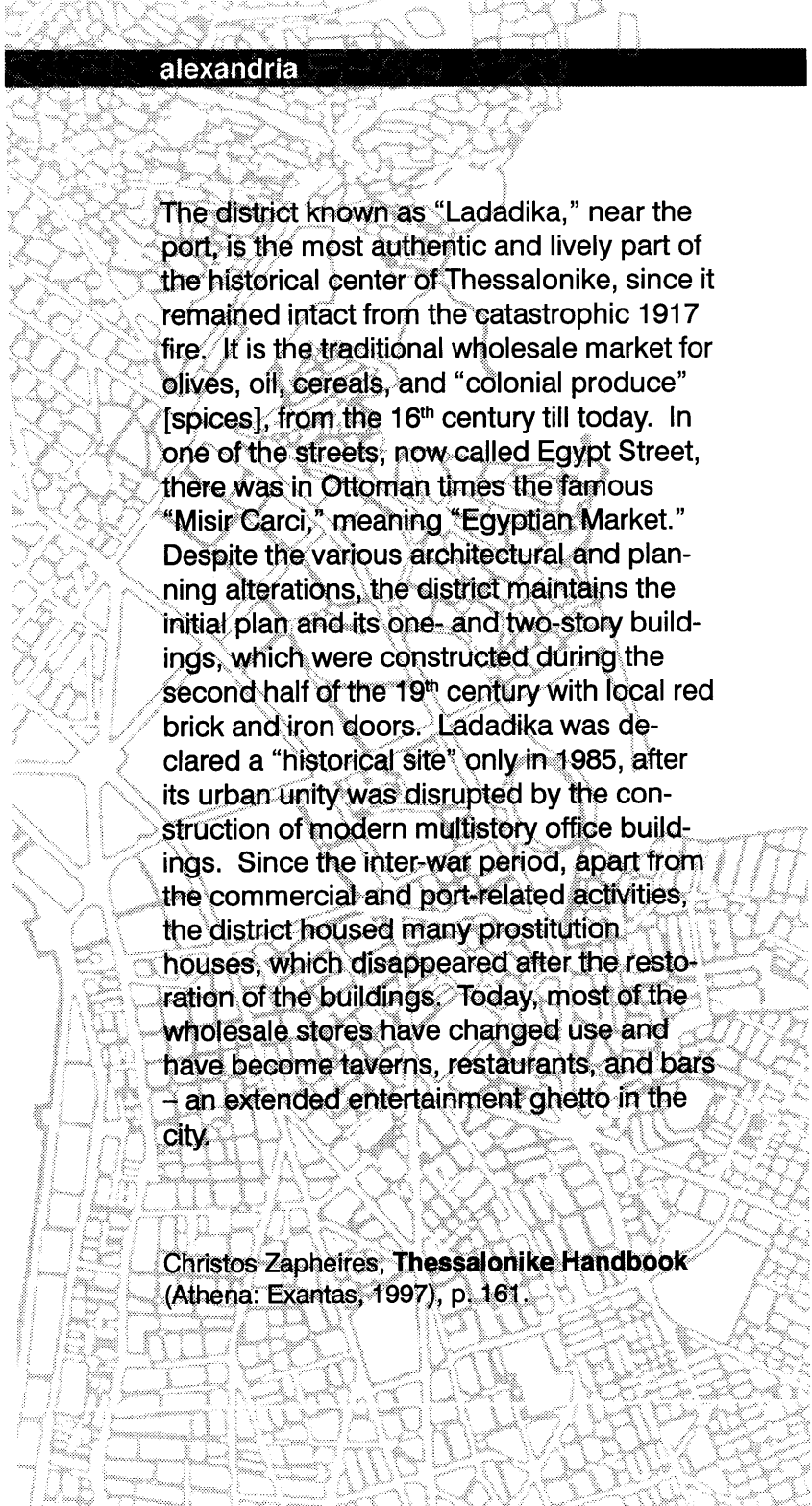
city index



egypt street



alexandria



The district known as “Ladadika,” near the port, is the most authentic and lively part of the historical center of Thessalonike, since it remained intact from the catastrophic 1917 fire. It is the traditional wholesale market for olives, oil, cereals, and “colonial produce” [spices], from the 16th century till today. In one of the streets, now called Egypt Street, there was in Ottoman times the famous “Misir Carci,” meaning “Egyptian Market.” Despite the various architectural and planning alterations, the district maintains the initial plan and its one- and two-story buildings, which were constructed during the second half of the 19th century with local red brick and iron doors. Ladadika was declared a “historical site” only in 1985, after its urban unity was disrupted by the construction of modern multistory office buildings. Since the inter-war period, apart from the commercial and port-related activities, the district housed many prostitution houses, which disappeared after the restoration of the buildings. Today, most of the wholesale stores have changed use and have become taverns, restaurants, and bars – an extended entertainment ghetto in the city.

Christos Zapheris, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athena: Exantas, 1997), p. 161.

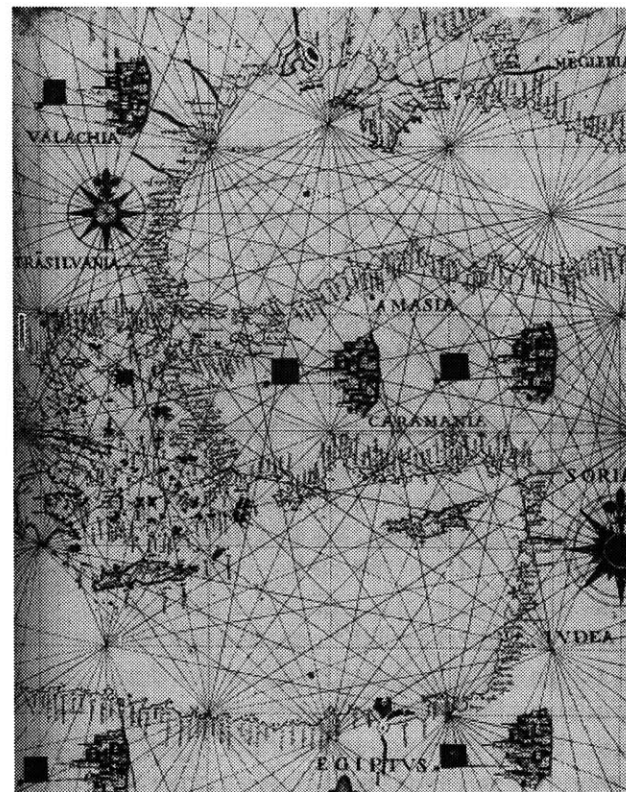
The city of Thessalonike, nestled in a bay, sheltered from the northern Aegean Sea and forming a natural port surrounded by hills, celebrated 2,300 years of existence in 1985. Since her foundation in the Hellenistic Age, the site has not ceased being occupied, and, significantly, the agglomeration has always maintained the characteristics of a city. In the words of Fernand Braudel, the historian *par excellence* of the Mediterranean, agglomerations, even small ones, have, in the Mediterranean, the tendency to become cities, while, elsewhere, even the largest can be reduced to villages. Writing about “*the narrow seas, home of history*,” Braudel emphasized that the Mediterranean “is not a single sea but a succession of small seas that communicate by means of wider or narrower entrances. In the two great east and west basins of the Mediterranean there is a series of highly individual narrow seas between the land masses, each with its own character, types of boat, and its own laws of history; and as a rule the narrowest seas are the richest in significance and historical value, as if man had found it easiest to impose himself on the Mediterranean in a small compass.”¹ The Aegean or Archipelago Sea has been one of these “narrow seas” and Thessalonike, situated at the inmost recess of the Thermaic Bay, “a miniature community”; as Braudel defines it, “a complex world in itself.”²

The commercial importance of the port for the Balkan Peninsula and the Eastern Mediterranean cannot be overemphasized. From Thessalonike’s harbor, the industrial products of the city and the agricultural ones of the Macedonian hinterland were exported to Asia Minor, North Africa, and Western Europe. Thessalonike was, on the other hand, the gateway for products arriving from across the sea. One of the first portolan charts (maps used for navigation, also known as “harbor-finding charts”³) of the Eastern Mediterranean, dating from the 16th century, shows the port of Thessalonike connected to all major harbors of the area. The name of the “Egyptian market,” the main market of Ottoman Thessalonike, adjacent to the port, is revealing of the close relationships between the port of Thessalonike and that of Alexandria. Other port cities historically related to Thessalonike include Smyrna, Beirut, Tunis, Venice, Trieste, Marseilles, Barcelona, Amsterdam, and London.⁴

City-ports are perhaps distinguished from other urban settlements by the fact that their development is intrinsically related to this extended network of ports, this organic unity, where the slightest incident occurring in one of its parts can have repercussions on all the others. Thus, very often, in the case of Thessalonike, the causes for local transformation can be situated in cities faraway across the sea; “The space of receipt is situated on earth, at the port, but one feels well enough that the principal deeds unravel elsewhere, in the sea.”⁵ In mid 19th century, for example, the construction of the Suez Canal influenced Thessalonike’s export trade to Alexandria; after exhausting the timber from nearby regions, the canal’s administration turned to deliveries from Thessalonike. Flour, dairy products, and so on, were also exported for the needs of the canal’s workers.”⁶ Even events happening as far as in America influenced the commercial exchanges of Thessalonike. For example, due to the American Civil War, the exports of cotton from Thessalonike to Marseilles, “which amounted to 2.8 million francs in 1862, after a rude ascent, fluctuated around 15.2 million francs; that is an increase of 545%. According to the law of supply and demand, the price of cotton in the European markets rose considerably although its quality was not so good as the American one. Thus, the American Civil War saved Thessalonike from the ravages of the European depression of that time.”⁷

But port-cities have not always been valued. According to Cicero,

Maritime cities are exposed to dangers, which are both manifold and impossible to foresee... [They] also suffer a certain corruption and degeneration of morals; for they receive a mixture of strange languages and customs, and import foreign ways as well as foreign merchandise, so that none of their ancestral institutions can possibly remain unchanged. Even their inhabitants do not cling to their dwelling places, but are constantly tempted far from home by soaring hopes and dreams. Even the mere delightfulness of such a site brings in its train (mainly) many an allurements to pleasure through either extravagance or indolence. And what I said of Corinth may perhaps be said with truth of the whole of Greece... For, surrounded as [Greece and the islands] are by the billows, not only themselves but also the customs and the institutions of their cities can be said to be afloat...⁸



Portulan [sic] of the Eastern Mediterranean, dating from the 16th century, after Braudel. (Source: National Library of Madrid, Ms. 17 818 f.4). Thessalonike can be found at the upper left of the map. Portulan charts, also known as “harbor-finding maps,” are conspicuous for their pattern of radiating lines corresponding to the principal lines of the compass, to aid the navigator in discovering the courses to be steered from one point to another.

model of the “floating” city

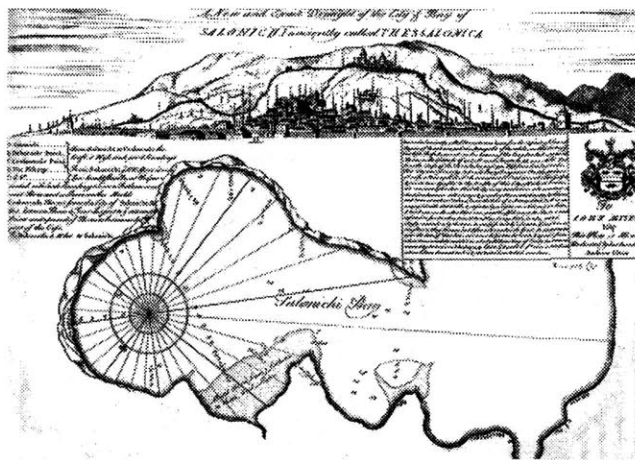


ALEXANDRIA

In the multicultural Thessalonike, these “disadvantages” have been the predominant traits of its history. It has always been receiving waves of “strange languages and customs,” it has suffered from catastrophes and tragedies brought about by its strategic location. On the other hand, because of this location, and in spite of the numerous wars, invasions, and occupations that it has historically attracted and their repercussions (see *Florence*), Thessalonike has enjoyed the necessary economic circumstances for its survival and prosperity through centuries. For, in the words of Cicero, maritime cities, “with all these disadvantages, possess one great advantage: all the products of the world can be brought by water to the city in which you live, and your people in turn can convey or send whatever their own fields produce to any country they like.”⁹

The geopolitical location and the commercial importance of its port are two of Thessalonike’s prominent characteristics. However, in its complex history, the most valuable exchanges the city has had with other cities are the cultural ones. Apart from merchandise, also “men traveled; so did cultural possessions, both the everyday and the unexpected, following expatriates round the world. Arriving with a group of travelers one year they might be carried further by others a year or a century later, ferried from place to place, left behind or taken up again, often by ignorant hands.”¹⁰ These unpredictable transfers, of peoples and their ideas, as well as of artifacts – from relics to songs to architectural details – have rendered Thessalonike an exquisite urban center, which although maintains many common characteristics with other historic cities in the Eastern Mediterranean, was and still is “a world in itself.”

In the geography of Thessalonike, quite like in most port-cities, the districts that have historically been perhaps the most sensitive or responsive to these patterns of exchanges are the ones in the greatest proximity to the “space of receipt,” the port. The area described in the *City Index*, the quarter once known as “Egyptian Market,” is a characteristic example, showing the reciprocal connection of the city with other cities and also the “openness” of the site, and the city, to “foreign ways and unforeseeable dangers,” to use Cicero’s words. The current area, today known as *Ta*



Thessalonike in the 18th century (1780?) after Andrew Elton. The title reads: “A New and Exact Draught of the City and Bay of Salonichi anciently called Thessalonica.” (Source: British Museum Map Collection)

Ladadika (“Oil-selling shops”), was in ancient and Byzantine times the site of the port, located to the southwest corner of the walled city. The harbor was filled in during the early Ottoman period, in the 16th century, and a new port was built to the south. Thus the *Misir Carci* (“Egyptian Market”) became the main marketplace in the proximity of the port, and it is mentioned as the greatest commercial district of the city, right outside the western walls, throughout the Ottoman period. In the 16th century, it was also the site of the slave market, an activity in which the Sephardim Jews, who had just arrived in the city (see *Toledo*), apparently specialized. Up to the end of the 19th century, the aspect of the area, like the entire western stretch of the city outside the walls, “resembled the market areas one found in the Balkans and the Orient: insignificant one-story shops of sloppy construction.”¹¹ However, the growing importance of the port of Thessalonike and the modernization process which had slowly transformed the city from 1870s onwards (see *Istanbul* and *Jiddah*), led in 1890 to the undertaking of a major construction project. New buildings, erected probably by French masons, introduce for the first time in Thessalonike “the dark-colored ‘European’ brick construction, with Flemish-type roof decorations.”¹² With the construction of these warehouses, “reminiscent of ports of northern seas, the color of Thessalonike is thus already European by 1890, especially for a visitor from the Orient, from Smyrna or even from Istanbul.”¹³

These mostly two-story warehouses underwent a transformation of use a few years after their construction; it is in the 1910s that the first account of prostitution houses operating in the area occurs, a period that coincides with the First World war and the occupation of the city by the Allies (see *London*). Thessalonike served for four years as the transfer station for hundreds of thousands of soldiers; “The mixed crowd of soldiers from Europe and the French and British colonies who frequented the cafes of Freedom Square, the cabarets of the waterfront road and the White Tower apart from the picturesque trait, gave, for four years, new life to the city economy. The presence of thousands of soldiers, passing from or entertaining themselves in the city, and the intense needs of the armies, led to a flourish of small trade and entertainment business.”¹⁴ Undoubtedly, prostitution was one of the forms of “entertainment

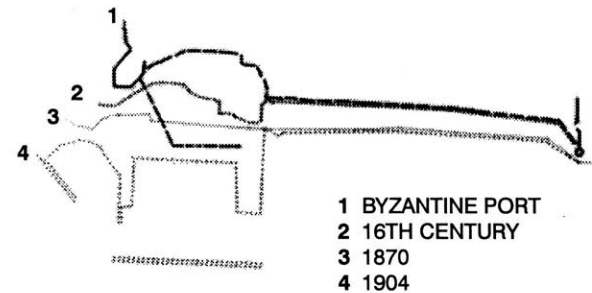


Diagram showing incremental filling of the harbor.

business” that flourished due to this “mixed crowd of soldiers.” (A photograph taken in 1917 shows soldiers in various uniforms promenading in the narrow streets around the Vardar Square (see *Durazzo*), a few blocks to the north of the market area, where the prostitution houses were located at the time.) Thus, the extension of brothels towards the “Egyptian market” can be explained as a result of an increase in the prostitution business.



Photograph taken in 1917, during the Allies’ occupation (see *London*). Prostitutes and soldiers in various uniforms on a street of the Vardar district (see *Durazzo*).

This mixed use of the area, both as a commercial district and a brothels’ neighborhood, continued until the early 1990s. As a market district, however, it had become clear by then, that the legendary “Egyptian Market” ceased to have a reason for existence: advances in port technology, and specifically the advent of containerization, brought significant changes in Thessalonike, as they did throughout the world. The piers of the old port were abandoned and new, modern facilities were constructed westwards. The warehouses, not serving any more as the place of concentration of wholesale trade of imported products, slowly deteriorated and the area reached its lowest point in the late 1980s – exactly when the 19th century surviving buildings were re-discovered by architectural historians and the area was declared a “historic site.”

The area of the Egyptian Market, in its formal polyvalence and its interrelations with the history of the entire city, illustrates that in the investigation of the physical city, one should always take into account the multiplicity of meanings, past and present, inherent in it. The excerpt found in the *City Index*, for example, although based on the same historical facts, significantly misinterprets the complex aspects of the area and reveals a common tendency to apply normative models of analysis even in cases, like the Egyptian Market’s, that deviate characteristically from traditional prototypes. The author presents the area as a typical ensemble and the existing buildings as authentic examples of the pre-1917 city. However, this small market area, in its “Frankish” architecture, is *atypical* of Thessalonike’s traditional urban fabric, an exception to the mostly Oriental-looking (see *Ankara*) neighborhoods of the city center, which was extensively destroyed in the 1917 fire (see *Spalato*). Most

of the existing buildings are not local products, but rather structural and stylistic imports, built most probably by French and Austrian engineers. Their cast iron parts, columns and beams, were actually brought from other places; they still carry stamps like “Frères Languedoc – Marseille,” etc. On the other hand, the author asserts that “the area is the most authentic and lively part of the historical center,” but at the end he laments at the fact that it has been transformed into “an extended entertainment ghetto in the city.” In a recursive manner, he avoids addressing a rather problematic aspect of the area at present day: the controversial transformation that followed the buildings’ restoration project.

It would not be generalizing so much to argue that the recent developments in the area illustrate paradigmatically the “return of aesthetics to city planning.”¹⁵ The “reclaiming of the area,” the restoration and embellishment of the buildings have been supported ideologically by a cultural view which focuses on the phenomena to the expense of social realities. However, although the buildings are preserved, they can not be any longer “authentic”: they can only represent their old authentic images. The potential of the area as place of tourist consumerism, with the nostalgic image that the buildings themselves advertise, was more than predictable from the beginning. The operation to “save Ladadika” should have made central in its design program, apart from saving the formal characteristics of the buildings, the economic and social factors at play, and find an answer to, or at least investigate, the problem of future uses of the area.

Currently, there is a growing speculation in the city as to how the area should be re-developed. There have been alternative proposals for reusing the buildings for cultural activities, such as galleries, and as artists’ studios. This, however, would only replace one form of tourist consumerism with another, only of a ‘higher’ scale. Meanwhile, very close to the area, around Vardar Square, (see *Durazzo*) the new immigrants in the city, Albanians, Polish and Russians, gather waiting for work, or simply waiting, most of them homeless and with the fear of police and subsequent deportation. These transient visitors of the city should be given a shelter; in reso-



A late 19th century typical warehouse in Ladadika, photographed in 1993.



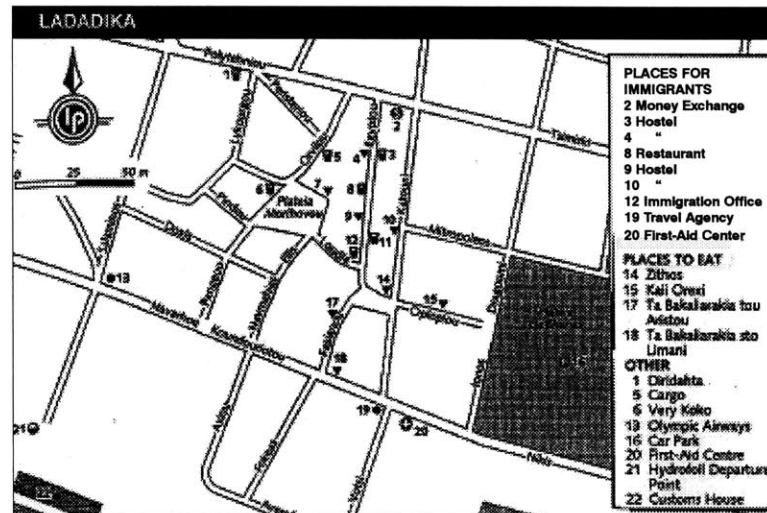
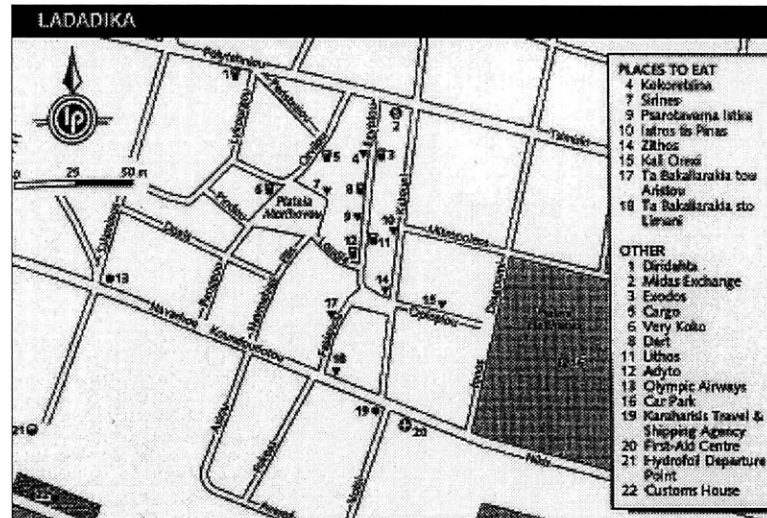
The building in the final stage of its restoration, in 1995; it currently houses a trendy brewery.

Resources for the lonely immigrant

Map showing existing uses of what used to be the Egyptian Market. The source is the *Lonely Planet Guide to Greece* (1999). In the chapter of Thessalonike, the guidebook, apart from a map of the city center, includes a detail map (the only one) of *Ta Ladadika*. Under the heading “Places to Eat – Entertainment,” it describes thoroughly “this small area consisting of a few blocks of formerly derelict warehouses and small shops close to the ferry terminal.”

The map highlights the location of specific must-see spots for a night in the town: taverns, music bars and pubs – a total of sixteen names.

The proposal is to infuse in this “entertainment ghetto” much-needed amenities for the hundreds of immigrants who usually gather in the nearby Vardar Square (see *Durazzo*). Along Egypt Street, several venues are taken over to provide a refuge for foreign immigrants. The program includes hostels and a number of services such as a restaurant, a first aid center, an Immigration office, and also money-exchange and travel agencies.



nance with its historical use, as the space of receipt of the strange and the distant, the area should become a welcome center for the “indispensable immigrants”¹⁶ in Thessalonike.

1 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the mediterranean world in the age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972-73), p. 108. Originally published in 1949.

2 “Even within these seas smaller areas can be distinguished, for there is hardly a bay in the Mediterranean that is not a miniature community, a complex world in itself.” See *Ibid.*, p. 110.

3 See H.C. Freiesleben, “The still undiscovered origin of portolan charts” in *Navigation* 36: (1) 124-129 and “The origin of portolan charts” in *Navigation* 37: (2) 194-199. Although the exact origins of the charts are not known, their first appearance occurs in Italy in the 13th century; the first charts cover mainly the Mediterranean. Portolan charts, “expensive works of art painted on parchment,” accompanied the “pilot books,” which included description of ports, with information required by the navigator concerning anchorages, etc. “All portolan charts are conspicuous for their pattern of radiating lines corresponding to the principal lines of the compass, to aid the navigator in discovering the courses to be steered from one point to another. As to the scales of the charts, it may be said that all of them show an aid to the measuring of distances. This conforms the theory that the charts were drawn on the basis of exactly known distances between ports founded on long expertise because the knowledge of a graticule of latitude and longitude cannot be supposed at the time when the portolan charts first appeared.” See “The still undiscovered origin of portolan charts,” *Ibid.*, p. 126.

4 “At the end of the 1850s, Thessalonike had become Turkey’s most important European port after Constantinople. In 1857, its total exports reached 51 million francs. In the middle of the 19th century, about 15 important trading houses, Greek, foreign, and Jewish were established there with a total capital of 5 million francs and a turnover of 12 million annually. The greatest part of these gains was directed to Constantinople and to other European centers such as Smyrna, Marseilles, Vienna, Trieste, and Genova. It must also be mentioned that most of the city’s houses were represented by the protected subjects of England, Russia, France, and Austria.” See Constantin A. Vacalopoulos, “Commercial Development and Economic Importance of the Port of Thessalonike from the Late Eighteenth Century to 1856,” in *Southeast European maritime commerce and naval policies from the mid-eighteenth century to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 305.

5 Aude Mathé, “Le port, un seuil pour l’imaginaire” in *Grandes villes et ports de mer* (Paris: Plan urbain, Ministère de l’équipement, du logement et des transports, 1993), p. 190.

6 Théano Tsiovaridou, “The commercial development and economic importance of the port of Thessalonike, from the end of the 18th c. to the end of World War I,” *Southeast European maritime commerce and naval policies from the mid-eighteenth century to 1914*, *Ibid.*, p. 274.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Rachel Vishnia, "Cicero, *The Republic*, 2.5-9: On the Disadvantages of a Maritime City" in *Mediterranean cities: historical perspectives* (London and Totowa, N.J.: F. Cass, 1988), p. 186.

9 Ibid., pp. 273-4.

10 Braudel, Ibid., p. 760.

11 Kostas Moskopos, *Thessalonike 1700-1912: cross-section of the ville-comptoire* (Athena: Stochastes, 1974), p. 18.

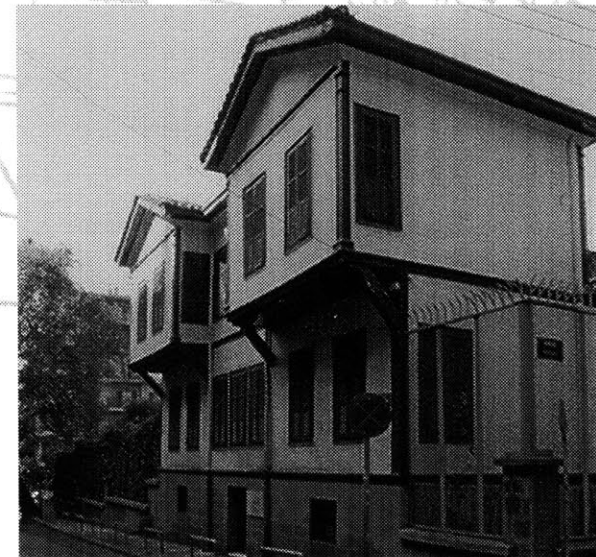
12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 27.

14 Christos Zappeires, *In Thessalonike: 1900-1960* (Athena: Exantas, 1994), pp. 50-51.

15 This phrase is the title of M. Christine Boyer's article included in *Philosophical Streets* (Washington, DC: Maisonneuve Press, 1990), pp. 93-111. As Boyer writes, "we have returned to focus on the aesthetic or physical form of our cities even though this gaze if from a distance; it neither sees the displacement of uses and people, the rapid gentrification of whole areas of the city spreading out from the center's core, nor does it understand the hidden class structure implicit in the development of these formalistic tastes." See Ibid., p. 97.

16 Braudel writes about *The indispensable immigrant*: "Another regular feature of Mediterranean towns is that the urban proletariat cannot maintain itself, let alone increase without the help of continuous immigration. The town had the capacity, and the obligation, to attract, besides the eternal mountain immigrants who provided labor of all kinds, a throng of proletariats or adventurers of every origin." See Ibid., p. 334.



ataturk's house



“Selanikli Mustafa,” Mustafa the Thessalonikian... that was the name a young lieutenant, who graduated from the Military School in Istanbul in 1902, was known by. He was born in Thessalonike in 1881, in the Ahmed Subaci neighborhood, where he went to elementary school, before entering the Middle Military School of the city. While a student there, a professor started calling him Kemal (“Perfect”). This young officer, Mustafa Kemal, would have a brilliant future. Thessalonike occupies a special place in the hearts of Turks, for it is the birthplace of the founder of modern Turkey. The Macedonian capital was one of the most important revolutionary centers during the Young Turks movement against the Sultan Abdul Hamid. It was from here that the 1908 Revolution started and the foundations of Turkish nationalism were formed. The Young Turks even considered establishing the capital of the new State here. Thus, the history of the city is connected to the chronicle of the fall of the Ottoman Empire in an indissoluble way.

Francois Georgeon, “Selanik’ of the Muslims and the Donme,” in **Thessalonike 1850-1918: the “city of Jews” and the awakening of the Balkans** (Athens: Hekate, 1994), pp. 117-118. Originally published in French in 1992.

The family house of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, stands on Apostle Paul Street in the upper part of the city. Opposed to this incontestable historical evidence, the reference to Ataturk as “a hardy Anatolian peasant”¹ appears as a big historical mistake. Although Ataturk recruited his revolutionary army among peasants from Anatolia, he himself was a Thessalonikian, born in a city where, even during Ottoman times, Turks were a minority.² The obliteration of the fact that Ataturk was born and raised on European ground, in Thessalonike, is not unrelated to his projection as the national leader of Turks, who, at a period when the Ottoman Empire was falling into pieces, argued for a resurrection of the nation through the development of a Turkish identity. In truth, despite the fact that Ottomans were a minority in Thessalonike (or exactly because of it), the city became, during the Young Turks revolution, one of the first centers of Turkish nationalism. Georgeon points out that “although a portion of the Turkish upper class was attracted by the cosmopolitanism and made efforts to penetrate the elite clubs of the city, all the rest, writers, government employees, military officers, became conscious of their identity through interacting with the non-Muslim communities of the city, inside the big melting-pot of Thessalonike.”³

During the Balkan wars of 1912-13 (see *Kiev* and *Sofia*), the official distribution of the European lands formerly belonging to the Empire took place; they were divided amongst the winners, the national states of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro. Thus, in contrast to the multinational character of the Empire, which had dominated over a large part of Southeast Europe, and had many of its great centers, like Thessalonike, located on European ground, for the new Turkey, the inevitable recess had to be made towards Asia. Thessalonike, a candidate for Turkish capital in 1908 when the Young Turks movement broke out, had become, ironically, part of Greece since 1912. Therefore, upon the foundation of the new Turkish State in 1919, Ataturk turned his back to Europe and the old decadent capital, Istanbul, and chose Ankara, till then an insignificant town at the center of Anatolia for his new capital, symbolically making a fresh start for the country.

The transition from a multinational Empire, in which Christians, Muslims, Slavs, Albanians, and Jews, coexisted under the same rule in relevant tranquillity, to the ethnic states that emerged in early 20th century, was undoubtedly a most violent one. Specifically in the context of the Greece – Turkey confrontation, the final act in the definition of borders took place ten years after the Balkan wars, in 1922, and revolved around the so-called “Asia Minor problem.” The problem involved “those hundreds of thousands of Greeks who lived outside their homeland in what had been ancient Ionia: they had lived there in the days when all Ionia was Greek; under Persian occupation; liberated by the conquests of Alexander, throughout the Roman and Byzantine empires, and finally remained subjects to the Ottomans.”⁴ In 1919, Greece obtained permission from the British and French governments to land troops at Smyrna, on the coast of Asia Minor. Nourished by the dream of the “*Megali Idea*” (see *Sofia*), the wish for the expansion of Greece to encompass the lands that used to be part of the Byzantine Empire and were still inhabited by many Greek-speaking peoples, the Greek government launched a war against Ataturk’s newly established Turkish state. In a rash expedition, described in the darkest of colors in Greek historiography, the Greek army was utterly defeated by Ataturk’s troops in the deserts of Anatolia. However, “worse was to follow. On August 26, 1922, the Greeks were totally routed and fell back in panic flight towards the coast. The Turks followed on their heels, and entered Smyrna in a manner reminiscent of their terrible advances in the 15th and 16th centuries.”⁵ Smyrna was devastated; “the loss of life is impossible to compute.” Over a million refugees from Asia Minor, survivors of the massacres and the great fire in Smyrna, found shelter in the islands, but mainly in northern Greece – especially in Thessalonike. As Bradford writes, for Greece, “the dream of Ionia was extinguished, and in its place, dominant over the smoking battlefield, stood Kemal Ataturk, the man who was to fashion out of its backward country and illiterate people a 20th century state.”⁶

Following the war, which in Greek history is referred to as “Asia Minor catastrophe,” Greece and Turkey cosigned the treaty of Lausanne for the obligatory exchange of populations between the two countries on January 30, 1923. The exchange was

The church of Acheiropietos as a refugee camp after the exchange of populations

View of the interior of the church of Acheiropietos. In this church, over the eighth pillar of the north aisle, there is the inscription with which Murad II commemorated the Ottoman conquest of the city in 1430 (see *Istanbul*). In 1923, Fred Boissonas took this photograph showing Greek refugees from Asia Minor sheltered in the church. The caption to the picture reads: "The flood of thousand of refugees who came to Thessalonike following the Asia Minor catastrophe caused enormous housing problems. To cover rudimentary needs, the refugees were piled up in churches and schools."





The port witnessed dramatic moments with the continuous arrivals of refugees from Asia Minor, especially from Smyrna, during the great exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. The photograph was taken in 1924; Christians from Asia Minor have just landed, carrying as much of their belongings they could manage.

based on religious criteria; the two countries agreed that all Muslims living in Greek territory had to migrate to Turkey, except for the ones living in Western Thrace; on the other hand, all Orthodox Christians residing in Turkish territory, with the exception of the ones in Constantinople and the islands of Imvros and Tenedos, had to move to Greece.

Christians from Asia Minor and Pontus left their homes back in the freshly designated Turkish lands that in Greek conscience are still today regarded as “lost homelands”; approximately 1,500,000 refugees flooded Greece, and a considerable number settled in Thessalonike. The impact of these events for the city was enormous in terms of demographic changes. For centuries, Jews, Turks, Greeks, and Westerners had shared the same urban space, though distinctly divided in ethnic neighborhoods (see *Stuttgart*). Even after the annexation of the city to Greece in 1912, Thessalonike maintained a highly mixed population, of which 45,867 people were Muslims.⁷ As a result of the treaty of Lausanne, however, all Muslims had to evacuate the city, which was immediately repopulated by Greek refugees from Asia Minor and from the shores of the Black Sea. Thus, while according to the 1913 census the Greek community, with 39,965 individuals, was the third ethnic group in population, amounting to 25.3% of the total, ten years later, after the exchange of populations, the Greeks consisted the 76% of the population⁸; for the first time in the history of city since the 15th century (see *Toledo*), the Jewish community lost its numerical superiority to the Greeks. The city was swarmed with more than 180,000 refugees and its total population reached the 300,000 mark within a few months.

According to *The New York Times*, “... the worst catastrophe for the wounded city [after the 1917 fire] has been the great influx of Greek and Armenian refugees from Smyrna in 1922, which accumulated to the waves of refugees from Russia and Turkey that had already arrived and raised the population nearly to 500,000. This influx has been truly disastrous. All civic buildings, except for the ones occupied by the British and French armies, were overflowed with people.hovels made of pieces of wood and tin sprouted in every spot...”⁹ In “the Mother of refugees,” as the city was

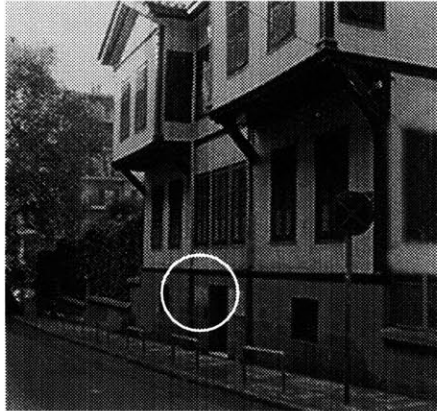
named, the starving and homeless immigrants were initially housed in makeshift shacks, but also in public buildings, hospitals, as well as mosques and churches. But it was also in the former Muslim quarters, at the northern parts of the historic center, where Thessalonikian Turks had left *their* homes and belongings, that Greek refugees found shelter. The deserted houses were taken over “violently,” as contemporary newspapers noted: “The refugees, who have no place to stay, sleep out in the open, along the quay [see *Jiddah*]; faced with the danger of death from the cold and the rain, many of them have invaded and attempted to settle themselves in various Turkish houses in the St. Demetrius [see *Kiev*] neighborhood.”¹⁰ Thus, the Muslim districts, known as the “Upper Town,” soon became refugee neighborhoods; in the local movie theater, where, before 1923, the Turkish population used to watch Turkish films, now immigrant girls would satisfy their nostalgic memory with cinematographic scenes from their lost cities, views of Hagia Sophia, Galata, Pera, and other Greek neighborhoods of Constantinople.¹¹

Today, the entire area of what once constituted the Muslim sector is one of the best-preserved traditional residential neighborhoods in the city. Being among the few parts of the historic core that escaped the 1917 fire and the subsequent rationalized plan (see *Spalato*), it maintains its traditional architecture and street network and is considered a characteristic ensemble of the “Macedonian” or “Balkan” vernacular. Not only are there conscious efforts for its preservation, to the extent that it was declared a “historic site” by the Greek government in 1978, but it has also been incorporated in the body of literature on “Greek Traditional Architecture.”¹²

Kemal Atatürk’s house, located on the southeast part of the area, is a typical example of the vernacular – a two-story wooden house with characteristic jetties (“*sahnisi*”). Incorporated in the complex of the Turkish consulate, it has been carefully restored. However, the significance of the house transcends its physicality. The house is often the theater of the diplomatic scene in the ongoing dispute between Greece and Turkey. For example, in 1954, “there was a bomb in the garden that caused some glass panes to break; when the incident was announced in Turkey, the furious mob

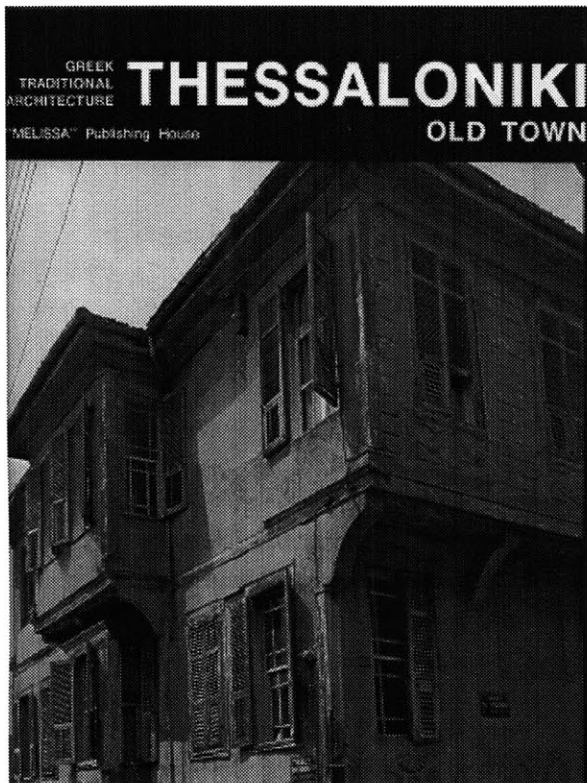


View of the Upper Town and the Acropolis, the traditional Turkish quarters of the city (see *Stuttgart*); the photograph was taken in 1919 from the rooftop of the White Tower (see *Pisa*). The area appears completely intact from the 1917 catastrophic fire and the minarets were still standing. Its Muslim inhabitants evacuated the area during the exchange of populations and, upon the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Christians from Turkey, the deserted houses were taken over “violently,” as contemporary newspapers noted.



**New plaque to be placed on the facade
of Ataturk's house**

**SINCE GREECE AND TURKEY ARE NATO ALLIES
AND GREECE HAS RECENTLY AGREED TO
TURKEY'S ENTERING THE EUROPEAN UNION,
ATATURK'S HOUSE SHOULD NO LONGER BE RE-
GARDED AS THE STRONGHOLD OF THE ENEMY
INSIDE GREEK TERRITORY. THEREFORE, THERE
SHOULD BE NO MORE TERRORIST ACTS AGAINST
THIS BUILDING, BUT IT SHOULD BE THOUGHT OF
AS A SYMBOL OF PEACE BETWEEN THE TWO
COUNTRIES.**



Cover of the issue on Thessalonike from the series *Greek Traditional Architecture* (Athens: Melissa, 1990) showing Turkish house (!) in the Upper Town district.

attacked the Greeks and the Patriarchy in Constantinople. Thousands of houses and shops belonging to Greeks were destroyed and hundreds injured.”¹³ As the Greek historian mentions: “Claiming as reason the attack against Kemal’s family house, the Turkish government could induce the masses into violent acts against the Greek minority.”¹⁴

At present day, in a period of considerably reduced hostility in the relationship between the two countries, there is a plaque outside the house, and the text, written in Turkish and in Greek, says that that this is the place where Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, was born in. This evidence of Greek-Turkish friendship should be accentuated by adding to this text another one, which would go as follows:

Since Greece and Turkey are NATO allies and recently Greece has agreed to Turkey’s joining the European Union, this house should no longer be regarded as the stronghold of the enemy inside Greek territory. Therefore, there should be no more terrorist acts against the house, but instead it should be thought of as a symbol of peace between the two countries.

Even though some of the refugees from Smyrna, for whom Kemal Ataturk stands for the man who slaughtered their families and forced themselves to humiliating flight, are still alive in Thessalonike, the design should be targeted on nourishing new ideologies about Greek-Turkish relationships. Therefore, should the response of the public to this second plaque be a negative, perhaps even violent one, it would be a telling sign that these diplomatic realignments in the context of NATO and the EU are simply a facade and that, for the two nations, reconciliation with the tragedies of history has not yet been consummated.

1 E. Bradford, *Mediterranean: portrait of a sea* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), p. 533.

2 “At the end of the 19th century, Thessalonike was the fourth largest city in the Ottoman Empire with a population of 150,000, after Istanbul (1 million), Smyrna (300,000) and Beirut (170,000). However, in 1908, only 27% of the population of Thessalonike were Muslims. In

Beirut and Smyrna, Muslims accounted to 1/3, while in Istanbul, to 45% of the population.” See F. Georgeon, “‘Selanik’ of the Muslims and the Donme,” in *Thessalonike 1850-1918: the ‘city of Jews’ and the awakening of the Balkans* (Athena: Hekate, 1994), pp. 118 and 122. Originally published in French (Paris: Editions Autrement, 1992). Georgeon is a French social historian, specializing in the political and cultural history of the Late Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey.

3 Ibid., p. 126.

4 Bradford, *ibid.*, p. 533.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 The rest of a total of 157,889 people was composed of 39,956 Greeks, 61,439 Jews, 6,263 Bulgarians, and 4,364 people of other nationalities. See Pavlos Petrides, “Thessalonike, 1912-1940: Political and social development,” in *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 1, p. 183.

8 See Ioannis Chasiotes, “The first after the first one,” in *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 42.

9 Quoted in Petridis, *Ibid.*, p. 191.

10 Yiorgos Anastasiadis and Evangelos Hekimoglou, *Waterfront-Ports-White Tower: The battle of memory* (Thessalonike: University Studio Press, 1997), p. 59.

11 Christos Zaphereis, *Thessalonikes Topiographia* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1990) pp. 110-111.

12 Agis Anastasiades, *Thessaloniki: Old Town*, from *Greek Traditional Architecture* series (Athens: Melissa Pub. House, 1990).

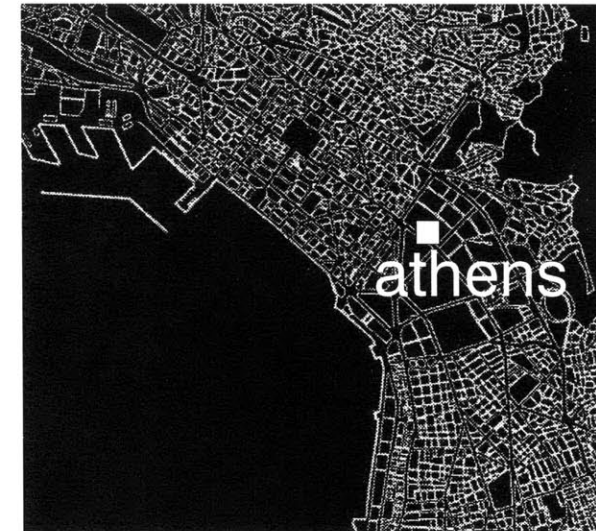
13 Demetrius Drogides, *Thessalonike 1897-1997* (Thessalonike: University Studio Press, 1996), p. 341.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 342.

city index



aristotelian university



Apart from literature and the press, a number of important cultural institutions have been set up in Salonica since 1912 – and particularly after the great exchange of populations ten years later – which have been contributed either with single-minded determination or as a side-effect, to the Hellenization of Greek Macedonia and the image of Greek Macedonia as it is perceived in the rest of Greece and, to an extent, elsewhere. Chief among these institutions, which have made a significant contribution to nation-building on a regional level, are the annual Salonica International Fair and the University of Salonica, both of which began functioning in 1926. [...] The University, which since the Second World War has symbolically taken over the site of one of the city's Jewish cemeteries, became a champion of liberalism and the demotic language against the ultra-conservatism of Athens University.

Peter Mackridge and Eleni Yannakakis, Introduction to ***Ourselves and others: the development of a Greek Macedonian cultural identity since 1912*** (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), p. 14.

The quote we read in the *City Index* needs to be compared to a historical overview of the foundation of the University, provided by Nikos P. Terzis in his article “Education in Thessalonike (1912-1992).”

The founding law of the University of Thessalonike was voted in 1925 by the Constitutional Parliament that declared the first Greek Democracy in Athens, with Alexander Papanastasiou as Prime Minister. However, until its normal operation in 1926/27, the new University underwent real adventures, connected with the general instability in the political scene. It is characteristic that within 15.5 months, eleven ministers paraded through the Ministry of Education, and there were two military coups. But to a large extent, these adventures were also due to the conflict between the conservative defenders of *katharevousa* [purist Greek language], who wanted to transform the new University into a sort of branch of the University of Athens, and the educational reformers, advocates of *demotike* [popular Greek], who saw it as their stronghold. In 1926, a decree abolished the first law and placed the University of Thessalonike under the aegis of the Academy of Athens. The ex-Minister of Education expressed his frustration in a local student newspaper: “In the University of Athens, scientific education, if not completely lacking, has certainly yielded to the professional preparation of its residents. That is why we were galvanized by the hope for the operation of the University of Thessalonike, which would raise the material and spiritual powers of the Greek State above all earthly conventions.”¹

In the article, written by a specialist in the history of education in Greece, there is an important omission: the fact that its campus lies on the grounds of the ancient Jewish cemetery. In a 1909 plan of Thessalonike (see “*the leaking city*” in *Istanbul*) the extended area to the northeast of the Fountain Square is indicated as “Jewish cemetery;” it had been used as such for almost five centuries. However, it was this site that was chosen for the erection of the new University in 1925, and the decision by the Greek government for the obligatory expropriation of the sacred land brought turmoil amidst the Jews of the city. Fortunately for them, as we read in the above quote, there were already enough internal problems in the University itself that halted the construction. In fact, until the 1950s, the Aristotelian University was accommodated in a preexistent building, designed in 1888 by Italian architect Vitaliano Poselli

(see *Palermo*), which used to house the Ottoman School of Public Administration, known as “*Idadie*.” (The fact that it was a Turkish building is very little known today. The edifice is called “Old School of Philosophy,” since a new School of Philosophy was built behind it in the 1960s, and proudly carries an inscription in Ancient Greek on its front façade - see *Palermo*.) Thus, during the first decades of its operation, the Aristotelian University, the new university of the Greek state, appropriated the Ottoman edifice and the plans to erect new buildings over the Jewish cemetery were postponed. It was in 1942, a year after the Germans had entered the city (see *Berlin*), that the cemetery ceased to operate. As the Jewish witness writes:

On December 6, 1942, the Nazis ordered work gangs to invade the cemetery, and with everything from hoes to bulldozers, went about pulverizing headstones, including that of my grandfather. So our four hundred-year-old cemetery became a marble quarry, open to any contractor or work foreman who felt like helping himself. I did not see the desecration of stones myself, but read about it in the local fascist press, which gleefully reported on what had happened. Those people with the means to bribe the Germans were allowed to have the bones of their loved ones removed, but most of course could not.²

One can imagine that fragments of Jewish tombstones were dispersed throughout the city, incorporated as building material in various locations. The Germans also used some of the slab stones for the paving of the area around the White Tower (see *Pisa*). In a way, the sack of the cemetery came as an unfortunate solution to the debate between the Jewish community and the Greek government. After the war, with the cemetery destroyed and the Jews annihilated by the Nazis, the campus was indeed built on the site. In front of the University Library, on the most prominent spot of the campus, there is the statue of the founder and first Greek Prime Minister, Alexander Papanastasiou, while a fragment of an elaborate marble headstone is encrusted on the pavement outside the Observatory. This overt confirmation of the success of the Greek authority, although partially facilitated by Nazi cruelty, is nevertheless a disrespectful act towards Jewish history. There should be an extensive excavation throughout the campus in search of remaining tombstones. When they are found,



The Observatory of the Aristotelian University (I. Triantafyllides, 1962). The only Jewish tombstone visible today is located a few meters from its perimetrical colonnade, on the left side of the picture.

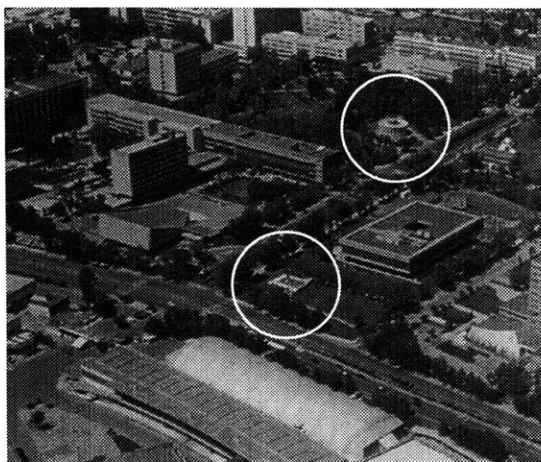


The cemetery underneath the campus

Papanastasiou's statue, now standing in front of the University Library (above). Papanastasiou was the first Prime Minister of the Greek Democracy and founded the Aristotelian University of Thessalonike in 1925.

Proposal for the replacement of the statue with tombstones from the Jewish cemetery, which lies underneath the Aristotelian University campus. At the time of its sack by the Germans, in 1942, the cemetery consisted of four hundred thousand tombs.





Aerial view of the Aristotelian University campus, indicating the location of the Observatory (the cylindrical building, on the upper right part of the picture), and that of Papanastasiou's statue, in front of the Library.

they should be placed on the site of the statue – there is a lot of lawn surrounding it. Thus, the reconstructed Jewish cemetery will act as a physical substitute for a verbal apology that was never asked (nor given).

1 Nikos P. Terzis, "Education in Thessalonike (1912-1992)," in *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 265-268.

2 Ya'acov (Jack) Handeli, *A Greek Jew from Salonica remembers* (New York: Herzl Press, 1993), p. 40.

Sunflowers of the Jews

*Every time our staircase creaks
"could it be them at last?" I think
and then I leave and for hours
bright yellow I paint sunflowers.*

*But tomorrow until I forget myself
in the waiting room, the train
from Krakow I shall wait.*

*And late at night, when they may come down
pale, clenching their teeth;
"took you so long to write to me"
I shall say, as if I didn't care.*

- Yiorgos Ioannou (1954)*



freedom square



Nine thousand grown men came to Freedom Square and had to wait, in the boiling mid July sun, from eight in the morning till 2 p.m. And it was the Sabbath, yet. Whoever tried to cover his head with a hat or newspaper, or to put on sunglasses, had the living daylight beaten out of him. The men had to jump up and down, lie on the pavement or dust and roll about, or go through all sorts of contortions, all the while getting beaten, spat upon, and insulted. Many suffered sunstroke; there were faintings and even deaths from the physical abuse, all of which evoked peals of laughter from the German women who watched from balconies around the square. No one from my family was affected, as my father was above age, I below, Shmuel was exempt because of his disability, and Yehuda simply ignored the order. We kept indoors. We saw what the returning men looked like in the afternoon and heard their tales of horror. This Sabbath came to be known as Black Saturday. From this point events took their irrevocable course toward implementation of the Final Solution on Salonica.

Ya'acov (Jack) Handeli, **A Greek Jew from Salonica remembers** (New York: Herzl Press, 1993), pp. 39-40. Original Hebrew edition (1992) entitled **From the White Tower to the Gates of Auschwitz**.

Thessalonike had the largest Jewish community in Greece, numbering 56,000 souls when the Germans entered the city on April 9, 1941. That community maintained 16 synagogues and 20 smaller chapels, as well as institutions for the needy and the sick. There were communal and private rabbinical libraries that contained thousands of volumes, several Jewish newspapers, Zionist organizations and above all, a cemetery where some 500,000 were buried. This 2,000-year-old community, which in 1492 became one of the greatest centers of Sephardic Jewry in the world ever since the expulsion from Spain, was the reason Thessalonike was nicknamed “Jerusalem of the Balkans.”

In 1941, only a few days after the entry of the German army in Thessalonike (see *Berlin*), the Jewish community of the city started suffering persecutions and continuous harassment. The Nazis shut down the Jewish press, replaced the communal authority by assigned persons, and destroyed their rich libraries and archives. During the second year of the occupation, the community was obliged to give enormous amounts of money for the return of its members from obligatory labor. However, the relief was temporary. All these persecutions, as well as the “humiliating exercises”¹ that the Jews of Thessalonike were forced to perform in Freedom Square – a square so ironically maintaining this name even today – were only the prelude to what happened the following year.

Eichmann visited the city in 1942 and wrote in his report back in Berlin that the city was a true “*Jugendstadt*” (see *Berlin*). Thus, in February 6, 1943, “an SS security department (SD) came to Salonica to put the racial laws into effect. To achieve that, they needed a respected figure to act as their go-between with the Jewish community. Within two days, they found such a figure in Dr. Koretz, the chief rabbi of Salonica.”² To facilitate enforcement of the racial laws, writes Handeli, “Rabbi Koretz rounded up every volunteer he could, I among them. Our job was to take a census of the Jewish community and register its members. 100,000 yellow stars, with a diameter of ten centimeters, were sewn.”³

The ambiguous figure of Dr. Koretz (born in Poland, educated in Vienna, Hamburg, and Berlin), who had come to Thessalonike in 1933 on the invitation of the Jewish community's board, undoubtedly played a crucial role in the annihilation of the community. It is commonly argued by Jewish historians that, had it not been for Koretz, the community might have had a greater chance to escape – at least its 96% death rate, the highest among all European countries, would have been prevented.

He should have drawn out the registration period to several months, and so give young boys and girls the opportunity to run away, as was done elsewhere. In my opinion, rumors that the Germans were exterminating the Jews did in fact reach Dr. Koretz, and he may even have known of the existence of gas chambers, but did not want to believe them and thought it was just propaganda. He collaborated because he thought the Germans would appreciate submissiveness and send the Jews, if not to Krakow, then at least to more pleasant camps. There can be no doubt that his own fate, and the live of his wife and son, played a part, because they kept on promising that they would not touch his family if he obeyed orders. That is in fact what happened. Anyone who justifies Dr. Koretz's actions shows disrespect for the 45,000 martyrs of Salonica. This is the unimpeachable truth.⁴

On March 3, 1943, after the census, which Koretz efficiently conducted, was complete, the Nazis set up a ghetto in the Baron Hirsch neighborhood, near the Old Railway Station, “a poor area which had been established 50 years earlier with a contribution by Baron Hirsch, as a refuge for victims of a fire that had destroyed their homes.”⁵ As Handeli writes, “a high wooden wall was put up initially, then, the next day, a double barbed wire fence, and soon afterwards, we were forbidden to go out the gates. So, only one month after the arrival of these six senior SD officers – only one month! – the Jews had been stripped out of their property and rights.”⁶ From the ghetto and the adjacent railroad station, “five trainloads left Salonica in March, nine in April, and two in May”⁷; the deportation of 49,000 Jews of the city was completed by the August of the same year.

The rest of the city of Thessalonike watched the Jewish community on its way to death in a helpless way that even today is very painful. “Beautiful Jewish women and



Celebration of Passover at the *Talmoud Tora* Synagogue in Thessalonike, 1918.



- 1 Hippocratic (Hirsch) Hospital
- 2 Square of Jewish Martyrs

young men with pale faces, who were married in a haste to receive the *zloti*, the money of the new land, aged grandfathers, rich merchants and porters of the harbor and the market, they all started their journey to death in a climate of passive sorrow and loneliness among their fellow citizens.”⁸ Reading Jack Handeli’s autobiography *A Greek Jew from Salonica Remembers*, is a lesson for any human person, but mostly for a contemporary Thessalonikian. In a city in which the collective memory of the Jewry was expressed only a few years ago in the renaming of a little square in the periphery to “Square of Jewish martyrs,” such lesson is much needed. Elie Weisel writes in the introduction to Handeli’s book:

I recall: There were Jews from Salonica in our block in the camp. They did not understand my Yiddish, nor did I their Greek or Ladino. Despite the language barrier, I liked being among them. They were good-natured people, they did not curse, were not violent. We were all impressed by their group cohesion. After the war, I heard and read about the heroism of the Greek deportees. The strong ones among them were chosen to work in the Sonderkommando. They all refused. Under no circumstances were they willing to burn bodies. They would rather die, and were shot at the spot. Much has been written about the catastrophe that had been visited upon European Jewry, yet little about how it affected the Jews of Greece. Too little. Reading his book... his hometown reminded me of my own: We also had non-Jews who did not work on Saturday. Happy families, idealistic young men and women, hopeful parents, and deluded leaders. In Greece, it was also possible to secure entry into Mandatory Palestine and Jews there also let the opportunity slip by. How is it that they did not understand what was happening? That they could not read the situation correctly, nor could they discern its future implications? And how could one explain the bizarre behavior of the community’s rabbi, Rabbi Koretz? Did he really mislead his flock? Did he deliberately lie and collaborate with the enemies of his people? In the answer is affirmative, can he be charged with treason?⁹

Back in their city of birth, in Thessalonike, “old Spanish melodies, *Ladino* folk songs that were heard as the Jews were leaving their city of birth, piled in the wagons for the new land of Israel, Krakow – as the Nazis had promised them – still echo in the Hirsch ghetto, the last station of the Jews of Thessalonike before the crematoria.”¹⁰

Elie Weisel also notes in his introduction that “sometimes when reading such memoirs, [one gets] the feeling that one Anti-Semite murdered the same Jew six million times. They all tell of the same initial decrees, removal to a ghetto, the long train ride, and selection. One must read carefully, one must listen to the voice of the writer, as it were, to realize that each tale is unique.”¹¹ The story of the Jewry of Thessalonike *is* unique in both respects, for the city itself, and for the history of Judaism – as well as that of humanism itself – and still intertwined with the city’s everyday.

Only recently have local historians discussed what happened in Thessalonike after the Jews were deported to Krakow. What happened to the private houses and shops, the plethora of public and religious buildings of their community, to the names of streets and neighborhoods that fifty thousand people lived in? In the city itself, there is a resounding absence of tangible Jewish traces, indicating the extent of systematic and deliberate destruction in the Nazi period, which also continued, perhaps “accidentally,” afterwards (see *Athens*). Even now, architectural histories of the city refer to Jewish buildings as insignificant and expressive of “the ephemeral character” inherent in their mentality.¹² This is a major distortion of historical truth, for the Sephardim of Thessalonike were not transient guests in the city; they had a centuries-old predominant presence in the city and regarded it as their homeland, a true “Spain of the Balkans” (see *Toledo*). Like its Ottoman past, the Jewish presence is unfortunately regarded as yet another parenthesis in the city’s “tragic history.” Undoubtedly, it is not only the 49,000 individuals that Nazism annihilated; it is the face of humanism that they gave to the city for four centuries. Poems such as the “Sunflowers of the Jews,” written by Giorgos Ioannou, whose family shared the same house with a Jewish family, convey perhaps in the best of ways, the sense one gets that often “together with the living, also the dead walk in the streets of this town.”¹³ This face of humanism would not be maintained even if the physical traits, the Spanish names of their neighborhood, the architecture of their synagogues, the Jewish names of their public buildings now carrying glorious Greek names,¹⁴ *had* survived in the city.



The community-sponsored “Pynchas” Medical Center. The inscription above the entrance reads: “Poor Patients’ Treatment Institution of the Israelite Community of Thessalonike.”



Survivors of the Holocaust inside the *Monastirioton* Synagogue (see Berlin). The sign reads “Losses of Jewish population of Thessalonike from the Nazi atrocities: 96%”

Nonetheless, the process of recording and publicizing even the absence and obliteration of the Sephardim population of the city, is an important project, and it has not even begun in Thessalonike. Evangelos Hekimoglou, a representative of the younger generation of Greek historians, has emphatically noted the problematic and unresolved position that this “chapter” occupies in the city’s history. Writing about the history of the Hirsch neighborhood – which at present day is a degraded industrial area and the site of the laboratories and slaughterhouses of the State Veterinary School (!) – he comments:

We cannot buy out our guilt. We cannot trade our memories. Sometimes you hear faint voices in a language familiar but unknown. The area has not been exorcised. The ghosts, ghosts of small children, of invalids and women nursing, are lurking. In our miserable memory, we have to find place some time for our true history.¹⁵

Inspired by this quote, the project consists of mapping the sites in Thessalonike where the presence of Jews has been imprinted. Often the traces have been removed, covered, or renamed, but the fact that they existed and thus can be mapped, creates “some space” for, and indeed “gives ground”¹⁶ to the Jewish history of the city. It is a conscious act of “*de-parenthesizing*”¹⁷ and bringing to the surface what is excluded but still lurking in the city’s memory.

* Yiorgos Ioannou, *Sunflowers* (Thessalonike, 1954), as reprinted in “Genius Loci: Thessalonike in literature,” *Tois agathois vasileousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 2, p. 352.

1 Basil Kontis and Giannis Stefanidis, “Thessalonike during the crucial decade 1940-1950,” in *Tois agathois vasileousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, edited by I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), p. 217.

2 Ya’acov (Jack) Handeli, *A Greek Jew from Salonica remembers* (New York: Herzl Press, 1993), p. 42.

3 Ibid., p. 45.

4 A. Recanati, *Zikhron Saloniki* [Salonica Memoir], as quoted in Ibid., p. 46.

5 Christos Zapheires, “The devastated Mother of Israel,” in *Thessalonikes Topiographia* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1990) p. 89.

6 Handeli, Ibid., p. 48

7 Ibid., p.49.

8 Zapheires, Ibid., p. 79.

9 Handeli, Ibid., p. 10.

10 Zapheires, Ibid., p. 89.

10 Handeli, Ibid., p. 9.

12 “Although the Jews were the most numerous community and played an important role in the economic and cultural life of Thessalonike, they did not leave samples of their own building activity. Their synagogues, schools, shops, and houses were simple, disposable, and had an ephemeral character.” See Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou & Evangelos Hekimoglou, “Thessalonike under Turkish Occupation; The organization of the city and the monuments,” in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 64, p. 64.

13 Nikos Gavriel Pentzikes, *Metera Thessalonike: keimena se pezo* (Athena: Kedros, 1970), p. 70.

14 A telling example is that of the “Hirsch” hospital, owned and used by the Jewish community; in the postwar it was named “Hippocratican” and became a state-owned institution.

15 Evangelos A. Hekimoglou, *Thessalonike; Turkish occupation and intewar period*.

(Thessalonike: Ekfrasi, 1996), p. 427.

16 I am borrowing the term from the recent *Giving Ground: The politics of propinquity*, Joan Copjec and Michael Sorkin, eds. (Verso, 1999).

17 See Introduction.



synagogue



The Year is 1960. Eichmann is in our hands, in Jewish hands! He is in prison, in Israel, the homeland of the Jews. Is this a dream? Or is it really true? Is this all possible? Did a miracle occur, that the all powerful Nazi, the wave of whose hand determined the fate of thousands of Jews, was himself now subject to the judgment of Jews? Those same Jews that he degraded, murdered, claimed were at the bottom of the animal kingdom? (Incidentally, Eichmann was in Salonica in 1942 and saw how influential Jews were in the city, which he called Judenstadt {Jewtown}. When he got back to Berlin, he sent a special unit under an officer named Visilizeny back to Salonica to commence implementation of the Final Solution among Greek Jews). Yes, it is reality. The trial commences. A courtroom is prepared, along with a reinforced glass cage to protect this archenemy of the Jews, the man responsible for implementation of the Final Solution.

Ya'acov (Jack) Handeli, **A Greek Jew from Salonica remembers** (New York: Herzl Press, 1993), p. 107. Original Hebrew edition (1992): **From the White Tower to the Gates of Auschwitz.**

Today, there is only one Synagogue in Thessalonike, on Syggrou Street, in a district that, as we see in maps of ethnic distribution in the city (see *Stuttgart*), was historically occupied by Jews. It is called *Monastirioton* Synagogue and it was founded by Jews from Monastir, the once important trade city, in Ottoman times, which is now called Bitola and belongs to the Former Yugoslavic Republic of Macedonia. Until 1922 and the great exchange of populations (see *Ankara*), the Sephardim Jewish community was the largest ethnic community of Thessalonike in terms of population, and according to an Ottoman register, the Israelite community of the city had a total of 32 synagogues in late 19th century. Since their exile from Spain in 1492 (see *Toledo*), in Thessalonike, as well as in the entire Empire, the Jews had enjoyed relative autonomy and religious tolerance under the Ottomans. A major change occurred in 1912; upon the annexation of Thessalonike to the Greek national state, “the Jews initially reacted to the new status quo with mixed feelings”¹; some feared that the change of rule could have unpleasant consequences. Soon, however, the Greek administration ended their uncertainty. Constantine Raktivan, the first Greek commander of Thessalonike, in an interview to a Jewish newspaper, stressed out “the principles of equality towards the law and the religious tolerance that characterize the Greek administration.”² Indeed, the state recognized the Jews as Greek citizens, with all the obligations and privileges of Christian Greeks. A photograph taken in 1915 shows an elderly Jew practicing vote in the elections for the Greek parliament. Later on, though, the Jewish community suffered some considerable blows, especially the implementation of the new city plan after the 1917 fire (see *Spalato*), the debate over its ancient cemetery (see *Athens*) and the establishment of Sunday as official obligatory holiday. Nevertheless, their relationships with the Greeks were good enough to keep them in the city, even though there was a large stream of Jews migrating to Israel from Western Europe. In 1940, the Jewish community still amounted to 50,000 people, representing 20% of the population of the city.

Greek Jews were also drafted to the Greek army; Jack Handeli in his autobiography writes that when Italy attacked Greece in 1940, “Ten hastily mobilized Greek divisions, which included 4,000 Salonican Jews, were rushed to the Albanian

frontier.”³ He points out with pride: “Even though the Greeks were poor in manpower and weaponry, they broke the Italian assault and drove their forces as far as central Albania. No one doubted the contribution of Jewish troops to the victory. Of 550 Salonicans who had been disabled in the fighting, 186 were Jewish, among them my brother Shmuel. Only a month after his mobilization, my brother was evacuated to an army hospital in Athens, with a decoration for bravery in action. I wrote my heroic brother every day, in Greek, of course.”⁴

One could say that despite the fact that the Jews of Thessalonike had remained the only non-Greek minority after the exchange of populations, they were to a large degree integrated in the Greek society. The city was no longer fragmented into ethnic sectors; in fact Jews and Greeks were living in the same apartment houses.⁵ However, the Jewish community continued to assert a salient, distinct presence in the city, with its own schools, libraries, hospitals, public housing projects, and, of course, synagogues. As quoted in the *City Index*, Eichmann called the city a “*Jugenstadt*” in 1942, which means that there was no actual amalgamation between the Jews and the dominant Greek culture of the city.

In an ironic twist of history, what had been the reason for the migration of their ancestors to the city of Thessalonike almost five centuries before – namely, its strategic location⁶ – in 1942 became the reason for the annihilation of the Jews: it drew the Germans to the city. “The geopolitical location of Thessalonike and its mainland, extremely important for the control of southeast Europe and east Mediterranean, as well as for the lines of supply towards the rest of Greece and northern Africa, explains the decision of the Germans not only to keep this area under their immediate control but also to establish in the Macedonian capital their military headquarters of the southern Balkan peninsula.”⁷ Although the rest of Greece was under the control of their allies, the Italians, the Germans considered Thessalonike too crucial in military terms to be left out of their direct control. On April 23rd 1941, in the grounds of the American College in Pylaia, General Georgios Tsolakoglou signed, in the presence of the German and Italian authorities, the final capitulation



Jewish voter in the 1915 Greek parliamentary elections (K. Koutsikas Collection).

Post-1912 successive setbacks for the Jews

The 1917 fire (see *Spalato*) hit hard the western and central Jewish neighborhoods; it was a decisive blow from which the Israelite Community never fully recuperated. Of the 73,000 victims who remained homeless, 53,700 were Jews. In addition, the administrative buildings of the Community, charity institutions, thirty synagogues, the schools of the Alliance (see *Paris*) and ten more schools were perished in the fire. The subsequent efforts of the Greek government to reconstruct the burned section and to implement the new plan, though much praised, had a very sensitive political side, since 75% of the old landowners were Jewish. The 1918 parliamentary decision for the obligatory expropriation of the burned lands was interpreted as an attempt to force the Jews out from the city and there were many reactions from the Community, who turned to international Israelite organizations for support. However the plan was implemented. The conflict between Greek authorities and the Community intensified a few years later, when the Athenian government decided to use the grounds of the Jewish for the erection of the Aristotelian University campus (see *Athens*).





Entry of German army in Thessalonike; tanks parading along the Old Quay on April 9, 1941.

protocol of the Greek army and finalized the surrender of the city. This historical moment marks not only the beginning of a harsh period of occupation, of everyday murders, violence, and hunger, for the entire city, but is also the harbinger of the ethnic cleansing of the Jews in Thessalonike. In Athens the Jews managed to survive the Holocaust, since the Italian authorities did not fully implement the racial laws. In Thessalonike, destiny led 48,000 Jews to the camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau and 98% of them never returned.

1 Albertos Nar, "Communal organization and activity of the Jewish Community of Thessalonike" in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, ed. I.K. Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 1, p. 285.

2 Ibid., pp. 286-7.

3 Ya'acov (Jack) Handeli, *A Greek Jew from Salonica remembers* (New York: Herzl Press, 1993), p. 93.

4 Ibid., p. 94.

5 Despite the cohabitation, the Sephardim continued to be socially and culturally, as well as linguistically, distinct (see also *Toledo*). For example, Handeli writes about his mother: "Mother Dudun never had much need to go out of the house. She did not know any Greek, just Ladino. She had no need for Greek. Her job was buying cloth for seamstresses to make clothes for her daughters. She bought the cloth from Jewish merchants who knew Ladino. Her friends and relatives all spoke Spanish and they were her entire circle of acquaintances. Most of the people in our building, though, were Greek. Our apartment was on the first floor, and sometimes when a neighbor would come over to ask for something, mother would have trouble understanding what she wanted. She knew a few words of Greek, but was unable to conduct a real conversation with the neighbor." See Ibid., p. 19.

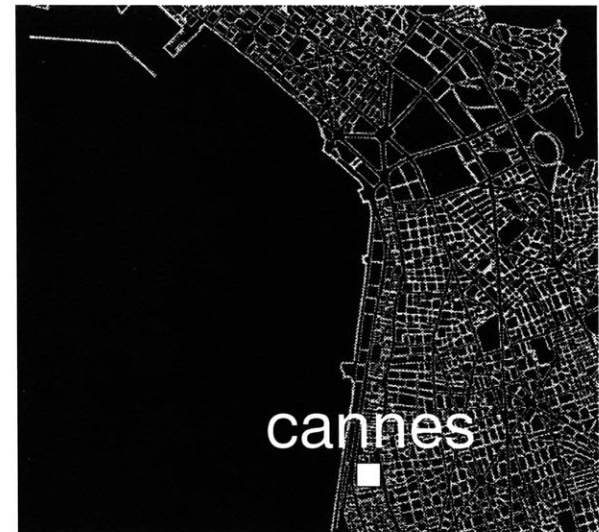
6 "The Spanish Jews, the Sephardim, forced into exile after the fall of the kingdom of Granada and the Inquisition, preferred to settle in Thessalonike, which at that time was still sparsely populated after its siege by the Ottomans and the flight of the Greeks. Maybe they were drawn by the strategic location of the city. Also, the Sultans were seeking to have new energetic population settle in it. Indeed, with their arrival, the deserted city woke up from its lethargy and developed once again into a first-rate economic center, as it had been in Roman and Byzantine times." See Albertos Nar, Ibid., p. 273.

7 Basil Kontis and Giannis Stefanidis, "Thessalonike during the crucial decade 1940-1950" in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, Ibid., vol. 1, p. 215.

city index



the castles



"Eternity And A Day," the latest movie by Greek director Theo Angelopoulos, winner of the Golden Palm Award in the 1998 Cannes Film Festival.

"Shimmeringly beautiful... Angelopoulos is a modern Homer!"

"To watch an Angelopoulos film is to feel that you are experiencing the essence of Greek culture."

Kevin Thomas, LA Times

"A Masterpiece...In a word, sublime."

Graham Fuller, Interview

"Quietly revelatory, luminous and invigorating...Parts for this film will never leave your memory!"

Peter Henné, Film Journal

The film traces the final days of Alexandre (Bruno Ganz), a celebrated Greek writer as he prepares to leave his seaside home forever. While packing, he finds a letter from his long-dead wife, Anna (Isabelle Renauld), who wrote about an enchanted summer day they spent thirty years. From that point, Alexandre embarks on a mystical journey through his past and present. Realizing that after spending his entire life chasing after the words of poems and novels, Alexandre wants one final chance to capture the lost precious moments of true happiness, even if only for one day.

<http://www.artlic.com/films/eternity.html>

The film mentioned in the *City Index* takes place in an old neighborhood of Thessalonike known as "the Castles" – the "seaside home," where many scenes, including the ending, are played out, can be identified with one of the mansions located in the area. The development of this neighborhood, at the end of the 19th century, marked a significant transition in the city. During that period, the demolition of the walls offered the opportunity for a long-sought-for expansion of the city, which was until then restricted within the perimeter of its fortifications (see *Istanbul*). Thus, while "the less economically powerful started to occupy the hilly inland area,"¹ rich Thessalonikians, irrespectively of religion, built their villas along the eastern waterfront of the city. "From the White Tower to the Villa Allatini, dozens of mansions, were built in a row along the new Yalilar Avenue. Belonging to wealthy residents of the city, Greeks, Turks, Jews, Europeans, as well as Balkanians, the villas impressed with their wealth and variety of European architectural styles and façade decorations. At the back, the villas of the Castles had gardens and private access to the beach, with cabins for the swimmers and a wooden dock for the boats."²

Both the architectural and the social traits of the new residential district were fundamentally distinct from that of the traditional city center. In contrast to the Macedonian vernacular that prevailed in the traditional neighborhoods (see *Ankara*), the villas, designed by renowned architects of the time, were eclectic in style (see *Palermo*) and competed each other in luxury. Though spatial segregation, based on ethnicity or religion, was until then a prevalent characteristic of the city (see *Stuttgart*), the basis for the formation of this neighborhood was strictly economic, since only the upper, mainly merchant, classes could afford it. However, this idyllic picture, "the lace-like seaside landscape of the Castles, which was praised by many writers and travelers,"³ can nowadays only be imagined, since the eastern Quay was filled in the 1960s, to create the new waterfront avenue and parks. After the subsequent erection of high-rise apartment buildings, the few villas that survived demolition are not on the seaside any more but they are encircled by modern constructions. The filling of the eastern quay was a very controversial endeavor at the time, quite like the idea for the underwater artery in the Old Quay is today (see *Jiddah*). Signifi-

cantly, the “mastermind” behind the filling and the resulted destruction of the area of the Castles was one of the most important politicians of modern Greece, the long-time Prime Minister and in later years President of the Democracy, Constantine Karamanlis (1905-1998). Ironically, it is precisely one of these castles that Karamanlis was connected with: the “*Villa Morpurgo*.” “It was on the first floor of this mansion that resided Constantine Karamanlis, when he was Prime Minister and President, during his visits to the city of Thessalonike.”⁴ The house was designed by the ubiquitous Italian architect Vitaliano Poselli (see *Palermo*) around 1906, and it was named after its first owner, the also Italian woman, Fani Morpurgo. “The mansion has the typical characteristics of the urban residences of the period, and despite later interventions, maintains many of its decorative patterns. It changed hands in 1952, when it was bought by entrepreneur and right-wing politician Nikos Zardinidis, and since it is known as ‘*Villa Zardinidi*.’”⁵

Theo Angelopoulos expresses throughout the film this problematic relationship between the idealized remembrance of thing past and the crude confrontation with their irreversible loss, and he does so in both personal and urban terms. Merging memories with real time action, he is using city and architecture as the symbolic field for the acting out of the hero’s mental journey. Alexandre’s trauma parallels the trauma of the city, which is nostalgic of its villa-like seaside neighborhood and attributes the catastrophe to right-wing politicians. Therefore the design includes the construction of a wooden cabin at the eastern seaside park, in the proximity of Villa Morpurgo, where the final scene of *Eternity And A Day* will be continuously projected. The scene goes as follows:

He takes the waterfront avenue leaving the city behind him. In a turn of the street, the old mansion we have seen in all his memories appears to the right, lonely, near the upset sea. He stops the car suddenly in the middle of the road; he comes out and approaches the house with his face marked with pain. He opens the iron gate to the garden, which gives out an acute sound of abandon. He climbs up the marble staircase. He pushes the entrance door, and passing through the small vestibule, finds himself in the central space of the house, the old salon. He stands in the middle, lost.



Villa Morpurgo (now Zardinidi), designed by Vitaliano Poselli (see *Palermo*), circa 1906.

The New Quay

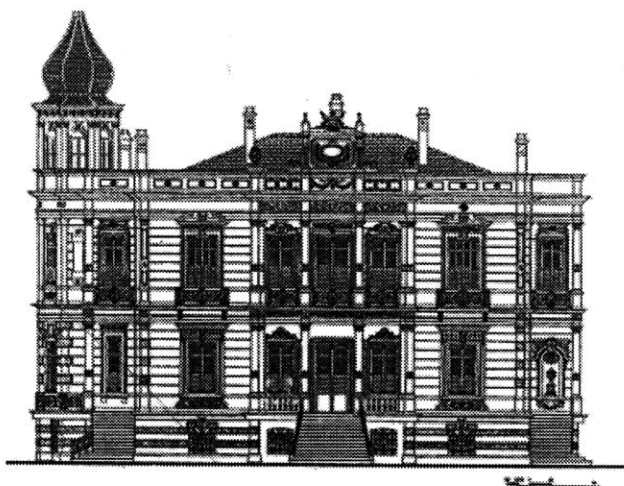
The entire eastern waterfront of Thessalonike, which includes *Megalou Alexandrou* ("Great Alexander") Avenue and the parks along the quay, was created from 1957 to 1965 with artificial filling of the area that stretches from the White Tower to the *Poseidonion* Athletic Center.

The New Quay, as it is known, replaced the neighborhood of "The Castles," the late 19th century mansions, famous for their flamboyant eclecticism. The few villas that were not demolished are hardly distinguishable behind the trees of the parks. Though these private residences used to have access from their back gardens to the then natural shore, they are now encircled by modern apartment buildings.

However, the mapping out of the waterfront avenue served as a solution, to some extent, to the traffic problem in the city and the construction of the New Quay provided the inhabitants with much needed open, recreational spaces.

The only building erected on the filled-in quay is the controversial *Macedonia Palace* Hotel, a project of Konstantinos Doxiades Architects. (K. A. Doxiades [1913-1975], a prominent architect and urban planner, is also the author of many theoretical books, including the famous *Architectural Space in Ancient Greece* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972], his doctoral thesis at the Berlin Charlottenburg Technische Hochschule [1937].) The hotel took ten years, from 1962 to 1972, to be constructed and it provoked intense public reaction at the time, not only because it occupied designated public space, as the eastern waterfront was supposed to be, but also because of its gigantic volume, which it is said to have "deteriorated aesthetically the New Quay."





Villa Mordoch (now Municipal Art Gallery). Designed by architect Xenophon Paionides (1905), it was originally the residence of a Turkish military officer. The villa is an exquisite synthesis of neoclassical, baroque, and art nouveau elements. Its name is reminiscent of its last owner, Samuel Mordoch, who was deported to Auschwitz in 1943 (see *Auschwitz*). During the Nazi occupation, it served as residence for German officers. In the postwar period the building was taken over by the Greek state; it currently houses the Municipal Art Gallery.

Suddenly, he thinks he can hear voices and laughs coming from outside, from the side of the sea. He opens the door that gives to the veranda and sees his mother. [...] Alexander goes down the steps of the veranda that lead to the beach and the sea. The space is now full of accordion music, songs, voices. There is an open tent in the middle of the beach and, underneath, his brother playing the accordion, some men, drunk, singing, one or two women with their backs turned.

The voice of his wife, again:

“I’m writing to you from the sea. Still and still... I’m writing, I’m talking to you. When... When you come back here one day, remember... I have looked at the sea with all my eyes. I have caressed it with all my hands. I’m standing here and I’m waiting for you, shaking... Give me this day.”

Alexander approaches, as if hypnotized. One of the women under the tent turns towards him. It is his wife.

“Forgive me, Anna,” he says in turmoil. “I didn’t understand.”

“Do you dance, sir?” asks his wife in an erotic tone, as if she didn’t hear him. “I know you tend to avoid it. But today it is my day.”⁶

1 Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou & Evangelos Hekimoglou, “Thessalonike under Turkish Occupation; The organization of the city and the monuments” in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 64, p. 96

2 Christos Zafeiris, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athens: Exantas, 1997), p. 228.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 230.

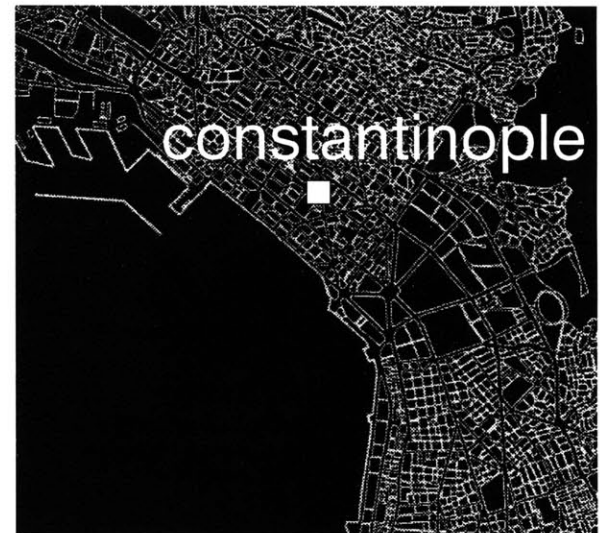
5 Ibid.

6 Translation of the script of the film. See Theo Angelopoulos, *Eternity And A Day* (Athena: Ekdoseis Kastanioti, 1998), pp. 94-96.

city index



hagia sophia



constantinople

From the 7th century dates the church of Hagia Sophia, which was considered one of the most significant in Thessalonike throughout the Byzantine period and was used as a Cathedral from 1224 till 1524, when it was converted into a mosque. The temple belongs to the intermediate typology of the cross-in-square domed church and is the best example of this group of buildings, and the only one preserved almost in its entirety. It was the first major domed church that introduces new ideas in ecclesiastical architecture in Thessalonike, where until then there were only basilicas. In Hagia Sophia we find the first cohesive form organized around a central space. On the other hand, the church maintains mosaics and frescos of several periods, and which are extremely interesting. In the niche of the sanctuary there are the oldest surviving mosaics: small silver crosses and floral ornaments in squares; also, the monograms of Emperor Constantine VI (780-797) and of his mother Irene (790-802).

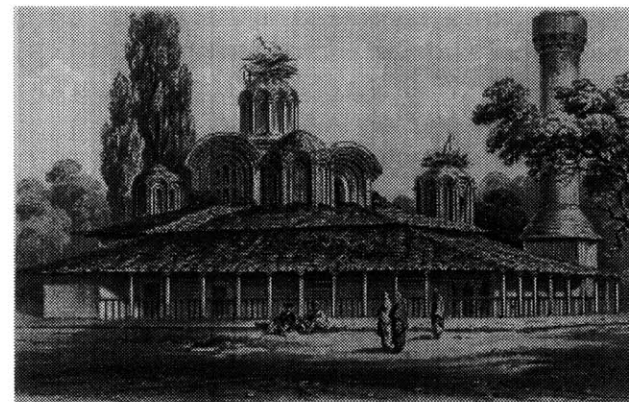
Nikos Nikonanos, "Topography and Art in Early Christian and Byzantine Thessalonike," in **Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization**, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), p. 43.

In the context of Greek history, Thessalonike, "an open museum of Byzantine art,"¹ offers the strongest links modern Greece can claim of having with the glorious past of Byzantium. According to Nikos Nikonanos (a local Byzantinologist and Professor at the Aristotle University), the fourteen Early Christian and Byzantine churches still standing in the city, "showing, with the brilliant mosaics and frescos, the quality of artistic production and verify that the second city of the Empire and metropolis of Macedonia was a main center of production of Byzantine culture."² Indeed, the city was an important center of the Byzantine Empire, and it is mentioned by Byzantine writers as "first after the First one,"³ the "First" being, of course, Constantinople. This quote has been widely used in contemporary historiography as evidence of the status of the city before the Ottoman period. As Charles Diehl, the renowned art historian notes: "Throughout Eastern Europe, Byzantium remains strangely alive. Five centuries have passed since Byzantium fell; but its memory persists, and for the many peoples who have received and treasured its heritage, its history, that to us seems dead, is full of promise and of pledges for the future."⁴ Diehl studied extensively the Byzantine monuments of the city and supervised the restoration of Hagia Sophia itself (see *Paris*). The fact that Thessalonike preserves a large number of buildings from its Byzantine period, "together with the Greek assumption that Byzantium was a purely Greek civilization, forming a link in the unbroken historical chain of Greek culture from prehistoric times to the present,"⁵ have contributed into its projection as a "Byzantine" city, although its recent past is Ottoman.

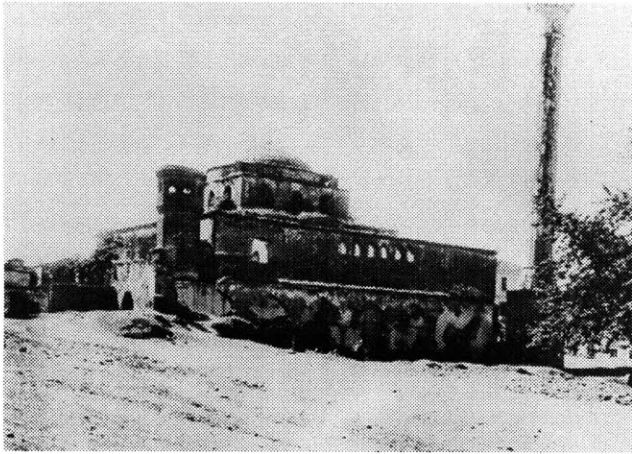
The important role the Byzantine Empire played in terms of the history of the Mediterranean – and even in world history – is not merely a Greek political argument. Many a western historian agrees that Byzantium served as "a bulwark of civilization" during the Dark Ages that fell over Europe from the fifth century onwards. As Bradford writes "the millennium between the extinction of the Roman Empire of the West and the fall of Constantinople to the Turks was one of the most disturbed in history. The impoverished centuries in which the 'wandering of the Nations' had devastated all of western Europe contributed little or nothing except to mingle the blood of many nations. Had it not been for the Byzantine Empire exercis-

ing its civilizing influence over the eastern portion and holding back the streams of invaders from north and east, the whole period might have sunk in barbarism.”⁶ The city of Thessalonike, the second in importance after the capital of Byzantium, flourished throughout the Byzantine period, contrary to many cities in the Eastern Mediterranean, which from the 7th century onwards underwent a slow process of decline. In fact some of the prominent ones had become small villages by the 9th century – Ephesos on the Ionian coast or Sardis in Anatolia, for instance. In mid 12th century, Thessalonike maintained a population of 100,000,⁷ while Rome had shrunk to 35,000 at that time. Braudel points out that it was around the shores of the Mediterranean that a tradition of “urban civilization” prevailed: “Until the end of the 14th c., the Mediterranean belonged to its towns, to the city-states scattered around its shores. These were of course already, here and there, a few territorial states, fairly homogeneous in character and comparatively large, bordering the sea itself: the Kingdom of Naples – ‘il Reame’ – the outstanding example; the Byzantine Empire; or the possessions united under the Crown of Aragon. But in many cases, these states were merely the extensions of powerful cities: Aragon in the broad sense was a by-product of the dynamic rise of Barcelona; the Byzantine Empire consisted almost entirely of the extended suburbs of two cities, Constantinople and Salonica.”⁸

However, if the Byzantine churches stil standing in Thessalonike are indisputable witnesses of its prosperity in Byzantine times, they also manifest the radical transformation the city underwent in 1430. Twenty-three before the fall of Constantinople, the “first after the First one” was conquered by the Ottomans and one by one its Christian churches were converted into mosques. Minarets and porches were added to the buildings and their names were changed from Christian to Turkish ones.⁹ The church of Hagia Sophia, for example, so powerfully reminiscent of Constantinople, became a mosque in 1524 but, quite astonishingly, it was called by the Ottomans “*Hagia Sophia Djami*” (“Mosque of St. Sophia”). Undoubtedly, the preservation of its Christian memory *inside* the new Muslim name was an exception to the rule. Nevertheless, the hybridity of this name shows that, though there was no real amalgamation of the two cultures, Christian and Islamic traditions in the city in certain



The 18th century engraving is entitled “Ancient Church of Holy Apostles,” however, at the time, the famous Holy Apostles (see Florence) was the Suuk Sou Djami (“Mosque of the Cold Water”). The porch and the minaret visible in the picture are Ottoman additions, and were removed after 1912.



Hagia Sophia Djami, in a dilapidated state, as photographed by an Austrian visitor in late 19th century.



Hagia Sophia as it is today, recently restored.

times were blended and confused. The continuous use of Byzantine buildings – even as mosques – proved to be positive for the city of Thessalonike: it maintained, after almost five centuries of Ottoman domination, a large number of buildings “from its prestigious Orthodox Christian and Greek-speaking past.”¹⁰

Byzantine temples were re-converted into Christian churches after the 1912 annexation of the city to Greece and at present day continue to be considered Thessalonike’s major monuments, though they are “often hardly visible and always surrounded by modern construction.”¹¹ Despite the fact that they have been extensively studied, the arguments made about them are still pseudo-historical. For example, one reads in a recent study that the Hagia Sophia in Thessalonike was built “with the intention to reproduce in reduced size Justinian’s homonymous church in Constantinople,”¹² although the churches belong to different types and are only remotely similar. Another example of false information is also found in the visual representation of the monuments themselves. There is a photograph of the 14th century little church of the Savior included in the cited article by Nikonanos, from which the surrounding buildings have been cropped out. In the picture, the tilting dome of the tiny church has a white, blank background (!) instead of being encircled by balconies of the adjacent houses, as it actually is. The contrast between this photograph and the actual site is striking; the reality is deliberately effaced and the “glorious past” is presented as the only visible part of the city, quite like in the case of the archaeological site of the Palace (see *Rome*).

Such visual manipulations are indicative of the tendency to obliterate the juxtaposition between Byzantine and contemporary architecture in the city’s physicality; however, such a perception of history is erroneous: it is precisely this counterpoint that constitutes what the city is today. It is through the discrepancy in aesthetic terms between the two cultural products, separated chronologically by centuries, that the past of the city coexists with its present. What is still being negated in physical terms has considerably been consummated in the abstract, that is, in the making of the Byzantine identity of Thessalonike, which has been used politically throughout the

century. As Diehl notes, for Greece, “the capital, Constantinople, is perhaps irreversibly lost, although Greeks have not forgotten the famous legend that foretells the day when, in liberated St. Sophia, a Greek priest will complete the celebration of the Mass so tragically interrupted by the Turks in 1453.”¹³ The violent struggle for Thessalonike in early 20th century and its successful ending for the Greek State (see *Sofia*) elevated the city to the status of a new Byzantine capital; at present day, “if Athens is the city of monuments of classical Antiquity, Salonica is that of Early Christian art and of Orthodoxy.”¹⁴ Significantly, the projection of the city as Byzantine lay at the center of the political project to build its modern, Greek Orthodox identity and will continue to be used politically, especially after the recent development in the Balkans (see *Kiev*).

1 “The splendor of the city is the unbroken and unique presence of glorious Byzantine monuments from the 4th to the 20th century which render Thessalonike the most complete and lively museum of Byzantine and post-Byzantine art in the Christian world.” See Christos Zapheires, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athens, Exantas, 1997), p. 13.

2 Nikos Nikonanos, “Topography and Art in Early Christian and Byzantine Thessalonike,” in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization* / ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 2, p. 32.

3 See for example, I. K. Chasiotes, “The first after the First,” in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 12-58.

4 Charles Diehl, *Byzantium: greatness and decline* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), p. 300.

5 Peter Mackridge and Eleni Yannakakis, *Ourselves and others: the development of a Greek Macedonian cultural identity since 1912* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), p. 15.

6 E. Bradford, *Mediterranean: portrait of a sea* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), p. 422.

7 “The city thrives, despite of the wars in its surroundings and the successive Slav and Bulgarian raids. Its population topped the 100,000 mark in mid 12th century.” See Albertos Nar, “Communal organization and activity of the Jewish Community of Thessalonike,” in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, Ibid., vol. 1, p. 270.

8 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the mediterranean world in the age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972-73), p. 657.

9 “Among the first transformed into mosques, were the church of Acheiropoietos [see *Istanbul*], which became Eski Mosque and the basilica of St. Demetrius [see *Kiev*], renamed to Kasimie mosque.” See Apostolos Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 85.

H. Brandeburg, «Byzantische und frühchristliche Skulptur in Thessaloniki», *Byzanz und ihre Kunst*, 1979, S. 1. *Βυζαντινή Σχολαστική*, 1979, 430-1981. - *1918 del Vaticano - Θεσσαλονίκη* 1984, σ. 296-317.

R. S. Crossick, «The Mosaic Decoration of St. Demetrios, Thessaloniki: A Re-Examination in the Light of the Drawing of St. S. George», *BZ*, 54, 64 (1968), σ. 17-51.

R. S. Crossick, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Principles and Methods in Thessaloniki* (29. 01.) *Συμπόσιο* 1968.

R. S. Crossick, «The Apse Mosaic of Santa Sophia at Thessaloniki», *ΕΣΑΚ*, σ. 6, 19 (1960-61), σ. 311-335.

Th. Gouma-Peterson, «The Parastyle of St. Euthymios in Thessaloniki: Art and Monastic Policy under Justinian's Son», *Art Bulletin*, 56 (1974), σ. 598-602.

S. Kozma, «L'art de Salonique de depuis du XIIIème siècle», *Notes et Mémoires de l'Institut de la Ville de Paris*, 1978, σ. 19-20.

M. Papanicolaou - A. Grabar, «Un édifice byzantin

byzantinien récemment découvert près de Thessalonique», *CA*, 24 (1972), σ. 33-46.

K. Papanicolaou, *Die Wandmalereien des 11. Jahrhunderts in der Kirche «Eusebios» von Kallistopolis in Thessalonie*, *Graz*, 1968.

St. Pichkanidze, «Die Malerei der Konstantinischer Zeit», *Abhandlungen des 12. Internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie* (Tome 5-11 Sept. 1963), *Città del Vaticano - Berlin* 1969, σ. 215-235.

St. Pichkanidze, «Beziehungen zu den Altarmalereien der Hagia Sophia zu Thessaloniki und die Frage der Datierung der Plastiken», *Byzantion*, 5 (1973), σ. 81-84.

St. Pichkanidze, *Гръцкият палеохристиянизъм и неговото отношение към Салоники*, *Салоники*, *Издания на Аристотелския Университет*, 1963.

Chr. Stangor, *Die Mosaiken und Fresken der Apsidenkirche zu Thessaloniki*, *Wienerische Anzeiger*, 1966.

J. M. Spathes, *Thessalonique et ses monuments de 527 au 1197*, *Centre de Recherches de l'Institut de la Ville de Paris*, 1968.

A. Stylianopoulos, *Thessalonique et le premier concile oecuménique*, *Athènes*, 1955.



Ο ναός του Σωτήρα στην Εγνατία, που καταστράφηκε κατά την διάρκεια του σεισμού του 1978. Τα τοιχάρια είναι κρυμμένα από το σπασμένο στέγαστρο.

The church of the Savior on Egnatia Street

The late 14th century Metamorphosis of the Savior, a very small church, with a miniature four-niche plan, is distinct from its leaning central dome. In the 1978 earthquake (see *Milan*), it suffered many damages; however, significant frescos, dating from 1350 to 1370, till then covered with plaster, were disclosed on the interior of the dome. Although the church is presented in the article cited in the *City Index* as standing against a blank background (above), in reality it is literally two meters from the perimeter of the apartment buildings surrounding it.



10 Odette Varon-Vassard, "Salonique la multiculturelle" in *Qantara* 32, p. 35.

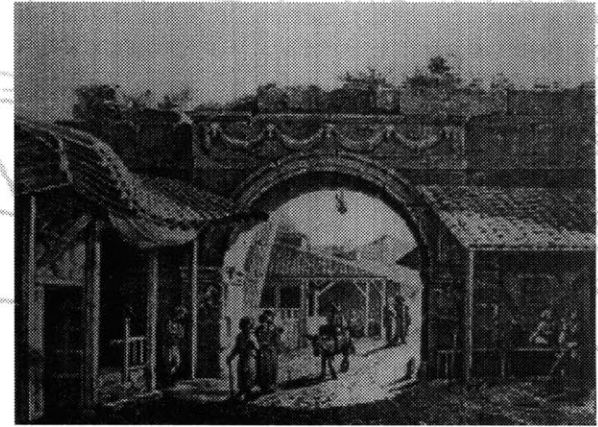
11 Ibid.

12 Ecaterini Malachtari, *City form and its transformations: the case of Thessaloniki* (SMArchS Thesis, M.I.T. Dept. of Architecture, 1984), p. 42.

13 Diehl, Ibid., p. 300.

14 Varon-Vassard, Ibid., p. 36.

city index



golden gate



In 168 BC, following the Roman conquest of Macedonia, Thessalonike gained great prominence as the seat of the Roman administrator of the region. The city was chosen not so much due to its size, but rather because of its vital geographic location at the point where two important natural roads, one from north and the other from west, meet with the Aegean Sea. The Romans also constructed a highly strategic road, Via Egnatia, which was the continuation of Via Appia. Initially the road started from Durazzo [modern Durach in Albania] and finished in River Evros, and was later on extended as far as the new capital, Constantinople. Thessalonike was undoubtedly an important station along Via Egnatia, being the first port one reached coming from the west. The western entrance of the city was marked by the monumental “Vardar” or “Golden” Gate, only known from a 1831 engraving by French architect Daumet, since it was demolished in 1874 and its building material was used for the construction of the quay. The only surviving piece is a cornerstone, now at the British Museum.

Emmanuel Voutiras, “Thessalonike under Roman Occupation” in **Tois agathois vasileoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization**, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 1, pp.102-113.

“There are probably two kinds of cities – not only in the area of the Eastern Mediterranean but in the entire world: those that began to develop incrementally, organically, around a citadel, a military camp, or a trade station; and those that were created all at once, with a founder’s decision and a town planner’s design.”¹ The city of Thessalonike belongs to the latter category: its birth is attributed to Cassander, king of one of the five Macedonian states during the Hellenistic age. Until then, all major cities in Macedonia (including the capital, Pella) had been inland. Following Alexander’s glorious expeditions to the East and the expansion of the kingdom, however, the necessity for a maritime city became emergent. Thus, according to the founding mythology, “King Cassander looked for that suitable harbor that would provide a well-located position and a convenient and safe route over which the inhabitants of the interior could come down to it. With shrewd insight he turned his gaze to the inmost deep recess of the Thermaic Bay [see *Alexandria*], and conceived the plan of founding Thessalonike.”² Cassander named the city after his own wife Thessalonike, sister of Alexander the Great. This happened in the year 316 or 315 BC; thus the city held festivities to celebrate its 2300 years of continuous life in 1985.

How was ancient Thessalonike founded, or rather colonized? According to the tradition in Strabo, Cassander demolished (“after dismantling”) 26 small coastal and inland towns in the inmost part of the Thermaic Gulf and compelled the inhabitants of these towns to move en bloc to residences in the new city.³ Cassander’s choice of the site was undoubtedly based on its geographic position and topographic characteristics; perhaps the most valuable asset of the city’s is its natural harbor, at the inmost recess of the Thermaic Bay, above which the city spreads like an amphitheater on the slopes of Mount Chortiates. The harbor is not only safe from the unpredictable Aegean; it also offers one of the most breathtaking views, especially at sunset, being located opposite Mount Olympus. Thus, thanks to its exceptional position, the city developed very quickly. Its commercial importance, foreseen by Cassander and proven from the first decades of its foundation, never ceased to be the salient characteristic in Thessalonike’s history.

When the Romans conquered Macedonia in the decisive battle of Pydna in 168 BC, Thessalonike fell under Roman sovereignty, first as an autonomous district (“*regione*”) and, in 149 BC, as a Roman province; however, it kept the status of a “free city.” In actuality, the Roman conquest marked the beginning of a period of unprecedented prosperity for the city, which became the “metropolis” of Macedonia, as Strabo characterizes it. The further extension of the Roman Empire eastwards contributed greatly to its development, because Thessalonike became the most important military and commercial station on the great imperial road to the East, the Via Egnatia, the continuation of Via Appia. The road, constructed between 146 and 120 BC, connected Durazzo (modern Durach on the western coast of Albania) to the river Evros; it would be, later on, extended as far as the future capital, Constantinople. At the same time, with the Roman conquests to the North, the hinterland of Thessalonike spread in depth and her harbor gained continually even more activity, because the city was at the end of a natural route which led from the Danube to the Thermaic Bay. In this way Thessalonike formed not merely the focal point of East-West communications but also of those running North-South. From the second half of the second century she became, in fact, a great crossroads.⁴

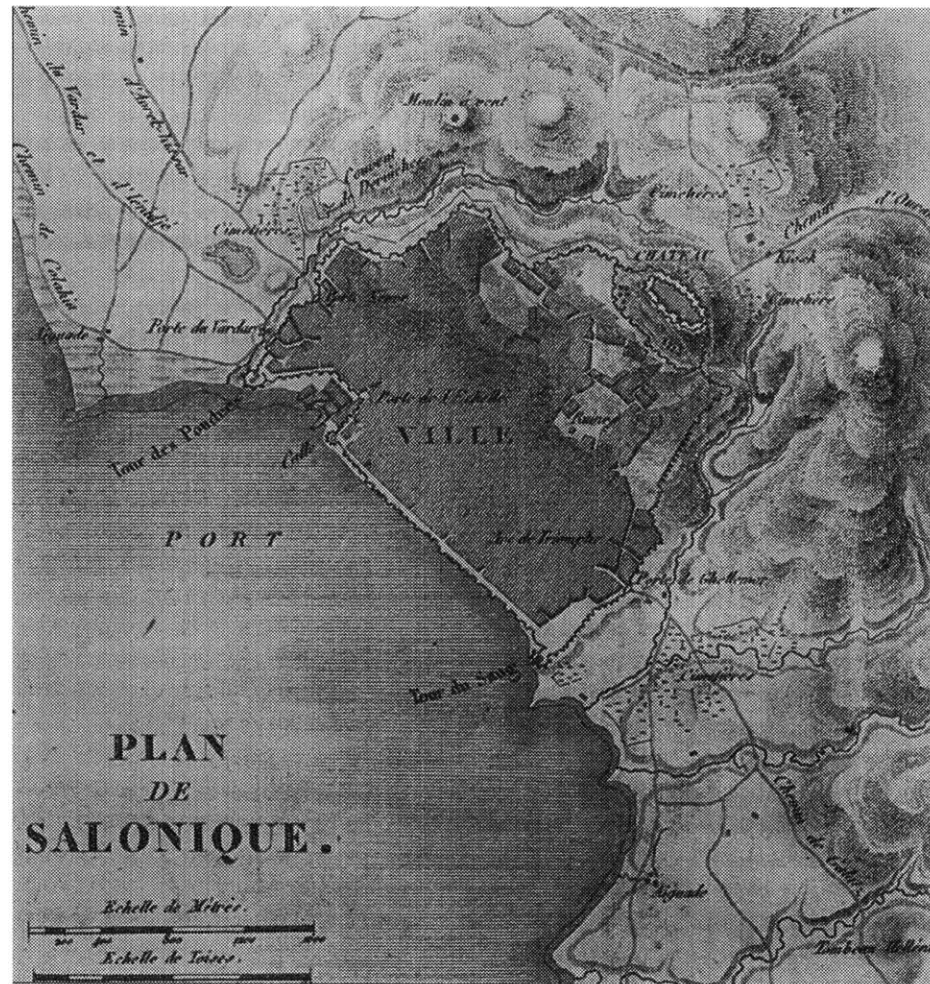
The orthogonal Roman street plan is still visible in the city’s street network; the predominance of Via Egnatia, for example, persisted throughout Byzantine and Ottoman times.⁵ The street, the main west-east corridor of the city, was called simply “*Leoforos*” (“Avenue”) by the Byzantines, later on “*To Fardy*” (“the Broad street”) in Ottoman times, and currently, it is named, once again, “Egnatia Street,” reminding of its Roman past. The other important street, parallel to Egnatia towards north, is the contemporary St. Demetrius Street (see *Kiev*). There thoroughfares together with narrower intersecting streets formed a quasi-orthogonal plan, in which the basic urban armature – the Agora, the Arch of Triumph, the Hippodrome, and in late Roman times, the Palace – fitted in. Today, along with the persistence of the street layout, the presence of the Galerian complex to the east (see *Rome*) and the excavated site of the Forum along the Aristotelous axis (see *Spalato*), provide a quite cohesive impression of how the Roman city was like.



Plan of Byzantine Thessalonike indicating Roman streets and monuments. 1: Via Regia (Egnatia Street) 2: St. Demetrius Street 3: Golden (Vardar) Gate 4: Forum 5: Arch of Galerius (Kamara) 6: Hippodrome 7: Palace

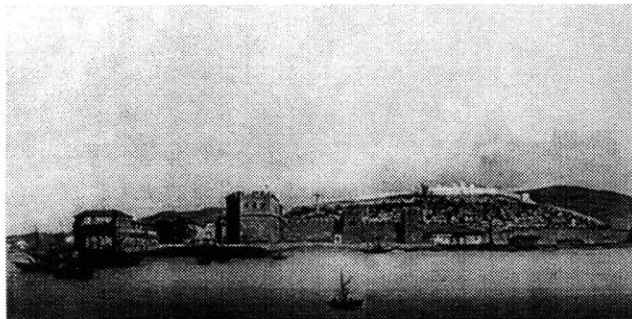
the city as refuge

Thessalonike in 1822. Drawing by French geographer Lapie. (Source: National Library of France, Department of Maps and Drawings)





Sunset at Thessalonike's port, with Mount Olympus in the background.



The seawalls in an Italian watercolor dating from 1825 (artist unknown)

Quintessential to the continuous habitation and development of the city was the existence of the walls. Not only was the city capable of resisting attacks from land and sea, but it also served as a place of refuge when northern “barbarian” tribes invaded the “tormented region” of the Balkans, which happened very often during Byzantine times (see *Florence*). The fortifications, still existing to a large extent, built at the times of Theodosius (see *Milan*), stretched about eight kilometers in length, and included a fortified acropolis on top of the hill to the north. Thessalonike, mightily fortified inside these walls, was an exception in the Balkans. Bulgarian historian Nikolai Todorov notes that Western travelers visiting Ottoman towns “were generally disappointed by the destruction or absence of fortress walls of Balkan towns. For the Western traveler, it was the fortress wall that symbolized and distinguished the city. He rarely failed to note the absence of fortress walls in Balkan settlements as the basic difference setting these cities apart from those of Western Europe. ‘There is,’ noted one traveler, ‘no fortified wall to shelter the frightened one.’ This circumstance made travelers skeptical about the status of the settlements they entered. For them, the remains of ancient or more recent ramparts were practically the only grounds on which they would accept the ‘open’ settlement as a city.”⁶ Contrary to the towns in its region, Thessalonike was always a fortified city, and it is pictured very vividly as such in the plethora of its representations (see the engraving in *Vienna*). Also characteristic is the example of an early 19th century Italian watercolor, in which the city *is* its walls.

Inside the walled city, the major thoroughfare, Via Egnatia, running from west to east, entered Thessalonike through the western gate, built by the Romans probably in the third century AD. This monumental entrance, known in Byzantine times as “Golden Gate” or “Vardar Gate,” as we read in the *City Index*, no longer survives but its site still carries the ancient name, known as Vardar Square.⁷ In Ottoman times, it was famous, and used to attract locals but mostly travelers, for its legendary taverns, music and coffee shops, as well as lodgings of all kinds. Despite the fact that “traffic needs and incompetent designers have destroyed, or rather, ridiculed”⁸ this legendary area, the square is still at present day the main gateway to the city, located at the

crossroads where northern and western routes meet. Since early 1990s, waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe, and especially Albania, following ancient routes, have arrived at the most southern point in the Balkans, in Thessalonike, and the square is once again swarmed with foreigners on an everyday basis. Always on the margins of the city, the district, in the proximity of the Central Railway Station and bus terminals, maintains its peripheral character and becomes associated as an immigrant ghetto. In the past few years, public opinion in Greece has been increasingly opposed to the presence of foreign immigrants in Greece. Overwhelmed by their fears and prejudices, Thessalonikians forget that the city has historically been a refuge for all peoples in the larger geographic region in difficult times. The site where for more than two thousands years stood the “Golden Gate,” welcoming people traveling on Egnatia Street, needs to be redesigned, preferably through an international urban design competition, as the case has been for other areas in the city, deemed more worthy of attention (see *Spalato*). The program of the competition should not emphasize the traffic arrangements – which are undoubtedly needed – but rather the ways to express physically what the site has been for the city: the meeting point of the “local” and the “alien.”

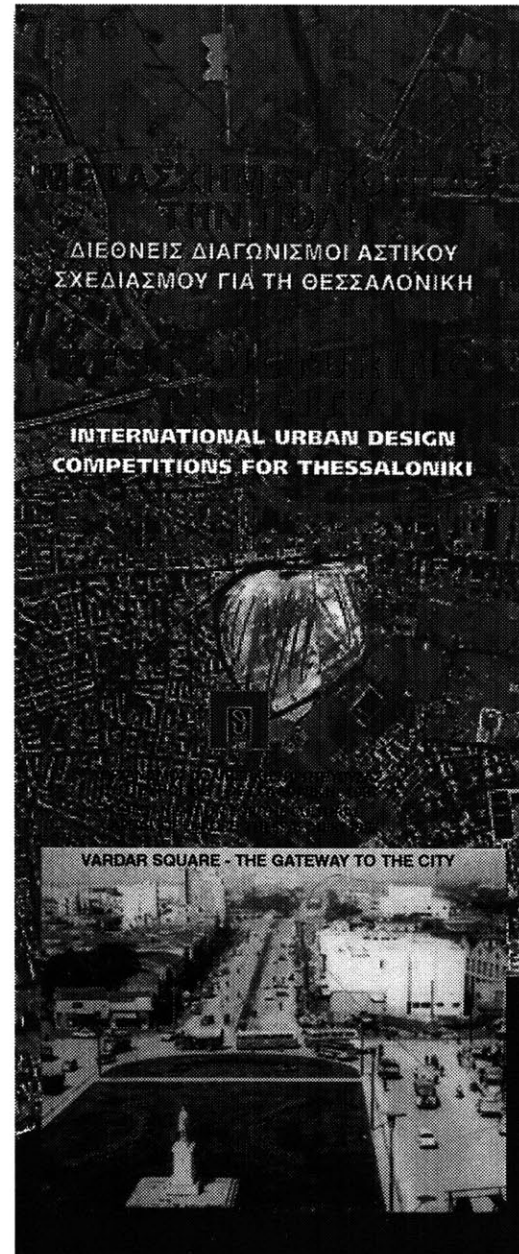
1 Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros, “We Thessalonikians,” in *Eneninta Epta* [Official journal of “Thessalonike Cultural Capital of Europe 1997” Organization] 4/1996, p. 9.

2 Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney. (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 5.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

4 “Thessalonica, the most important commercial center in Europe after Constantinople, was the necessary port of call for all trade between the Adriatic and the Bosphorus and the natural outlet for the exports of the Balkan Slavs. Each year, at the end of October, at the feast of St. Demetrius, a famous fair was held on the Vardar plain. In the wood-and-canvas town that sprang up on the river bank for those few days, Greeks, Slavs, Italians, Spaniards, ‘Celts from the Alps,’ and people from the shores of the distant ocean all came together. Booths overflowed with precious wares: fabrics from Boeotia and the Peloponnesus; produce of Egypt and Phoenicia; goods brought by sea from the West, such as fabrics and wine from Italy, embroidered carpets from Spain, and those that arrived from the Black Sea via Constantinople: salt fish, furs, wax, caviar, and even slaves.” See Charles Diehl, *Byzantium: greatness and decline* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), p. 81.

flyer for the design competition



5 “The matter should not appear at all strange to us, because people – unless there is a serious reason – have the habit of walking upon the old paths.” See *Ibid.*, p. 15.

6 Nikolai Todorov, *The Balkan City, 1400-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), p.32.

7 The name “Vardar” originates from the River Vardar that traverses the Balkans and flows into the Bay of Thessalonike. See above note 4.

8 Yiorgos Ioannou, “‘St. Vardar’ Square,” in “Genius Loci: Thessalonike in literature,” *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 2, p. 371.

city index



holy apostles



florence

The 14th century Renaissance in the Arts and Letters in Thessalonike did not last for long. The reasons were exogenous; the Venetian occupation was obviously ephemeral and the Ottoman danger was impending. Thus, when the Ottomans conquered the city in 1430, all of its important scholars – philologists, theologians, philosophers, and mathematicians – had already migrated to the West, together with other prominent Thessalonikians. The flight of the scholars reflected negatively to the cultural life of the city. In parallel, the living conditions did not cease to be difficult for the Greeks, being under the uncontrolled domination of a people of another religion, culturally inferior to the oppressed people. However, the Hellenism of Thessalonike was not completely cut off from the West. For instance, towards the end of the 15th century, Janus Lascaris came to the city to buy manuscripts on behalf of the Laurentian Library in Florence. He must also have visited the Monastery of the Holy Apostles, whose famous church was not converted into a mosque till 1520.

Haralambos Papastathis, “The cultural life in Thessalonike under Turkish occupation” in **Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization**, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 214-215.

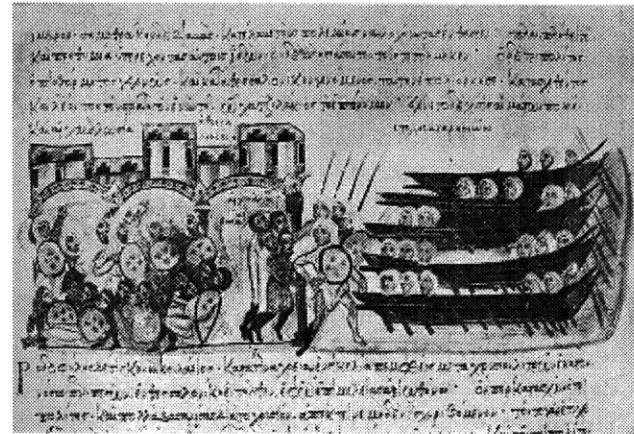
The Ottoman conquest of Thessalonike in 1430, and the subsequent five centuries of domination during which “Thessalonikians suffered under the dynastic behavior of their oppressors,”¹ was in actuality the most peaceful in the city’s entire history. For more than a thousand years, during Byzantine times, the city had been attacked from land and sea – and sometimes seized – by numerous invaders: the Goths (end of 4th century), the Avars, the Slavs (late 6th – early 7th centuries), the Bulgarians (from the end of 9th century till early 13th century), the Arab pirates (904), the Catalans (1308), the Normans (1185), the Franks (1204), and finally, the Ottomans (1387, 1391-1403, 1430).² Ioannis Kameniates, in his account of the sack by the Saracens in 904, describes how these Arab pirates plundered the city for three days and left taking with them all the youth of Thessalonike, men and women, who traveled in the congested ships, without water or food, for many days. When the ships arrived in Candia, the capital of Crete, where the pirates’ headquarters were, the slaves – the ones who had survived the trip, that is – were counted and were found to be twenty thousand people.³ From there, they were transferred to the slave markets of Africa and Near East and only about 1,000 of them returned to their homeland, among them, Kameniates himself. Reading this eyewitness account, or that of the sack by the Normans, provided by Eustathius (1185), one is struck not so much by the graphic horrifying details, but how contemporary these ancient narratives sound, in their spirit of genuine pride for the city, lament for its sufferings, but also strong belief in its rebirth. For, even after such decisive blows, the city always managed to recuperate and continue “being one of the most glorious spiritual and artistic urban centers in the Eastern Mediterranean. While all provincial centers of Byzantium were in serious decline and the intellectual tradition of Athens was nothing but a memory, Thessalonike always managed to present significant and uninterrupted cultural production.”⁴

The “miracle of Thessalonike”⁵ continued even through the harsh times of the Late Byzantine period. In what could be called a “historical paradox,” and while the city was under continuous external threats, as well as internal, social and religious, upheavals, the 13th and 14th centuries brought the “golden age” of Thessalonike.

Historians, philosophers, theologians, philologists, poets, and scholars of the law, “turned the city into a true ‘mother of orators,’ a ‘hearth of the Muses’ – as writers referred to it.”⁶ On the other hand, the Renaissance of Thessalonike was remarkably expressed in its artistic monuments – for example, the famous mosaics in the church of Holy Apostles, which are distinct in their “sophistication, monumental character, geometric organization of the composition, sense of the third dimension, and sculptural treatment of human forms.”⁷ Despite the intellectual flourish in the city, however, already by the end of the 14th century, the hinterland of Macedonia was under Ottoman rule. “The city – like a cut-off Christian island in a sea of Turkish lands – was under the eminent threat of Ottoman conquest.”⁸

While, however, the city was struggling to remain independent, Thessalonikian intellectuals, the ones responsible for its “renaissance,” adopted a passive attitude. “Even before the city was captured, some of the learned of Thessalonike, who could no longer live in those stifling surroundings, migrated to the West, where the social and intellectual environment gave them the capacity to pursue their literary work.”⁹ The flight of the intellectuals to the West is contradictory to the overall hostile relationships Byzantines had with the Latins. Since the 12th century, the grasping policy of Italian maritime cities, especially of Venice, led to a commercial and political penetration of Westerners in the Empire, mostly in Constantinople, where

The Greeks protested at the greed and insolence of these foreigners. However, Constantinople in the 12th century was full of Latins; Eustathius of Thessalonica reports that towards the end of Manuel’s reign there were no fewer than 60,000 of them in the capital. The favor shown by the Emperor drew them in multitudes to the East, and not only merchants. The army was full of soldiers from the West: Lombards, Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Germans; and Manuel even rearmed his cavalry in the Latin fashion. In administration and diplomacy, too, Latins held important positions. “Despising his little Greeks as weak and effeminate,” says William of Tyre, “Manuel entrusted affairs of importance to Latins alone, rightly relying upon their fidelity and strength.” Such blatant favoritism displeased the Greeks as much as did the arrogance and cupidity of the Italian traders. These things resulted in an increase of hostility to the exploiters: the unruly population of



Miniature depicting the sack of Thessalonike by the Saracens in 904. (Source: National Library of Madrid)

Constantinople and the clergy who swayed it felt fierce hatred for the people of the West, which sometimes broke out in wild nationalist explosions. This happened in 1182. Andronicus Comnenus had only to spread the rumor that the Latins in the capital were planning to attack the Greeks, for the citizens to besiege the Latin quarter of Constantinople. They sacked and burned and massacred both clergy and laity, women and children, and even the aged and the sick in the hospitals. In 1185, the Normans took Thessalonica in ruthless retaliation. These reciprocal acts of violence deepened the gulf between Byzantium and the West.¹⁰

Following the sack by the Normans, the 1204 conquest of Thessalonike by the Franks accentuated the feelings of animosity of its Byzantine inhabitants towards the West; an attitude that got even worse during the years of the Venetian occupation of the city (1423-1430). “The particularly bitter prejudice of the Orthodox against the Latins had its roots in resentment at Latin attempts, during the declining years of the Byzantine Empire, to blackmail the Orthodox into submission to Rome as the price for assistance in warding off the Ottoman threat. In the last days of the Empire a high official declared that he would rather see the turban of the Turk rule in Constantinople than the Latin mitre.”¹¹ Similarly, in Thessalonike, and while the city was surrounded by Ottomans, such was the despair and hostility of the inhabitants (who initially had thought that the Venetians could be their protectors), that according to oral tradition, the city fell to the Ottomans due to treason by the Greeks themselves! Thus, although the intellectuals found in the West a spiritual refuge, the majority of the population, at least at the time of the capture, thought of the Latins as enemies.

Nonetheless, after the ultimate fall of Byzantium and the imposition of Ottoman rule, “it was not merely the scholars who looked with grief upon the enslavement of Greece and who dreamed of her resurgence; also the aristocratic, upper classes looked to the Christian West for rescue.”¹² On the other hand, Byzantine intellectuals, fugitives in Italian city-states, also influenced the attitude of the West towards Byzantium, through the teaching of Greek letters. “Theodore Gazis made his way to Italy after the capture of Thessalonike and contributed to the dissemination of Greek

literature in the West, where a few years previously Manuel Chrysoloras had prepared the ground. Andronicus Callistus (d. 1486), another worthy scholar probably born in Thessalonike, also took refuge in Italy, where he successfully taught Greek. A fervent and devoted patriot, Callistus was one of the very few Greek scholars abroad who attempted by word and deed to excite sympathy and attention amongst the powerful of that day and age in regard to the enslaved Greeks.”¹³

In these convoluted ways, the intellectual relations between East and West were in fact strengthened after the dissolution of the Byzantine state. Thus, also in the political sphere, the role of Byzantium, until then an enemy to Western states, was reassessed (see *Constantinople*). Diehl writes, for example, that “Byzantium was for a long time the champion of Christianity against Islam. By its stubborn resistance it smashed the Arab assault between the 8th and 11th centuries, later staving off and weakening that of the Turks. In the sphere of intellect, Byzantium defended civilization against barbarism. Within its boundaries of the Greek Empire the traditions of the ancient world were preserved and developed, and the civilization that flourished there was perhaps the most brilliant and advanced of any in the middle Ages. Byzantine was the teacher of the Slavs and Arab East. The West learned an incalculable amount from the same school, and in the 14th century the torch of the Renaissance was kindled from its flame.”¹⁴

Historians have pointed out that the intellectual life of Thessalonike was practically non-existent during the Ottoman period, although the city was prosperous and booming at that time. This failure has been emphatically attributed to “the uncontrolled domination of a people of another religion, culturally inferior to the oppressed people,”¹⁵ meaning the Ottoman rulers’ inferiority to the Greek-speaking population. Significantly, the reappearance of intellectualism would occur from early 19th century onwards, a time that coincides with the political formation of modern Greece itself. Thus, the 14th century Thessalonikian “Renaissance,” which happened at the twilight of the Byzantine Empire, is often interpreted as a precursor of the 19th century Greek resurgence. For instance, Vasiliev, a Russian historian, writes in regard to the 14th

century flourish: “In this way, Hellenism, in the hour of its political and social anguish, concentrated all its powers on showing the vitality of classical civilization and providing grounds amid this crisis for prediction of the hope of the rebirth of Greece that was to come in the 19th century.”¹⁶ Such an interpretation, however, is not void of political reverberations; on the contrary, it contributes to a sense of continuity of Hellenic civilization and abstracts the whole five centuries of Ottoman history to the level of a “sad parenthesis.”¹⁷

In the classic formulation of the “Ottoman parenthesis” in the historiography of Thessalonike, there is often a lament expressed by Greek writers: that the Turkish domination cut the links of the city with the “cultured West.” However, sources show that the remaining inhabitants, Greeks as well as Jews, who would arrive shortly after the conquest, maintained close relations with Western towns throughout the Ottoman period. In a way, one could consider the establishment of economic links between the city’s merchant class and the West as an interesting permutation of the reciprocal influence initiated by its intellectuals in the 14th century. There is, however, a basic distinction: contrary to the intellectuals, the merchant classes maintained these relations operating inside the specific system of production of the Ottoman Empire, despite the fact that they were foreign subjects, deprived of their own national governmental autonomy. In the words of Antonio Gramsci, “the productive classes (capitalist bourgeoisie and modern proletariat) can conceive the state only as the concrete form of a specific economic world.”¹⁸ Thus, in Thessalonike, until the 19th century at least, the concept of state, from the standpoint of the function of its multinational society, was actually in disjunction with that formulated by Greek intellectuals, who still resided in the West. “It is characteristic of the function of the intellectuals to present the state as an absolute,” and this will become explicit from the 19th century onwards – the *Risorgimento* in Italy is a typical example. In the context of the formation of national states in Europe, the establishment of Greece in 1830 anticipated the ultimate subversion of the cosmopolitan Thessalonike, since, upon its annexation to Greece, the dissolution of its space of production was unavoidable. Thus the abandonment of the city by its intellectuals in the 15th century is

actually the prelude to their “return” to it in the 19th century, when Hellenist scholars feed the political propaganda of the “pure” Greek state. “And whenever intellectuals seem to ‘lead,’ the concept of the state in itself reappears with all the “reactionary” retinue that usually accompanies it.”¹⁹

1 I. K. Chasiotes, “The first after the First,” in *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization* / ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), p. 27.

2 Ibid., p. 22.

3 Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), pp. 35-37.

4 Chasiotes, Ibid., pp. 24-25.

5 The case of Thessalonike and its persistent habitation, apart from its economic bases, forms part of a larger European tradition, in which urban settlements are sustained by their “numerous classes without a function in the world of production, in other words, absolutely parasitic classes,” as Gramsci points out in relation to *The so-called “mystery of Naples.”* Gramsci writes that, contrary to “the rationalization of the population” in what he terms “Americanism,” “the European tradition is characterized precisely by the existence of these classes, created by the following social elements: state administration, clergy and intellectuals, landed property, commerce. The older the history of a country, the more have these elements left, over the centuries, sedimentations of a lazy people who live on the ‘pension’ left by their ‘ancestors.’ It is extremely difficult to have statistics of these social elements because it is very hard to find the ‘category’ that could encompass them. The existence of certain forms of life provides some indications. The considerable number of large and medium-sized urban clusters without industries is one of these indications, perhaps the most important one.” See Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), vol. 1, p. 167.

6 Chasiotes, Ibid., p. 25.

7 Nikos Nikonanos, “Topography and Art in Early Christian and Byzantine Thessalonike,” in *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, Ibid., vol. 1, p. 50.

8 Chasiotes, Ibid., p. 27.

9 Vacalopoulos, Ibid., p. 81.

10 Charles Diehl, *Byzantium: greatness and decline* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), pp. 200-1.

11 Richard Clogg, “The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* / Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. (New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), p. 191.

12 Vacalopoulos, Ibid., p. 82.

13 Ibid., p. 81.

14 Diehl, Ibid., p. 290.

15 Haralambos Papastathis, "The cultural life in Thessalonike under Turkish occupation" in *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, Ibid., vol. 2, p. 214.

16 A. Vasiliev, *Histoire de l'empire byzantin* / trad. du russe par P. Brodin et A. Boirguina, vols 1-2 (Paris: 1932), as quoted in Vacalopoulos, Ibid., p. 52.

17 I explore the idea of the "parenthesis" in the Introduction. See also Odette Varon-Vassard, "Salonique, la multiculturelle," in *Qantara* 32, p. 36.

18 Gramsci, Ibid., p. 229.

19 Ibid., p. 230.

city index



fountain square



The modern Fountain Square is named after the still standing marble fountain, which Sultan Abdul Hamid II “donated” to Thessalonike in the early 1880s, after the construction of the new avenue that was named, in honor to His Majesty, “Boulevard Hamidie” (now National Defense Avenue). Along this tree-lined avenue, which followed the trace of the demolished eastern city wall, the Ottoman authorities pursued, with particular interest, the development of a new neighborhood, based on the decision to introduce new, westernized patterns of residential architecture in Thessalonike. Indeed, the rapid development of the Hamidie neighborhood is one of the most important chapters in the history of the “modern” city. On the state-owned plots that were freed after the demolition of the wall, a series of elegant residences, which came to be known as the “sultanics,” were designed by a group of architects from Istanbul. The “sultanics” were leased to Thessalonikians and European residents of the city, and “sold like hot cakes” among the rich.

Aleka Karadimou-Yerolimpou, “Architectural and urban development of Thessalonike (19th-20th centuries),” in **Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization**, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 84-85.

Thessalonike, the “Eternal Coveted,”¹ as it is often referred to, remained for almost five centuries under Ottoman rule and the jurisdiction of the Porte in Istanbul. “The Sultan Murad Khan took Thessalonike in 883 [1430],” reads the Turkish inscription over “the eighth pillar in the northern colonnade, counting from the altar”² of the church of Acheiropoietos (see *Ankara*). According to a Turkish legend related to the capture of the city:

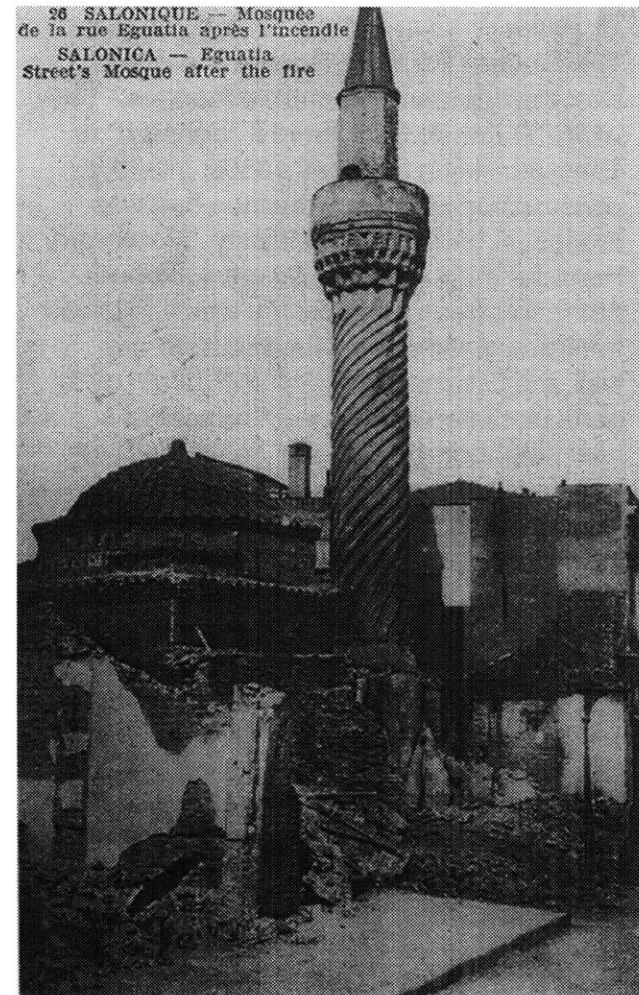
While Murad was asleep, in his palace at Yanitsa [a town in central Macedonia], God appeared to him in his dream and extended toward him a rose full of beauty and perfume. Murad was so much dazzled by its beauty that he eagerly begged God to give it to him. And God answered: “This rose, Murad, is Thessalonike. Know that you have been destined by Heaven to enjoy it. So waste no time, but go and take it.” In obedience to God’s exhortation Murad campaigned against Thessalonike and, as was destined, captured the city.³

Contrary to the beauty of the Turkish legend, the Greek stories about the fall of the city are gruesome and horrifying. Anagnostes, an eyewitness of the capture, narrates how the conquerors proceeded to “the plundering and seizing of their slaves. Men, women, and children, bound together in rows, were dragged off, out of the city, to the tents of the Turkish camp. Then, for the first time, children were separated from their parents, wives from their husbands, friends from friends, and kinsmen from their kin”⁴ – most of the people were sold as slaves in the markets of the shores of North Africa. After the killings and enslavement of its inhabitants, the city was almost deserted. With an eye to resettlement of the city and the finding of shelter for new, Turkish colonists, Murad proceeded, after two years, to the seizure of the houses of the townsfolk, present and absent. For the new settlers occupied houses and sometimes churches indiscriminately and, by their tyrannical behavior towards the old inhabitants, brought disturbances to the city. Thus, as Anagnostes writes: ‘Not merely is it the case that people who have been yearning for a while to come to our city have abandoned their desire to do so, but we too, who have come, have come to regret it, because we have been cheated of our hopes. For everything has been turned upside-down as the proverb says.’”⁵ Similarly, many centuries after Anagnostes,

Vacalopoulos, a renowned Greek historian, laments: “The Turks were by this time sovereign in real earnest. Symbols of this were the minarets, which sprang up next to the churches which had been changed into mosques, and which soared away impetuously to the heavens. From up there, the monotonous chant of the muezzin used to disturb the melancholy silence of the deserted city. Thessalonike as time went on lost her Byzantine color and was transformed into a Turkish city. She became Selanik.”⁶ Furthermore, after putting up his inscription inside the Christian church, Murad also gave orders “that a thousand pieces of marble were to be extracted from its churches and monasteries and transported to Adrianople in order to be used there to lay the floor of a bath.”⁷

In Greek historiography, the period of the Ottoman occupation, sometimes also termed as “post-Byzantine,”⁸ is often referred to as an endless martyrdom of the Christian Greek population, and in physical terms, as a chronic violation, appropriation, and distortion of “Greek” cities and towns. In actuality, historical sources provide rather confusing information about the city’s aspect up to mid 19th century; French travelers found it picturesque and attractive; other Westerners colorful but unbearably dirty; and Turkish visitors “great and powerful.” In 1820, Mullah Hairullah wrote to the Sultan, after visiting the city: “My God, what was my surprise when, after crossing through the gate of the Vardar, I found myself in the great boulevard which unites the East and West. [...] Your Majesty can be proud that Thessalonike is included amid all the vast number of cities which he possesses.”⁹ Vacalopoulos, on the other hand, stresses that “the two dreadful scourges of the city under Turkish rule were fires and epidemics.” These scourges, he notes, “were also scourges in the cities of Western Europe – but, in the main, only during the Middle Ages.”¹⁰ He also provides us with a very interesting story about how its inhabitants protected themselves from epidemics that vessels arriving at the harbor could bring with them:

The so-called “quarantining” of ships began to be applied just after the middle of the 19th century. Up till then vessels came freely into the harbor and often brought infectious epidemics and wrought great havoc amongst the inhabit



Among the 48 mosques of Thessalonike, the most famous one was the *Burmali* (“spiral-shaped”) *Djami*, with its serpentine minaret. The mosque, as shown in the photograph, suffered damages in the great conflagration of 1917 (see *Spalato*); it was demolished soon afterwards.

ants, first and foremost among the Jews, who lived principally in the districts round the market and the harbor. Because of this, the Jews took a personal interest in their own well being. As soon as they saw, far out to sea, any boat or ship of which they had suspicions being directed towards the harbor, they would all run in a group to the place where the old harbor had been filled in, climb up on top of the heap of rubbish built up by the garbage that had for whole centuries been jettisoned there, and shout out with all the power of their lungs, as though they were possessed: “Non lo vogliamo! Non lo vogliamo!” (“We don’t want it! We don’t want it!”).¹¹

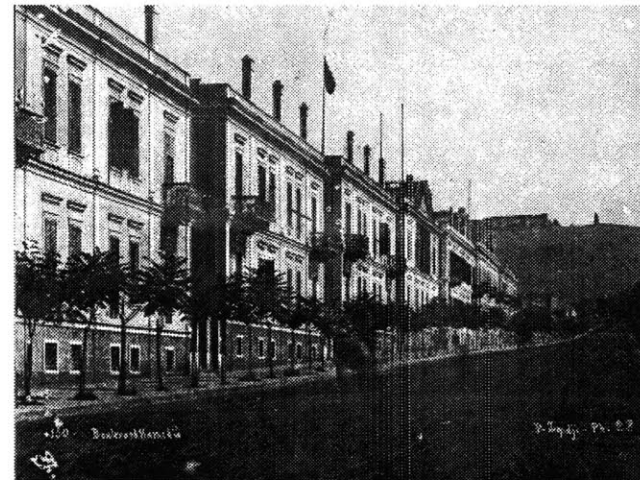
In the course of the 19th century, however, the city underwent a series of major transformations. Economic development, mainly from the astounding expansion of its maritime commerce, brought also a dramatic increase of its population, which in 1895 reached 120,000 people. At the same time, in Istanbul, Sultans reformers began to “europeanize” their state. The signing of the decrees of 1839 (Tanzimat) and 1856 (Hati Houmayun) are milestones in the history of the Empire: “The decrees, propagating equality among the subjects of the Empire, irrelevant of religion, changed fundamentally the living conditions of the subject population and had chain reactions in architecture and town planning.”¹² These reformations in a way brought the Ottoman State up-to-date with its Western counterparts. It is characteristic that for the administration of the provinces of the Empire, the Ottomans emulated the French administration system, which, in Thessalonike, led to the establishment of a municipal authority for the first time in 1869. The town also became capital of the homonymous “sancak,” an administrative entity corresponding to the French department.

After the establishment of municipal authorities, Thessalonike “rapidly became a salubrious beauty.”¹³ One of the first “accomplishments” was that “the municipal council succeeded in gaining approval to use convicts to sweep the streets. And so, every morning, the people saw in the streets whole lines of manacled convicts who went around the city holding the broom of the municipal sweepers that is still a well-known object even in our day. The first beginning had been made.”¹⁴ A major intervention in the city was, however, the decision to demolish the sea walls (see *Jiddah*) as well as a part of the eastern walls. The subsequent mapping out of

Boulevard Hamidie and the building of the “Sultan’s houses,” is the first implementation of European methods in the production and control of urban space, and at the same time, a visible political propaganda of the process of modernization of the Ottoman State. Thessalonike, the least Turkish, the least Oriental of all the major towns of the Empire,¹⁵ benefited from these political changes happening in Istanbul in conspicuous ways. The Tanzimat reforms initiated the construction, for the first time in Ottoman history, of public buildings: schools, hospitals, barracks, Customs House, and prisons. “In 1894 the ‘*Hukümet Konagi*’ (State House – see *Palermo*) was built, which cost to the Ottoman treasury over 35,000 Ottoman pounds. Like in all large cities of the empire, the Ottoman identity of the city was no longer expressed through the architecture of mosques but rather with a series of public buildings, which followed the same architectural style throughout the Empire.”¹⁶ By the end of the century, the modernization processes in Thessalonike, “though slow and fragmentary, converged, nevertheless, to a level that is considered satisfactory by the contemporaries.”¹⁷ In 1894, for example, Professor Matalon, representative of the Alliance Israelite, describes the city in a telling manner:

The Turkish neighborhood [see Ankara], on the northern side of the city, with narrow and badly-paved streets and wooden houses ready to fall down, is the only part reminiscent of the Orient. The rest of the city is not in any way different from any city of the West. Wide streets with paving and sidewalks; large multistory masonry buildings; shops with plenty and rich merchandise; all along the quay, coffee-shops, hotels and luxury residences; and also, a beautiful boulevard, Boulevard Hamidie, where all the consulates are; this is, overall, the image of Thessalonike.¹⁸

Thus, Abdul Hamid, the last Ottoman Sultan, left his seal on the city’s fabric with the construction of a new neighborhood, an avenue, and a fountain, whose name reminded of the Sultan (“*Hamidie*”). Today none of these “luxurious residences” has survived – only the fountain stands at the northern end of the street that used to be *Boulevard Hamidie*. The road is now called “*Leoforos Ethnikis Amynis*,” meaning “Avenue of National Defense.” Its old name, commemorating the Sultan, has been



View of *Boulevard Hamidie* with its famous “sultanic” residences. The houses were demolished en masse in the 1950s; of the entire neighborhood, only the Fountain, gift of the Sultan Hamid to the city, still survives. The street is now called *Ethnikis Amynis* (“National Defense Street”).

forgotten; its new name is reminiscent of the historic moment that Thessalonike became for a short period the capital of Greece, an event that coincided with the era of World War I.

Thessalonike was in fact at the epicenter of the turmoil of the First World War. Initially, “the stagnant Athenian government and the ‘secretly’ German-friendly King had kept a neutral position, but it was clear that by refusing to help the Entente, Greece was actually assisting Germany and its allies.”¹⁹ On August 30, 1916, however, there was the famous revolutionary movement of “National Defense”; in opposition to the reactionary Athenian politicians, Eleftherios Venizelos, Greece’s most influential 20th century politician, declared the formation of a revolutionary government, with Thessalonike as its capital. The Greek historian notes the internal disparate ideologies between the official capital (Athens) and the alternative one (Thessalonike): “Greece found itself with two governments which did not recognize each other. The Thessalonikian government, in its revolutionary character, also proceeded in social reformations, regarding language, education, and the agricultural land-owning system. Most importantly, we have the paradox phenomenon of a parallel presence of two political orientations: Athens maintaining the treacherous neutrality, while Thessalonike in reality fighting on the side of the Allies.”²⁰ The Allies, eager to secure Greece’s cooperation in the operations of the war, recognized Venizelos’s government, thus *de facto* accepting the “state of Thessalonike.” Once the country entered the war on the side of the Entente, “everybody’s eyes, in Greece and in whole Europe, were turned upon Thessalonike, where the outcome of World War I was actually played out. For four years the city served as the vital strategic transfer station for the Allied Forces [see *Kosovo*] and contributed greatly to their final victory.”²¹

Although local historians attribute the Allies’ victory to the National Defense movement, in essence, the meaning of the coup was that the country succumbed to external pressure to enter the war. Significantly, the landing of the Allies in Thessaloniki had preceded Venizelos’s government and the *de facto* occupation of the

city was happening against Greece's refusal and diplomatic reaction (see *London*). Only retrospectively was the coup – at that time an act of treason against the official Athenian government – proudly named “National Defense” and this happened because the Allies' victory also meant that Greece itself was thus saved from the Bulgarian danger (see *Sofia*), since Greece's greatest northern enemy was fighting the war on the side of Germany.

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- 1 Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 74.
 - 2 Ibid., pp. 74-75.
 - 3 P. Risal, *La ville convoitée, Salonique* [Thessalonike: The eternal coveted] (Paris: Perrin et cie), 1914.
 - 4 Vacalopoulos, p. 73.
 - 5 Ibid., pp. 76-77.
 - 6 Ibid., p. 77.
 - 7 Ibid., p. 76.
 - 8 See footnote 5 in *Paris* chapter.
 - 9 Vacalopoulos, Ibid., p. 106
 - 10 Ibid., 109
 - 11 Ibid.
 - 12 Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou & Evangelos Hekimoglou, “Thessalonike under Turkish Occupation; The organization of the city and the monuments” in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 64, p. 95.
 - 13 Vacalopoulos, Ibid., p. 111.
 - 14 Ibid.
 - 15 Francois Georgeon, “‘Selanik’ of the Muslims and the Donme,” in *Thessalonike 1850-1918: the “city of Jews” and the awakening of the Balkans* (Athena: Hekate, 1994), p. 120.
 - 16 Ibid.
 - 17 Alexandra Karadimou-Yerolympou, *Between East and West: Northern Greek towns at the times of Ottoman reformations* (Athena: Ekdoseis Trohalia, 1997), p. 236.
 - 18 Ibid.
 - 19 Demetrius A. Drogides, *Thessalonike 1897-1997* (Thessalonike: University Studio Press, 1996), p. 187.
 - 20 Ibid., pp. 186-187.
 - 21 See chapter “Thessaloniki as the reason for the Allies' victory in the First World War,” Ibid., p. 194.

city index



old quay



Thessalonike, as it is known, is one of the oldest cities in Europe, a region inhabited continuously for 5000 years, an urban ensemble of built and natural environment. It has been connected with the sea in an indissoluble way, from prehistoric times till today. In its urban development and in its morphology it is a city of the sea, of the water; before the walls, with the walls, and after the walls. Along its historic coastline, the water is not far, but it is a continuous ensemble with the buildings. That is how the cityscape has always been: The sea is there, on the side. However, this close relationship with the sea along the old quay, a most valuable factor for the quality of life in the city, will be lost if the plans for the filling of the old quay and the construction of the underwater artery are implemented. It is characteristic that the promoters of this project that threatens to destroy the most unique part of the city have used the case of the waterfront of Jiddah in Saudi Arabia as design prototype.

Demetres A. Phatouros, **Thessalonike: survival or great city?** (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1993), p. 103.

“In respect of the definition of boundaries, port-cities have a feature that distinguishes them from other examples: they are unique in a way that originates in their continuous and dynamic coexistence with water, the natural element par excellence.”¹ In Thessalonike, where for centuries the city was abruptly separated from the sea, encircled as it was by walls, the present close proximity between the two elements is a product of the 19th century. It was under Ottoman rule that the crucial decision to demolish the walls of the southern side, as well as part of the eastern side, changed radically the cityscape of Thessalonike.

The process of modernization of the city started simultaneously with that of the entire Ottoman Empire: with the *Tanzimat* reforms, the first of which was published in 1848.² The reforms implemented Western patterns for civic administration and regularization of urban space (see *Istanbul*), and their impact for the Empire, “the Great Patient,” was rapid and visible. The city of Thessalonike, described as a typical unplanned, chaotic, and dirty town with the swarming life of the Orient in 1849,³ became by the first decade of the 20th century “the most modern city of the Ottoman Empire.”⁴

The site of the present waterfront known as the “Old Quay” would become the locus where the modernization process was acted out most clearly; it is also significant that this project, so innovative at that time, was documented thoroughly, both in Ottoman state archives, as well as in the press of the time. In a French consular report from October 1869, we read in great detail the reasons for the demolition and the prospective benefits for the city, as outlined by the Ottoman governor, Sabri Pasha.

S. E. Sabri Pacha, governor general of the vilayet [province] of Salonica, has received recently from Constantinople the full necessary powers to demolish the walls of the city on the side of the sea and construct there a quay for disembarkation which will be circa 1,500 meters long. This operation was for long a question, for all the advantages for the commerce, the navigation, and the public hygiene. Sabri Pasha, who has already obtained for the city of Smyrna-where he was governor-a quay of this type, has made since his arrival here the necessary steps to provide to Salonica the same benefit. He has

succeeded in the end to win over the resistance of the Turkish military, which in the Ottoman Empire, like all other countries, but with less reason than anywhere else, always opposes to improvements that oblige it to concede a part of its domains. The military administration has inclined this time to a taken decision, to what seems like unanimous in the Council of Ministers and ratified by the Sultan. [...] The walls of Salonica made of stone were constructed in the Middle Ages; they are in bad condition, almost ruins, incapable of resisting some canon coups and of no utility in defense. They facilitate solely the surveillance of the customs and the employees of the city toll, and permit the officers to fall asleep during the night next to their rifles once the gates close. The gates are six in number: that of the citadel in the north end of the city, which is not open to the public; four opening to the countryside; and finally a last one from the side of the sea. This one and only gate is absolutely insufficient for the communication between the Customs and the harbor a city so active as Salonica is. It is superfluous to count the congestion that results from this. This principal inconvenience from the existence of the walls is an obstacle to the free circulation of merchandise and to the construction of a quay. Currently, in the west part of city there is hardly 500 meter long of a strip of ground, where there are situated: the Customs, the administrations of the Quarantaine, of the Port, and of the Beacons, a certain number of shops called "tanneries," a factory where wood from Mount Olympus for construction or for fire is piled up, and a bazaar selling objects for the usage of seamen. All these constructions are one above the other... the disorder and confusion that reigns in that whole part of the city, is impossible to describe having not seen it the moment of the great arrival from the interior or for the outside. In the eastern part of the littoral, in a 1,500 meters long part, the walls have their foot in the sea, and it is there, more than anywhere else, that they carry a serious danger to public health in the city, contributing to the accumulation of dirt and detritus of all kinds, forming in some seasons a continuous line of mess that cannot be dried by the sun, and which infects the air. Finally, in all their stretch, the walls intercept the circulation of air and inhibit the wind, the only that passes in the summer, to penetrate the lower part of the city. The serious inconveniences that result for Salonica from maintaining these useless fortifications, from the double point of view of hygiene and communications between the city and the sea are since a long time sufficiently recognized elsewhere. [...] Sabri Pasha expects from Smyrna the engineer who constructed the quays in that city. His plan to demolish the walls, to clear away the ground and throw to the sea all the rubble and part of the materials coming from the demolition. There will be, thus, the advantage of gaining



Photograph dating before 1907 showing the White Tower (see *Pisa*) and part of the waterfront avenue, with the horse-ridden tram passing by. The wooden cabin next to the Tower's wall was used for public bathing on the beach.

space and obtaining along the quay a greater depth of water. The constructed quay, possible with the stones that form the present wall, will follow the city in all its length and will be 15 piques (about 10 meters) wide. Sabri Pasha estimates that the empty space that will be left between the quay and the houses of the city will not be less than 110,000 square piques of surface. It is by selling these lots that he counts to reimburse the expenses from the works of demolition and construction. It is more than probable that these new grounds will be very well sold; everyone will want to build residences on the water's edge, but above all shops, which will find there their natural place. The expenses necessary for the construction of the quay are estimated approximately by our Governor General to 100,000 Turkish pounds (2,300,000 francs). The existence of the quay will present always an incontestable advantage by opening a large lane for the circulation along the water's edge, by permitting the embarking and disembarking to operate simultaneously in as many points as necessary, and finally by making place for the construction of shops, which is important to have as close as possible to the customs.⁵

The document is an important primary evidence of the historical circumstances and necessities that led to the formation of the Quay: the urgent need for expansion of the port area, the awareness of the dangers for public health, especially in the lower parts, where the Jewish quarters lay, and the prospective economic benefit from the creation of new plots, in the privileged position along the sea front. The fortunate coincidence for the city was that the governor at that time happened to be Sabri Pasha, a progressive politician from Smyrna, who had just finished the supervision of the quay in that town: the same engineer and contractor involved in the Smyrna project, were invited to work in Thessalonike. In early 1870, in a special ceremony, "Sabri himself begins the demolition of the walls, throwing the first stone to the sea, while the citizens cheer with joy and offer him as a present a silver trowel."⁶

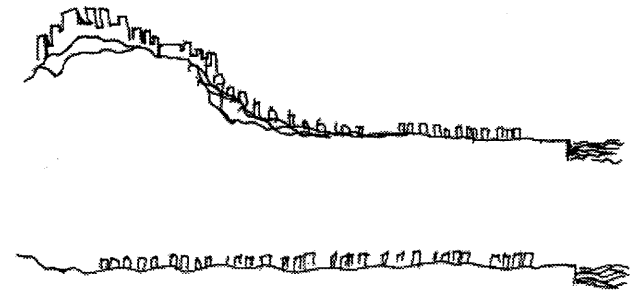


The Old Quay as it is today.

This symbolic catastrophe marked a new era for the city. The making of the quay took several years and required conscious efforts from social and ethnic groups sharing the urban space of Thessalonike. There were many reservations about the feasibility of the project, which as it is mentioned in the official report, was financed by the future owners of the prospective plots, and also delaying changes in the Ottoman administration and the original contractors. Like in all attempts of modern

ization in 19th century Thessalonike, urban transformation would happen incrementally and in parallel with the formation of a new, shared civic consciousness that replaced the pre-modern mentality of the ethnically divided society which characterized Thessalonike for centuries (see *Stuttgart*). At the end, three years later, demolition works had finished, and the paving of the new promenade with slab stones brought from Naples started in 1882.⁷ The quay, although it was used for landing of small boats up until the 1950s, was never transformed into a proper port; new docks were added westwards, far from the historic center.⁸ Stretching opposite Mount Olympus, the promenade of the Old Quay, terminating at the White Tower (see *Pisa*) soon became the new physical and symbolic face of the city, both for the travelers arriving from sea, as well as for the inhabitants themselves. A fashionable spot and at the same time the city's major urban open space, in its attractiveness, it also bespoke of the important transition the city underwent, the complex set of transformations, social, economic, and political, before this new, modern, aesthetics could be implemented.

The site of the Old Quay, so often verbally praised,⁹ would also become one of the most photographed in the city – as was the case during the First World War (see *London*) and the occupation of the city by the Entente – and function as the public space *par excellence*, where military parades, demonstrations, and famous arrivals would take place, like that of Mrs. Onassis with her private yaght in the 1950s. Apart from the dramatic change in the built fabric that flanks it, it has been left practically unplanned since late 19th century. Today, only an ordinary road separates the mass of buildings from the calm surface of the water. The urban grid, still based on the Roman plan of the ancient city (see *Durazzo*), runs parallel to the sea front; thus the north-south streets “finish in the water” and make its presence predominant everywhere in the historic center. “The passage between the urban density and the natural element is as immediate as it is imperceptible.”¹⁰ It is in this peculiar transition, “sharp yet almost absent,” that the dynamic character of the Old Quay lies. Its uniqueness becomes apparent when compared with the so-called New Quay that stretches along the eastern extension of the city, where the natural shore was filled in



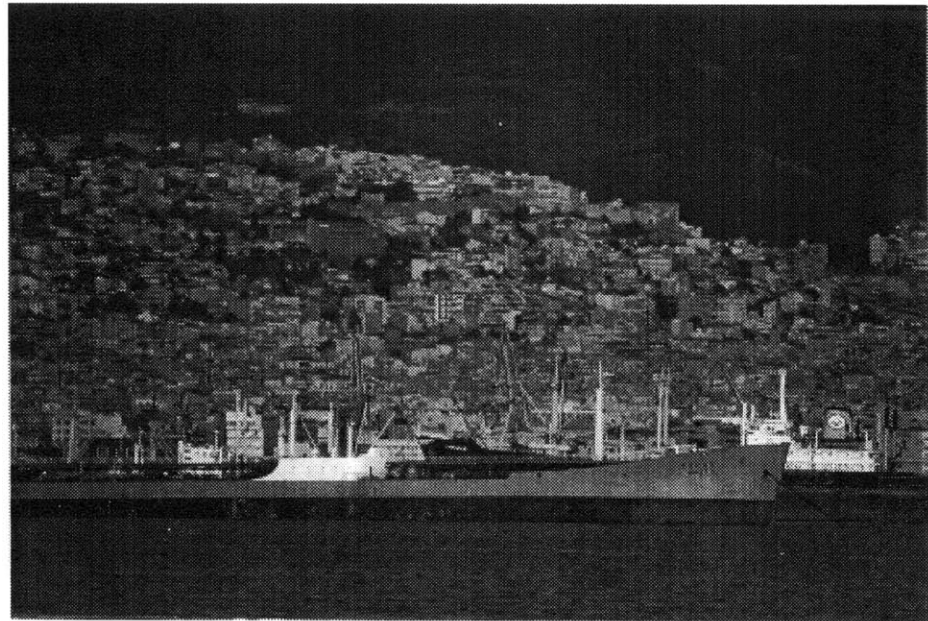
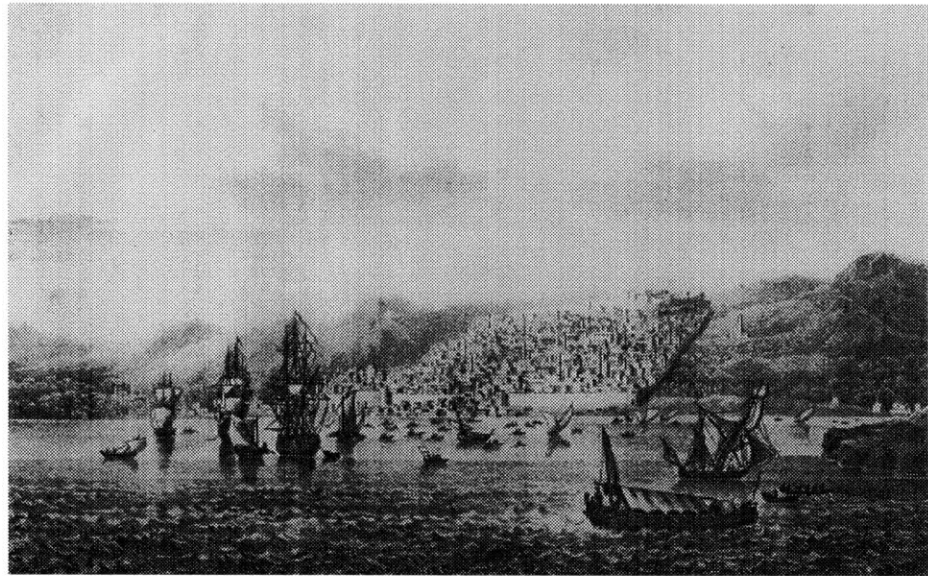
The double identity of Thessalonike: sketches by D. Phatouros

“In the case of Thessalonike, the entry of people should be made from the sea.

Which view of our city do you like most? From the sea as we approach it on a boat from afar? That is how we see it in a copperplate engraving of the 18th century, made by a foreign traveler, as he saw it from this side, as it was then, in Turkish times, with a considerable number of minarets.

Before Thessaloniki was constructed by Cassander – in the name of Alexander’s sister, the girl whose noble mother died at birth – in the inmost recess of the bay, which had a different shape, there were twenty six villages, near waters, in ancient sites. From the south, the route of Gods, there were ships coming, carrying decorated vases, whose geometric or wavy patterns the local artisans gladly copied. The sea, which attracts the living, is the romantic element. But when we see its matter, beyond theory, the “bitter-waving” is an element of pain; together with all the rivers drowns also all the tears. She is fed by shipwrecks, the episodes of history.”

Excerpts from *Metera Thessalonike* by Nikos Gabriel Pentzikes (1960).





the 1960s and modern apartment buildings are far away from the water's edge. With the exception of a gigantic hotel (see *Cannes*), built by the renowned Greek architect C. Doxiades, the area in between is recreational space, parks and athletic facilities; nonetheless, the urban experience is considerably different – as well as substantially poorer – from that of the Old Quay. It is precisely the coexistence of both types of relationship with the sea that renders Thessalonike unique in its “double identity,” as D. Phatouros discusses: “The arrangement of the new quay, 30-35 years ago, was outside the walls and corresponded to the style of extension of Thessalonike. The buildings are in a far distance from the sea and a green belt intermediates. This is a completely different category of urban landscape. The old and the new waterfront coalesce in what I call composite, double identity of Thessalonike.”¹¹

However, there have been several proposals for an intervention in the Old Quay, which would apparently transform it in the same pattern as the filling of the New Quay did. In 1992 it was announced that the waterfront area in the Old Quay was to be extended by 130 meters; an underground motor-way and car park was to be constructed; and that the land surface was to be “landscaped” and house athletic facilities. There was a unanimous immediate reaction to this proposal, not only by architects and urban historians, but also by the majority of the city's inhabitants. It is one of the few cases, perhaps, where the political rhetoric of public works and traffic improvements found no resonance at all in the public opinion. Despite the advertisement of the plan as a much needed intervention on the city's edge that would become the solution to Thessalonike's undeniably acute traffic congestion, public reaction manifests clearly that the Old Quay is experienced and perceived as the edge that separates two equally important elements: the urban fabric and the open sea. The intensity of this experience of “lack of transition” is a characteristic of everyday life in Thessalonike; “any alteration in the natural, morphological and functional elements which make up the structure of the frontage on the sea will involve a mutation in its economic and social character and, as a result, a mutation in the cultural and symbolic signals of which it is a dynamic bearer for the city.”¹²

The Old Quay and the resistance of the city's people to patterns of waterfront developments happening elsewhere is not a nostalgic clinging to a provincial past; nor is it a mere product of the peculiar topography of the site. Rather, in the context of waterfront projects around the world, it presents a multitude of meanings, of which the most important is a significant transportation of roles between city and sea. It proposes that in discussing and designing a project on the edge, the sea is the other space, making a powerful penetration into artificial space. The rejection of the project for the filling and for the creation of new "surface space" for the congested city is based on a consciousness of presence of the "other surface," the surface of the water – "a surface which is not empty but the receptacle of multiple activities connected with it."¹³

1 Morfo Papanikolaou and Rena Sakellaridou, "City, water, and edge," in *Teychos* 13, p. 97.

2 For a thorough analysis of 19th century Ottoman reforms and their impact on Greek towns, including Thessalonike, see the recent study by Alexandra Karadimou-Yerolypou, *Between East and West: Northern Greek towns at the times of Ottoman reformations* (Athena: Ekdoseis Trohalia, 1997).

3 The urban situation before the reforms is discussed in *Istanbul*. Karadimou notes that "During the decades 1820-1850, the descriptions of the urban space of Thessalonike by various writers, as well as by European consuls, convey gloomy images of poverty, devastation, oppression, and insecurity. Foreigners stress out the lack of vital urban amenities, the sordid condition of public hygiene, the bad maintenance of the built environment, and the complete absence of street network proper." See *Ibid.*, p. 84-85.

4 Statement by Javit Pasha, Minister of Economy of the Young Turks government, during his visit in Thessalonike in 1910, as recorded in a local newspaper. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 19.

5 This is an English translation of the official French document; the original version (in French) is included in *Ibid.*, pp. 289-291, as an appendix to the discussion of the demolition of the sea walls in Thessalonike.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

8 In other port cities in the Eastern Mediterranean, contrary to Thessalonike, the development of the industrial port took place to the expense of the historic core – the case of Naples is characteristic in that respect. It is noteworthy that at present day the city of Naples is attempting to reclaim the zone taken over by port structures. "Except from reclaiming the physical and visible connection with the sea – a relation aborted more than a hundred years ago – the ancient center of the city would acquire a wide space, partly already empty or otherwise, easily 'empty-able.' [...] The idea of the abandonment of the central port – till



now considered a simple academic hypothesis – is not unrealistic.” See Roberta Amirante et.al., “La mise à l’écart de la ville dans la relation ville-port à Naples” in *Urbanité des cités portuaires* / Thierry Baudouin et.al., eds. (Paris and Montreal: L’Harmattan, 1997), p. 361. 9 “Thessalonike’s sea front is certainly spectacular, although little has been undertaken in the past to enhance the beauty of the given location,” wrote Aldo Van Eyck. “The intensity of the confrontation between the sea and Thessalonike renders the city somehow startling,” noted Mario Botta. “Mount Olympus can be seen in the distance,” reiterates the Coop Himmeb(l)au design team. “There still exists the seaside; there still exists the changing rhythm of the sea breezes; there still exists the undefined contours. Exists Thessalonike’s bay,” says Enric Miralles. The citations are from a recent project, co-organized by the Municipality of Thessalonike and the “Organization for Thessalonike Cultural Capital of Europe 1997” (see also *Spalato*), in which eight European architects were invited to do a project on eight sites along Thessalonike’s waterfront. Their proposals were published in *Between sea and city: eight piers for Thessaloniki*, Sabine Lebesque, ed. (Rotterdam and New York: NAI Publishers, 1996).

10 Finn Geipel in *Ibid.*, p. 47.

11 Demetres A. Phatouros, *Thessalonike: survival or great city?* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1993), p. 103. Phatouros (b. 1926), a renowned Greek architect, Professor of Architecture in the Aristotle University of Thessalonike and also politician, has written extensively on the city’s identity and how the designer should incorporate its special characteristics in a project. He stresses out that the predominant characteristics of Thessalonike have been constant throughout its history: “the sea, the low mountains to the north, the parallel border to the sea, the walls, the linear development. [...] The city’s identity may be in constant change, in result of history, a product as it is of composite economic and social relationships; however, the everyday social role of these characteristics is always maintained.” See *Ibid.*, p. 211.

12 Papanikolaou, *Ibid.*, p. 97.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 100.



st. demetrius



The cult of St. Demetrius, which occupies a central position in the history of Thessalonike, can be regarded as a particular instance – and one singularly rich in historical content and dramatic overtones – of a process which I have endeavored to study for a number of years: the transmission of Byzantine civilization to the Slav peoples of Eastern Europe. In the history of Byzantium's foreign missions there is no more remarkable period than the sixties and seventies of the ninth century, when a mission led by Cyril and Methodius, planted Byzantine Christianity and civilization in the heart of central Europe. [Their] work did much to spread the cult of St. Demetrius among Slavonic peoples; his basilica in Thessalonike became the object of pilgrimage for the whole East Christian world. The Russians did not lag behind the Bulgarians and the Serbs in their veneration of Demetrius, the megalomartyr of Thessalonike. A notable bearer of this Christian name was Vsevolod III, Grand Prince of Kiev (1176-1212), who, in late 12th century, built in his capital the magnificent cathedral of St. Dimitri.

Dimitri Obolensky, "The cult of St. Demetrius in Thessalonike" in **The Byzantine inheritance of Eastern Europe** (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982), pp. 3-15. Originally presented in 1973 (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies).

The relationship between Thessalonike and the Balkans has historically been a very strong one. In geographic terms, the city occupies a natural strategic location, being the entry point to the Balkan Peninsula from the Aegean Sea (see *Alexandria*). Throughout Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine times, it was the administrative center of Macedonia, the region encompassing the southern part of the peninsula, and a most valuable military asset for the respective central powers. In the Byzantine period, due to its importance, Thessalonike suffered repetitive attacks by peoples from the north – the "barbarians," as the locals would call them (see *Florence*). One of these tribes, the Visigoths, had managed to establish their presence in the city as mercenaries in the imperial army, and this intrusion is related to the massacre in the Hippodrome (see *Milan*). However, after the dissemination of the Christian religion to the Slavs and Russians, described by Obolensky, the city claimed another role, that of the spiritual heartland of Balkan Christianity. Once the "barbarians" were "civilized" – as Obolenski points out – they were transformed into veneration: the basilica of the city's patron, St. Demetrius, was a site of pilgrimage, and it was imitated in Tynovo, in neighboring Bulgaria, but also as far as Kiev. Obolenski stresses out that "in descriptions of the church, Slav pilgrims display almost the same open-eyed wonder and religious awe as [in those of] the sanctuaries of the Holy Land and Constantinople."¹

With the fall of the Byzantine Empire in the 15th century, all the Balkan peoples, Greeks, Slavs, Albanians, Bulgarians, and Rumanians found themselves subjects to the same rule – the Ottomans. Since the practice of the Ottoman Empire was to divide its subjects according to religion, these distinct ethnic groups were jointly categorized, from the 15th century onwards, as one "religious nation" ("*millet*"), the so-called "*Millet-i Rum*." This Ottoman definition is often translated in the historiography as "the Byzantine nation," a standard term used in Greek historiography, not surprisingly, but which is also embraced by acclaimed historians such as Charles Diehl.² One could say that under this "umbrella" term and through the almost five centuries they shared under Ottoman occupation, these different national groups, which fought each other ferociously in Byzantine times, were forced to realize they

shared many cultural characteristics – religion being only one of them. “Until the early decades of the 19th century, there was little antagonism between different ethnic groups within the Millet-i Rum, whose intelligentsia for the most part shared a common faith, a common admiration for Greek culture and whose masses remained steeped in the thought-world of what Nicolae Iorga termed ‘Byzance apres Byzance.’”³

Under the new status quo, the role of the ecclesiastical authorities, namely the Orthodox Patriarchy of Constantinople, gained utmost importance. According to an agreement made with the Porte as early as in 1460, immediately after the fall of Byzantium, the Patriarch was appointed as the leader of the Christian nation and their representative to the Ottoman government. The role of the Orthodox religion and its clergy during Ottoman times has however been interpreted in contradictory ways. For the Greek historiography, the coiling of the Balkan peoples around the Patriarchy was the crucial factor that kept the ethnic groups from becoming amalgamated with the Ottomans. Clinging to their religious beliefs, though they were under the Muslim yoke, kept the flame of hope for liberation alive. In accordance with this dominant view, Diehl writes:

In the half of Christendom that lay under the yoke of Islam the Church played an essential part; it was the holy Ark in which, with the Christian faith, the Hellenic language, tradition, and nationality were preserved. It was not the Greeks alone who benefited, but also the Serbs, Bulgars, and Rumanians, who were equally under the rule of the Orthodox Church. It is true that the Phanariot prelates had their faults; often they were tyrants, lovers of intrigue, greedy and corrupt. In spite of the too-exclusively Hellenic tendencies in their government-especially in the 17th and 18th centuries-the Orthodox Church did immense service to the Christian nations of the Balkans. It maintained for them a framework wherein they could survive, it gave them cohesion in the face of their Turkish masters, and above all it enabled them to retain the memory of their origins and the sense of nationality. For four centuries the Orthodox Church kept Christian patriotism alive in the Balkan East, and beneath its shadow the first impulse was given, in the course of the 18th century, to the great movement through which, in the dawn of the 19th c., the oppressed nations awoke and found their independence.⁴

Saint Demetrius, the patron saint

The repercussions of the cult of Saint Demetrius and the building of the basilica that housed his relic were enormous, not only for the city of Thessaloniki but for the entire Christian world.

The miracles of the Saint are depicted in a series of manuscripts from the 10th, 11th, and 12th centuries, from the Vatopedi monastery of Mount Athos. From the sacred relic of his, which reposed in a chest, was given off “an inexhaustible stream of divine perfumes,” which had therapeutic properties. The miracles worked by the Saint were numerous and remarkable: he healed, saved the inhabitants from famine, rescued prisoners, provided the means for the building of his church etc. His fame went beyond the city walls and flowed out throughout the Byzantine empire. But above all, he was the vigilant protector of Thessaloniki and her inhabitants. As Venice had Saint Mark, so too Thessaloniki had Saint Demetrius. The people of the city believed that the Saint dwelt amongst them in his magnificent church and that, as long as he stayed there, they had nothing to fear. He was the “patron saint,” (“*poliouchos*,” meaning “the beholder of the city”), the “savior of the fatherland,” the “champion” against the barbarian invasions and assaults. In critical moments for the city he intervened to protect her from any danger: from epidemics, from famine, from civil war, from enemies. As shown in one of the scenes from the manuscripts, “walking upon the sea he raised heavy seas and sank enemy fleets.”





The famous mosaic from the basilica of Saint Demetrius, depicting the saint and an angel coming out of colorful clouds, is dated from the 5th century.

However, other historians, specialists in Balkan and Ottoman studies, claim that rather than facilitating the maintenance of national identity, the Orthodox Patriarchy collaborated with the Porte in keeping the subjugated peoples from revolting against the Ottomans (see *Sofia*). The example of the 1821 Greek revolution against the Turks is used for this argument:

When hostilities broke out in 1821 it was inevitable that reprisals should be taken by the Ottoman authorities against the Patriarch, Gregory V, and against leading members of the Millet-I Rum. For they had manifestly failed their primary duty, that of ensuring the fidelity and obedience of the orthodox community to the sultan, in return for which they were granted such wide-ranging authority over Orthodox Christians in both ecclesiastical and civil matters. The Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory V was himself fully aware of the obligations, and he was executed not, as it still sometimes maintained, because of his refusal to denounce the insurgents, but despite the fact that he had denounced them. Gregory's uncompromising opposition to the revolt, however, neither saved his own life nor stood in the way of his being officially canonized in 1921, on the centenary of his death, as an "ethnomartyr."⁵

For the historiography of Thessalonike such a subversive argument would be denounced as outrageous. If the city has something to claim as being perennially present, it is its dominant role as symbol, both physical and mental, of (Balkan) Orthodox Christianity, as we read in the *City Index*. In support to this role, established in Byzantine times and persisting through the Ottoman period, its ecclesiastical monuments (see *Constantinople*) are regarded as physical evidence. When the time came, in 1912, the argument about the Byzantine character of the city offered justification for the Greeks, who were the third minority in the city after the Jews and the Muslims, to claim it as Greek, despite the fact that, in actuality, the city had been the hub of the entire Balkan Christianity, and not only of the Greek Orthodox population.

The historical moment of the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire in late 19th century brought about the complexity of this relationship, as the national states of Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria started fighting over control of the same geographic region,

Macedonia, which was still under Ottoman rule. Centuries of peaceful cohabitation came to an end. From 1893 to 1908 there was a reign of terror in the region of Thessalonike, with Greek- and Bulgarian-sponsored armed bands fighting each other. Both sides “used all available means (including murder, torture, the burning of houses, and collaboration with the Ottoman authorities) in order to achieve their goals.”⁶ Soon, however, Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians “were sinking their differences and establishing a Balkan Pact with the aim of evicting the Ottomans from Europe. The effect of this pact was the first Balkan War of 1912, when the three allies achieved their aim almost entirely: indeed, the Bulgarians almost succeeded in capturing Constantinople itself, the capital of the Ottoman Empire.”⁷

In these conflicts among the Balkan ethnic states, the city of Thessalonike, the capital of the region par excellence, was the apple of discord. Since the three allies had made no prior agreement about how to divide the conquered territories, Thessalonike became Greek by the mere fact that it was the Greek army that entered the city first, with the Bulgarians coming second with a few hours of difference. The fragile alliance among the three countries fell into pieces the year after, in 1913, when “Bulgaria and Greece turned against each other over the sharing of the spoils; Greece defeated Bulgaria in this second Balkan War.”⁸ As we read in the description of the Balkan Wars, there were “widespread atrocities committed by all sides against the civilian population. They also resulted in the wholesale destruction of villages and the expulsion of huge numbers of people from their homes, in accordance with the policy that has become known in the 1990’s as ‘ethnic cleansing.’”⁹ Under the light of the recent events in former Yugoslavia, the tactics described are unfortunately repetitive patterns in the history of the Balkans.

The altered role of Thessalonike, from being the swaying symbol of the united Balkans and the spiritual capital of the diverse ethnic groups under the Ottomans to becoming the contested field and the *casus belli* when nationalism in the Balkans broke out, is quintessential for its past, as well as for its future history. Since the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, Greece, the most westernized state in



The 1917 fire (see *Spalato*) destroyed the five-aisled Early Christian basilica and the present building is actually a reconstruction. The photograph above dates from 1919 and was taken by Fred Boissonas, who had also photographed the church before the fire, in 1913 (see picture in *City Index*).



The reconstructed church as it is today. Opposite the south facade, on Saint Demetrius Street, the headquarters of the *Organization for the Reconstruction of the Balkans* should be housed in one of the postwar office- and apartment buildings.

the region and a member of NATO and the European Union, has emerged as the leader of the Balkan countries and valuable intermediate between them and the West. Thessalonike is being promoted by the Athenian government as the “gate to the Balkans,” and in the last ten years, has received waves of immigrants from the former Communist countries, Serbia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Russia. Recently the city was succeeded in its efforts to be chosen for the headquarters of the *Organization for the Reconstruction of the Balkans* (see *Kosovo*). Since the future promises a central role for Thessalonike in the context of the Balkans, the basilica of St. Demetrius, the locus where this centrality has historically been played out, should be reconnected to current attempts for a Balkan alliance. Therefore, the Headquarters of the Organization should be located in the vicinity of the church, preferably on Saint Demetrius Street, which is a major thoroughfare of the city.¹⁰ This location would highlight the physical as well as immaterial juxtaposition of the political with the spiritual focal points in these conscious efforts to secure peace and prosperity in the tormented region of the Balkans.

1 We also find that the Grand Prince of Kiev, whose Christian name was Dimitri, “on the occasion of the erection of the church of St. Dimitri, had a relic connected with St. Demetrius, which a contemporary Russian chronicler tantalizingly describes as a ‘tomb slab,’ transported from Thessalonike to his capital. The saint’s name – Dimitri or Dmitri in Russian – has been widely popular in all sections of Russian society to the present day.” See Dimitri Obolensky, “The cult of St. Demetrius in Thessalonike” in *The Byzantine inheritance of Eastern Europe* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982), p. 15. Note that Obolenski himself is a “notable bearer” of the saint’s name...

2 “Under the Ottomans, Christians lived like foreigners; they formed what the Turkish administration called the *Roum-milletti*, the Byzantine nation, and were governed by the Ecumenical Patriarch, who was appointed by the Sultan.” Charles Diehl, *Byzantium: greatness and decline* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), p. 292.

3 Richard Clogg, “The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire; The Functioning of a Plural Society*, Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. (New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), p. 190.

4 Diehl, *Ibid.*, p. 292.

5 Clogg, *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

6 Peter Mackridge and Eleni Yannakakis, Introduction to *Ourselves and others: the development of a Greek Macedonian cultural identity since 1912* (Oxford and New York:

Berg, 1997), p. 9.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., pp. 9-10.

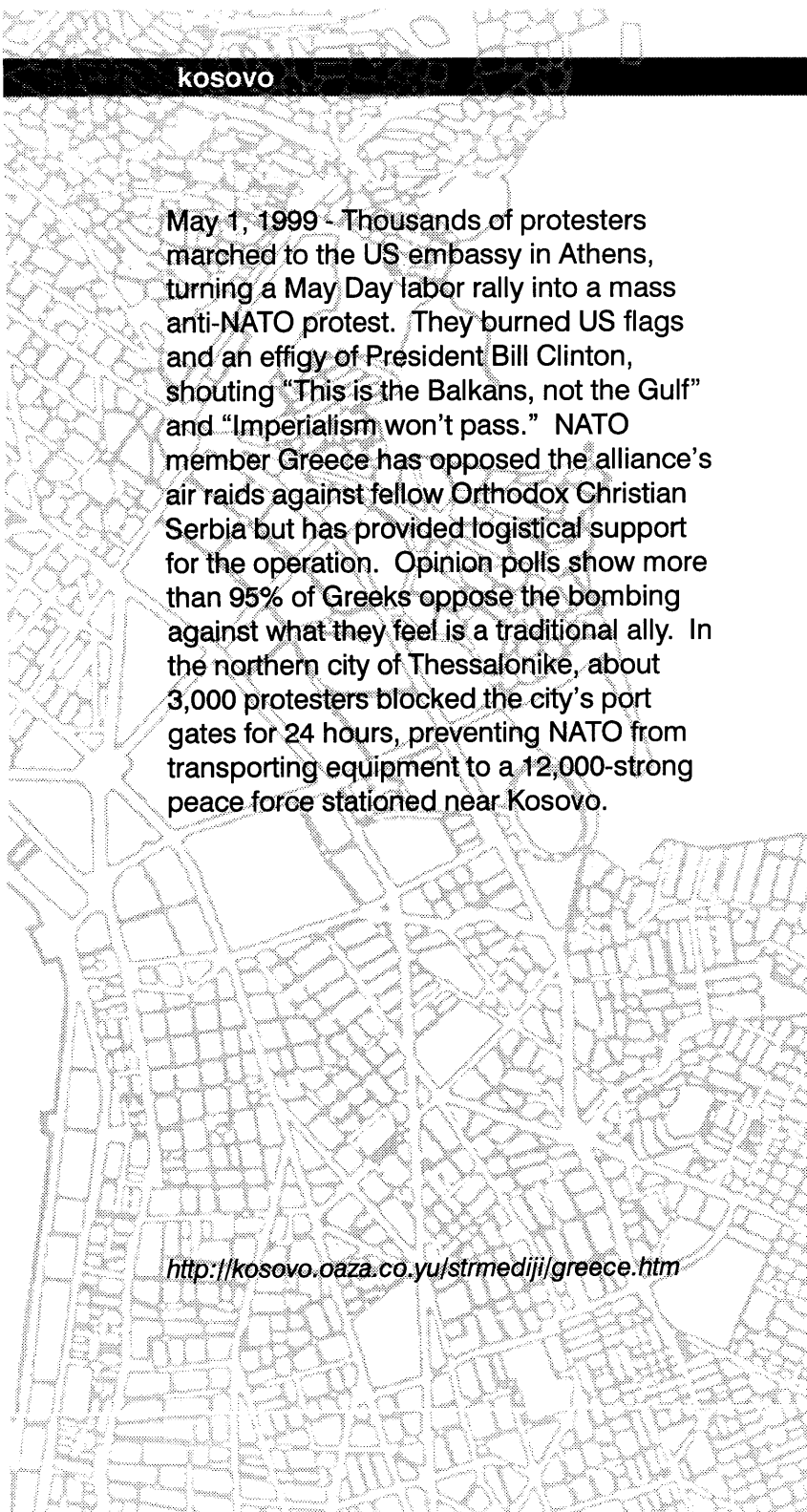
10 Interestingly enough, the next road parallel to St. Demetrius Street towards north is called Cassandrou Street, after the founder of the city, King Cassander (see *Durazzo*), while the one towards south is called Philippou Street, after the famous Macedonian King, father of Alexander the Great. Thus, the ancient Greek and the Byzantine “heroic” personalities are close and collateral in the street map of Thessalonike – quite like the respective historical periods are considered complimentary in the city’s identity.

city index



harbor docks





May 1, 1999 - Thousands of protesters marched to the US embassy in Athens, turning a May Day labor rally into a mass anti-NATO protest. They burned US flags and an effigy of President Bill Clinton, shouting "This is the Balkans, not the Gulf" and "Imperialism won't pass." NATO member Greece has opposed the alliance's air raids against fellow Orthodox Christian Serbia but has provided logistical support for the operation. Opinion polls show more than 95% of Greeks oppose the bombing against what they feel is a traditional ally. In the northern city of Thessalonike, about 3,000 protesters blocked the city's port gates for 24 hours, preventing NATO from transporting equipment to a 12,000-strong peace force stationed near Kosovo.

<http://kosovo.oaza.co.yu/strmediji/greece.htm>

During the recent crisis in Kosovo, the role Thessalonike was asked to play, by necessity, due to its proximity and strategic location, are strikingly similar to the situation of the city in the context of the First World War. In 1914 the Greek State had just come out of the Balkan wars (see *Kiev* and *Sofia*) and the city of Thessalonike had only been Greek for two years. Inside the country's politics there were two opposite sides, one in favor of the Allies, the other arguing for neutrality (the dispute led to the "National Defense Movement" – see *Istanbul*). Initially, the Greek government, though in internal conflict, was persistently reluctant to participate and eager to maintain its neutral status, although, by refusing to stand by the Allies, Greece was accused of assisting the Germans. However, the strategic significance of Thessalonike, especially for the operations of the Allied Forces in Serbia, was too great to leave the city uninvolved. Without the consent of the Greek authorities, the Allies proceeded into an actual occupation of Thessalonike, using its harbor as their transfer station. "Especially after the entry of Bulgaria in the war on the side of Germany, the importance of the city became absolutely obvious. From October 1915, warships, troop carriers and other freighters came and went in Thessalonike's harbor. The armies, with all their different names – English, French, Italian, Singhalese, Indians, and so forth – gave a picturesque, bustling life to the city. By the end of January in 1916, 125,000 Frenchmen and 100,000 Englishmen had been disembarked, without taking into account the men of the auxiliary services."¹ Upon their arrival, Thessalonike was transformed into a proper military camp. "Hundreds of makeshift warehouses, barracks, and even hospitals and airports, entire neighborhoods, were set up in the outskirts, connected with each other and with the port with a dense railway network for the use of the military bases."² The disembarkation of the Allies in Thessalonike provoked a storm of protest in Athens, but, as the historian notes, "even the passive resistance [of Greece] had the effect of enervating the armies of the Entente and of arousing their irritation against her."³

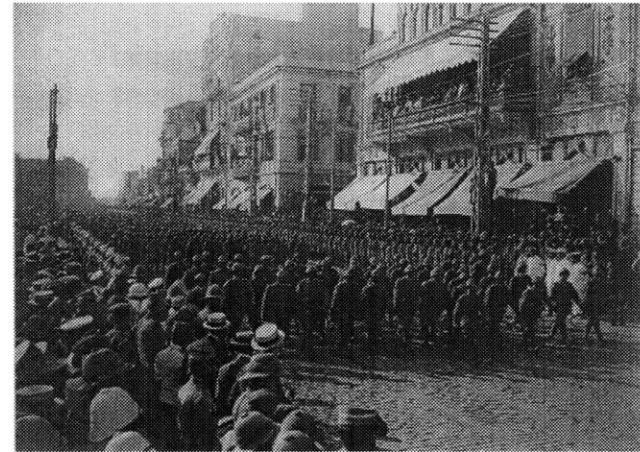
Despite the fact that the Allies in Thessalonike complained of systematic opposition to their work on the part of the Greek military authorities, the multinational armies seemed to have enjoyed their stay in the city. "Thessalonike was but a re-provision-

ing station, a hospital, and a place for rest where all who suffered, came for a few hours, in search of distraction.”⁴ These are the words of a French soldier from one of many accounts published, especially in French and in English, of the city and its peculiar character during the First World War (see *London*). Thessalonike, exuberantly cosmopolitan in that period, was an immense “place of distraction” for the armies. Militaries and correspondents swarmed the city and their presence “gave, for four years, new life to the city economy.”⁵

On the other hand, seen in the context of worldwide history, it can be said that the use of the city of Thessalonike, both as a transfer and a re-provisioning station played a crucial role for the success of the Allies and the final outcome of the war. Bradford wrote that

The expedition to Salonika involved the transport of tens of thousands of men across the sea. The Salonika campaign, which was principally undertaken with the objectives of checking German influence in the Balkans and taking some of the pressure off Serbia, lasted from 1915 to 1918. In the end, it was crowned with success – the first decisive Allied military success of the war – but against this must be laid the fact that for three years it kept a large part of the Allied forces bottled up with the chain of mountain ridges that protect the Balkans. The German remark that Salonika was their “largest internment camp” contains an element of truth. Even so, the overthrow of Germany’s ally Bulgaria in 1918 began a series of capitulations which ended with that of Germany itself on November 11 of that year.⁶

Eighty-one years later, in 1999, the Kosovo crisis would again bring Thessalonike to the epicenter of world news. Thessalonike’s port and airport were considered to be key transit points for NATO troops and equipment; till then, NATO had been using the city as an entry point for troops and equipment in a peacekeeping force based in Skopje and for refugee relief. When the bombing started, however, the Greek government refused to give permission for foreign troops to use Greek territory. On April 23, 1999, Thessalonike Mayor Vassilis Papageorgopoulos told reporters that “the bombing of Yugoslavia contravened the NATO charter and, as such, Greek support was not covered by the article.”⁷ However, merely two months later, the



French military parade on Thessalonike’s waterfront avenue in 1916.

U.S. Marines in Thessalonike

“U.S. Marines from the 26th MEU return to the *USS Kearsarge* Amphibious Ready Group.

U.S. Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit board a landing craft in Thessalonike, Greece, on July 15, 1999, for return to the *USS Kearsarge* Amphibious Ready Group off shore.

Elements of the 26th deployed into Kosovo as an enabling force for KFOR. KFOR is the NATO-led, international military force in Kosovo on the peacekeeping mission known as Operation Joint Guardian. DoD photo by Chief Warrant Officer Seth Rossman, U.S. Navy. (Released)

From a news release of the US Defense Department: <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/Jul1999/990715-N-9593R-005.html>

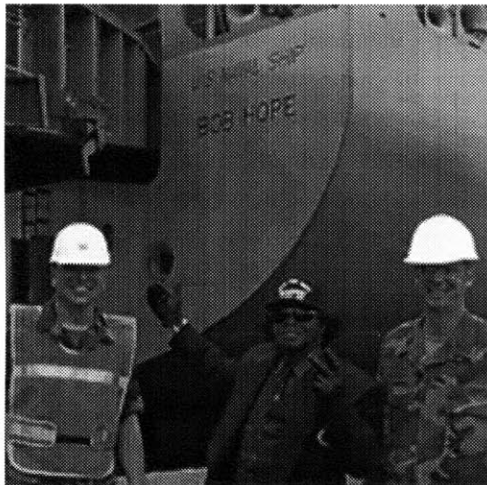


opportunity offered for Greece and for Thessalonike in particular, to emerge as a strategic factor in tranquillity in the Balkans, was seized upon as soon as peace was implemented in Kosovo. According to the official announcement of the Greek Ministry of Defense on July 14, 1999:

Greek Prime Minister will meet today the US Secretary of Defense William Cohen to discuss the Greek role in the reconstruction of Kosovo. Cohen agreed that the headquarters for rebuilding the Balkans should be located in Thessalonike. NATO has used Thessalonike to deploy peacekeeping forces into Kosovo since the bombardment of Yugoslavia ended. Cohen and Greek Minister of Defense Tsochatzopoulos visited the US marines who are back from Kosovo and are on board the “USS Kearsarge” which has sailed into the port of Thessalonike and attended a formal dinner on board a cruise ship in Thermaikos Bay.⁸

Nonetheless, the diplomatic compliance of the Greek government to American-controlled peacekeeping forces, was not accepted unanimously, by either the opposition’s political parties or the public opinion in general. As Thessalonike was flooded with multinational troops and endless convoys of trucks carrying military equipment, the majority of its people reacted with discontent. In June 1999 U.S. Marines arriving in an amphibious vehicle and disembarking on a beach near Thessalonike were welcomed by demonstrators carrying signs like “Killers Go Home.” Despite the grievances, Thessalonike has been serving as the main transfer station for months now; multinational armies, Americans included, are periodically stationed in the city, where, last summer, they “worked to the musical beat” of James Brown for a day.⁹

Thus Thessalonike has become once again a transfer station as well as “a place for rest” for foreign soldiers, quite like it was during the First World War period. Like in 1915-1918, again the foreign operations and the city itself are being photographed, only the pictures are not sold as postcards but are posted on the Web. Most importantly, the involvement of the “Great Powers” of today in the Balkan countries has opened new diplomatic possibilities for Thessalonike, which imbue short- and



“Entertainer James Brown is pictured with Col. Tom E. Thompson (left), commander of the 598th Transportation Group, and Col. Michael Coldwell, commander, 29th Support group.” (US Army Photo)

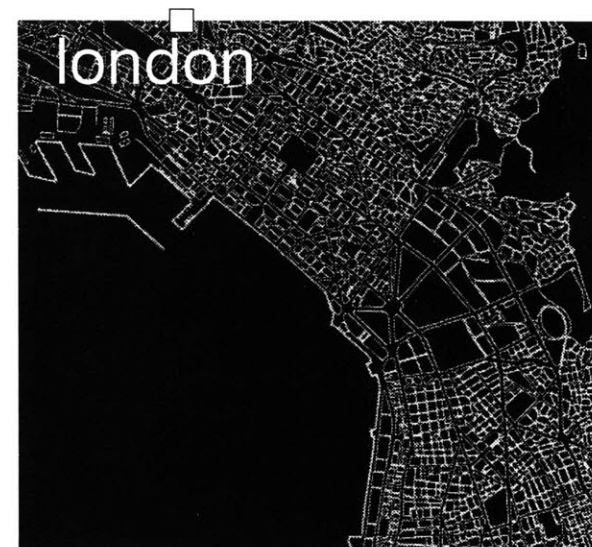
long- term benefits for the city, economic and political (see *Kiev*). The comparison between the two historical events (and also their juxtaposition to the Second World War period - see *Berlin* and *Warsaw*) manifests that the military role of the city, prevalent throughout Roman (see *Durazzo*), Byzantine (see *Florence*) and Ottoman times, has conditioned its history in the twentieth century as well. It is true that Thessalonike has to cope with the unpredictable, most often violent, repercussions of its strategic position. However, the changed attitude of the Greek government – from its rigid denial in April 1999 to its complete cooperation in June of the same year – is less puzzling and more indicative of the positive aspects of Thessalonike’s “tragic” character. The disaster in Kosovo helped to bring the city to the diplomatic front stage as the physical gateway and political nodal point of the Balkans, a role that it can claim as a historical given.

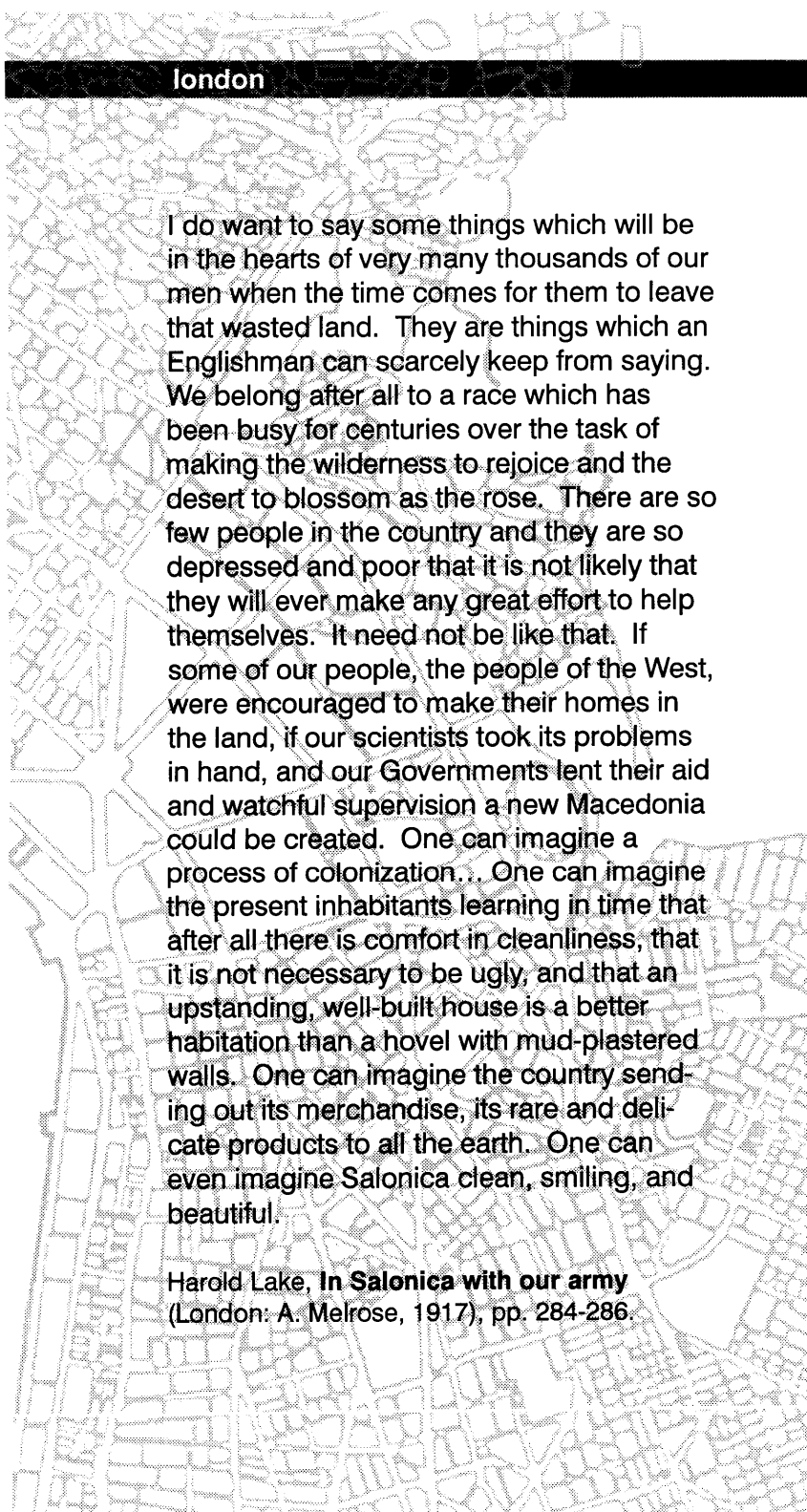
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- 1 Apostolos E Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 133.
 - 2 Christos Zapheires, *In Thessalonike: 1900-1960* (Athena: Exantas, 1994), pp. 50-51.
 - 3 Vacalopoulos, *Ibid.*
 - 4 P. Chaulaine, *Les armes reposees* (Paris, 1932), as quoted in Vassilis Kolonas, “Thessalonike during World War I,” in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 7/1983, p. 45
 - 5 Zapheires, *Ibid.*
 - 6 E.D.S. Bradford, *Mediterranean: portrait of a sea* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), p. 528.
 - 7 See <http://baileys-mtmcwww.army.mil/about/Kosovo.htm>
 - 8 See http://www.cthesis.com/politics/0799/p_14_1.html
 - 9 On June 30, 1999, “US Army troops unloading combat vehicles for Kosovo worked to the musical beat with the surprise arrival of legendary entertainer James Brown.” Brown happened to be in Thessalonike for a musical appearance. The title of the article is “James Brown Spirit, Song Galvanizes Kosovo-Bound Troops” – see <http://ustcweb.safb.af.mil/news/990630-2.html>

city index



zeitenlik cemetery





I do want to say some things which will be in the hearts of very many thousands of our men when the time comes for them to leave that wasted land. They are things which an Englishman can scarcely keep from saying. We belong after all to a race which has been busy for centuries over the task of making the wilderness to rejoice and the desert to blossom as the rose. There are so few people in the country and they are so depressed and poor that it is not likely that they will ever make any great effort to help themselves. It need not be like that. If some of our people, the people of the West, were encouraged to make their homes in the land, if our scientists took its problems in hand, and our Governments lent their aid and watchful supervision a new Macedonia could be created. One can imagine a process of colonization. . . One can imagine the present inhabitants learning in time that after all there is comfort in cleanliness, that it is not necessary to be ugly, and that an upstanding, well-built house is a better habitation than a hovel with mud-plastered walls. One can imagine the country sending out its merchandise, its rare and delicate products to all the earth. One can even imagine Salonica clean, smiling, and beautiful.

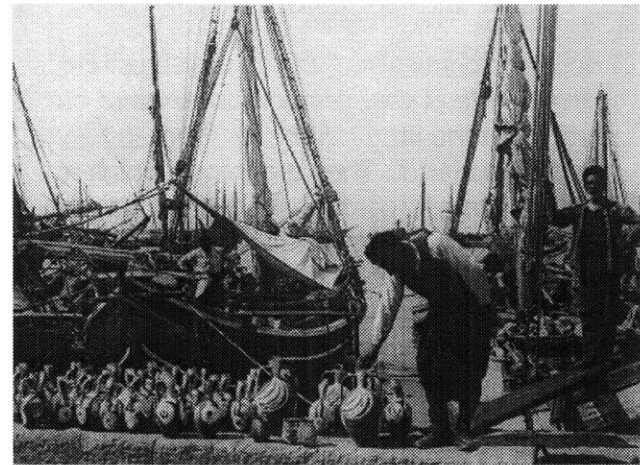
Harold Lake, *In Salonica with our army* (London: A. Melrose, 1917), pp. 284-286.

The years of the Allied Forces' occupation of Thessalonike (see *Kosovo*) coincide with one of the best-documented periods of the city's history. The visual material from these years (1915-1918), consisting of thousands of photographs, taken mainly by French photographers, which can still be found in antique shops in Paris, is invaluable evidence for the aspect of the city and its inhabitants at the time.¹ The pictures, for the most part general views from the Acropolis, or views of the city's monuments, also document "episodes," ephemeral events that happened in Thessalonike and, presumably, were impressed in people's memories. An example of this kind of photograph is the one showing a German Zeppelin aircraft that, after it was put down by the Allies, was placed as "a public spectacle" in front of the White Tower, the ubiquitous symbol of the city (see *Pisa*). There are also other pictures, of everyday-life activity in the city, of its "types" and "peculiarities," like the one that shows two "leeches dealers," quite a disconcerting reminder that the "swarming life of the Orient" characterized the city until very recently. Other photographs are documents of the "booming of the local economy due to the presence of the Allies,"² such as the one of a native (a peasant from an island in the proximity of Thessalonike) arraying ceramic jars for sale on the Old Quay – a predecessor of Greek islanders in the Aegean who have been living for decades now out of "tourist economy."

On the other hand, there is written evidence: the considerable amount of reports and memoirs of soldiers, scientific personnel, and military correspondents who fought in or witnessed the war at the Macedonian frontier. These foreigners' accounts from their lives and days in the city are very interesting in terms of evidence of how the city appeared to the eyes of outsiders. We learn, for example, that the Englishmen compared Tsimiski Street with Bond Street in London, and that the French thought the style of Venizelou Street was similar to that of Cannabiere in Marseilles.³ On the other hand, British military officer Harold Lake, cited in the Index, seems less enthusiastic about the city of Thessalonike, this "place of exile," as he calls it. It is characteristic that the only positive comments he makes about the city in the entire book, occur the coveted moment that he is escaping from it, on his return back home:

There is one view of all these towns of exile which is fit to take its place among the loveliest views in the world – the view over the stern as the departing ship bears one away. That view of Alexandria convinced me of the splendor of the sweltering town, that view of Salonica left with me a vision of enduring loveliness... Salonica from the sea has a power and glory of its own. One is away from the detestable streets and the utterly alien people. It is no longer possible to be afflicted by the abominable smells or deafened by the crash and clatter of iron across the primitive paving of the road. It lies, pierced by the tall fingers of the minarets, with trees breaking the monotony of the tall buildings with the hills rising very nobly behind it. All the unpleasant things are forgotten, and as the picture fades into the majesty of the mountains, one can even think of it kindly. And to be able to think kindly of Salonica is a great miracle. Presently, there is the glory of Olympus in the west and there comes a little rise and lift beneath the feet as the ship begins to feel the power of the open sea.⁴

Lake's condescending comments about the inhabitants of the city and its region throughout the book and his all-too-obvious belief in the superiority of his [English] race are not, nevertheless, a typical example from these memoirs. The filthy and chaotic aspect of the city does not seem to be compromising of the foreigners' fascination with its good parts – the main commercial streets, the waterfront, the rich neighborhoods, like the Castles (see *Cannes*), or the romantic promenades along the walls of the acropolis (see *Toledo*).⁵ Besides, the forced contact the city had with these foreigners, especially Western Europeans, undoubtedly influenced its inhabitants themselves, although such changes are only unconsciously expressed in the reports. A French military officer describes, for example, how, while he and his friends are sitting in a café having their afternoon aperitif, they become observers of the city's "wretchedness: the little shoe-shiners, the young girls selling newspapers, the beggars, the young men looking at the windows of the shops with hungry eyes, the Turks and the Jews hidden in their shops like spiders in their webs."⁶ Yet, and in parallel to its "wretched" natives, the city was bustling with new hotels, cafes, restaurants offering international cuisine, as well amenities completely absent before the war, like cabarets, music-halls, "which the war multiplied like mushrooms." Behind the "flourish of small trade and entertainment business," there was undoubt



French photograph taken during World War I, showing an islander arranging ceramic vases for sale along the quay. The caption reads: "*Salonique – Les Quais – Arrivage de gargoulettes (poteries).*"

edly corruption and “deterioration of morals,”⁷ perhaps not dissimilar to the situation in Naples during its occupation by the Allies in the Second World War. In *The Skin*, Curzio Malaparte’s often sarcastic account of the “plague,” which broke out “in Naples on October 1, 1943 – the very day on which the Allied armies had entered that ill-starred city as liberators,” the author poignantly notes that “perhaps it was written that the freedom of Europe must be born not of liberation but of the plague.”⁸ Scenes like the ones Malaparte portrays in his autobiographical novel, could equally have occurred in Thessalonike; “underground operations” taking place in the city have been described only by foreigners, in a manner that evokes the atmosphere of espionage films:

For the spy, Thessalonike was Paradise. If one of them had the time to create an ideal work environment, that would be in Thessalonike. Imagine a city where the languages used in everyday are Spanish, Greek, Turkish, Italian, Bulgarian, Slavic, Rumanian, and French, where each person has changed citizenship at least once in the last five years. Where the upper part of the city is a true labyrinth of almost deserted narrow alleys, where no one knows who lives on the same street because they are of different religion or they speak different languages. Even more, where there are an unknown number of subterranean rooms and passages,⁹ as it is natural for a city built on the vestiges of an ancient, opulent great city.



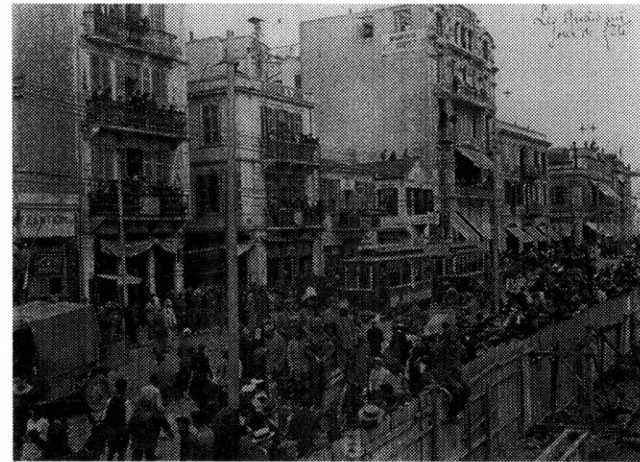
Two sellers of leeches display their “merchandise” on the street; the leeches are inside small glass bottles, so that one could see them swimming and choose. They were used for bleeding, especially at springtime, “to clear the blood,” as people said. The caption of the photograph reads: “*Guerre 1914-15-16... En Orient. Salonique – Marchands de sangsues.*”

Such accounts reinforce the argument that towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, Thessalonike was an actual “playground” for Western and Balkan countries (see *Vienna*). However, the developments of that time – the 1912 annexation to Greece and the subsequent entry of the Greek State in the First World War on the side of the Allies – were quintessential for the city’s modern history: they shaped its future and transformed it into what it is today: Greek and European.¹⁰ It is almost impossible for any contemporary visitor, or even inhabitant, of Thessalonike to imagine that the city, merely eighty-four years ago, appeared and functioned socially as it is portrayed. That “true labyrinth” of ethnicities, religions, languages, and, most importantly, conflicting aspirations and interests, underwent enormous changes in the years following the occupation of the Allies to acquire the physical and social traits it has

today. Historical coincidences, namely the two major catastrophes of the 1917 fire (see *Spalato*) and the 1922 Greek-Turkish war (see *Ankara*), helped the city's "modernization process" immensely, and quite like the Allies' occupation, proved beneficial in the long run. Despite Lake's pessimism that the inhabitants "will never make any great effort to help themselves,"¹¹ in the end, Thessalonike's rapid transformation happened without Macedonia becoming a protectorate of the Great Powers.

A postcard from 1917 shows representatives of each one of the eleven different armies of the Allies stationed in the city wishing "Christmas greetings from the Salonica Army." What has remained of the lively, colorful, and picturesque crowd of soldiers that swarmed the city's streets? In the western part of the city, "in the old zone of death,"¹² where there are many cemeteries, the map shows the site of the cemetery of the Allied Forces, known as the "*Zeitenlik*," which is located not far from Ivanov's statue (see *Warsaw*). This is the largest military cemetery in Greece, "where 20,500 of well arranged tombstones cover the sturdy youths from Yugoslavia, Italy, France, and Great Britain who were lost in the war at the Macedonian frontier."¹³ It is here that each year, on the 11th of November, the day of the ending of the First World War, representatives of these foreign countries, as well as veterans of the war, pay tribute to these soldiers. This ceremony is, according to a Greek commentator, "a confirmation of the vanity of death for the powerful of this world, who over the bodies of these dead, split Europe and drew the national borders in the map of the Balkans."¹⁴

Although the *Zeitenlik* site is venerated by the veterans, it is very much unknown to present-day inhabitants of the city, a city that is, perhaps, overwhelmed with traces of history. The absence of a Greek memorial for the Allies, rather than being lamentable, is historically quite appropriate; it a physical proof that Thessalonike has become, as Lake imagined it, "smiling, and beautiful," and has moved a great deal from its semi-colonized past identity. That little piece of earth still occupied by these soldiers, whom the war brought together in the city of Thessalonike, belongs today to the memories of *their* countries alone.



The port and the quay bustling with people and traffic in a photograph taken by the French Military Photography Service, during the period the Allies used the city as a transfer station (1915-1918).

“Greetings from the Salonica Army”

Christmas card from 1916 with a photograph of Allied troops in Thessalonike. Distinguishable from their uniforms there are: two Englishmen, a Frenchman, an Italian, a Serbian, a soldier from Montenegro, a Bosnian, an Indian, a Chinese, and an African of the British colonial army.



1 There are many publications based on private collections of postcards from the First World War. Some examples are: Elias Petropoulos, *Old Salonica* (Athens: Ekdoseis Gnosi, 1984); Christos Zappeires, *In Thessalonike: 1900-1960* (Athena: Exantas, 1994); Lampros Tsaktsiras, *In Old Thessalonike: a journey through text and image* (Thessalonike: Malliaries Paideia, 1997).

2 Christos Zappeires, *Ibid.*, p. 51.

3 Vassilis Kolonas, "Thessalonike during World War I," in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 7/1983, pp. 45-46.

4 Harold Lake, *In Salonica with our army* (London: A. Melrose, 1917), p. 244. 5 Apparently a romantic soul, one of these military men writes: "I loved to isolate myself once more in the spaces of the Upper Town and the Acropolis, in the places of venerable antiquity, where one feels far away from the boisterous agitation of Venizelou street, from the noise of trucks and military vehicles in the quay of Victory, from the pretentious society life of the White Tower." See R. Dufour de la Thuillerie, *De Salonique a Constantinople; souvenirs de la division navale d'Orient, 1916-1919* (Paris: J. de Gigord, 1921), p. 142.

6 Kolonas, *Ibid.*, p. 46.

7 "Every so often, local men approach while we sit, offering to show us the "infamous" quarters of the city. 'Hotel with girls, monsieur, come to see my sister.'" E. Chauffard, "Salonique," *revue Hebdomadaire*, Nov. 1919, XI as quoted in Kolonas, *Ibid.*

8 Curzio Malaparte is most famous for his house in Capri, the subject of a recent collection of architectural essays edited by Michael McDonough, entitled *Malaparte: A House Like Me* (Clarkson Porter Publishers, 2000). In *The Skin*, he writes: "The price of freedom is high – often higher than that of slavery. And it is not paid in gold, nor in blood, nor in the most noble sacrifices, but in cowardice, in prostitution, in treachery, and in everything that is rotten in the human soul." See Curzio Malaparte, *The Skin* / translated by David Moore (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1952), p. 30.

9 W.C. Price, *The story of the Salonica army* (London, 1918) as quoted in Kolonas, *Ibid.*, p. 51.

10 The city of Thessalonike was "Cultural Capital of Europe" for the year 1997, an alternating annual institution sponsored by the European Union.

11 Lake, *Ibid.*, p. 284.

12 Christos Zappeires, "Extra Muros," in *Thessalonikes Topiographia* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1990), p. 72.

13 Christos Zappeires, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athens: Exantas, 1997), p. 297.

14 Zappeires, "Extra Muros," *Ibid.*

city index



catholic church



In early 18th century, the French colony in Thessalonike began to take shape: a Consul, merchants, skilled workmen, and a few Jesuits – who later, in 1744, built a great new church that had ample accommodation, the Church of St. Louis. The Church separated the building where the Consulate was housed from that in which the Jesuits lived and was the nucleus of the Roman Catholic or “Frankish” quarter in the city. It is probable that the Roman Catholic neighborhood was established upon or near to the place where the Venetian colony had been of old; but this happened by a pure coincidence, because both groups were equally anxious to be situated near the city’s harbor. We should not conclude from this circumstance that the Venetian colony had a centuries-long unbroken existence. In contemporary times the Roman Catholic quarter in effect does not exist, because the Europeans, the “Franks” as people have commonly termed them, do not any longer live in this part of the city. Nowadays, the memory of the quarter is mainly preserved in the name of the road in the very center of the district, the “Road of the Franks.”

Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, **A history of Thessaloniki**, translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 96.

The multinational character of Thessalonike during Ottoman times conditioned its urban configuration as a system of socially defined enclaves. Manifested primarily in its tripartite division into Jewish, Turkish, and Greek sectors (see *Stuttgart*), this type of organization was also manifested with the traditional existence of a European quarter in the city. It was in this neighborhood, near the markets and the port, where Westerners of various origins, but mainly French and Italians, had established their indisputable presence as early as in Byzantine times. These foreigners were termed en masse “Franks” by the local people, a denomination based on their religious identity, which was Catholic. The first account of their settlement dates from the 13th century, an era of “general weakening and decline of the Byzantine State.”¹ In 1204, as it is known, the Fourth Crusade deviated from its original aim and terminated in the overthrow of the Byzantine Empire and the capture of Constantinople. As a result, “a multitude of little Frankish and Greek states sprang up from its ruins. Baldwin, the Frankish Emperor of Constantinople, ceded the city of Thessalonike to Boniface of Montferrat, who in fact became the Founder of the Frankish principality of Thessalonike (1204-1224). From the beginning of 1205 Boniface proceeded to organize his new domains and also the Catholic Church. With the objective, first and foremost, of enabling the Franks to perform their religious duties, he proceeded to seize two churches, those of St. Demetrius and St. Sophia.”² Although the Latin occupation did not last for long – twenty years later the city fell into the hands of Theodore Comnenus Ducas, ruler of the Greek Epirote state –

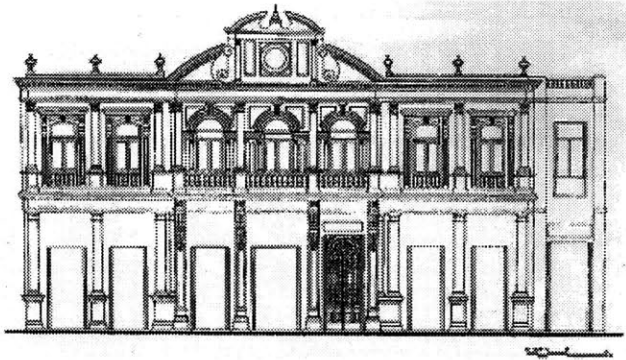
the Franks, even after they had been chased out of Constantinople (1261), did not cease to entertain pretensions to Thessalonike. Many an aristocratic ruler in the West bore the honorary styling “king of Thessalonike.” Although their attempts to recapture the city miscarried pitifully, the Frankish penetration into Greek lands was remarkable. From this period, vigorous commercial relations developed between the inhabitants of Thessalonike and the Italian merchant cities, especially Genoa and Venice. By the treaty of March 10th, 1277, the Venetians obtained the right to maintain churches and their own special quarter in Constantinople and Thessalonike. The result was that they expressed a desire to have this quarter next to the harbor, where all their mercantile business was concentrated.³

As we read in the *City Index*, the district continued to house Westerners throughout the Ottoman period. Most of them were families of merchants, but there were also missionaries, teachers, and passing visitors, who found in the neighborhood of “*Malta*” a real colony, adorned with the Catholic church, the consulates, its own marketplaces – an island of Western culture in the midst of the bustling city. The area was in close proximity to the markets and the port and thus was used by all of the city’s inhabitants, especially from mid 19th century onwards. “Ruga Street, Malta Street, Puglia Street – this area of mixed habitation does not have a linguistically unified topography; every street and square has three or four names for the respective languages of the city – Turkish, Spanish, Greek, French, and even Italian or Bulgarian.”⁴ Despite the mosaic of its users, the urban architecture of the area, though most probably built by local craftsmen, followed what seems as a generic western typology and was therefore distinguishable from the rest of the city. It is in this area that, even in early 20th century, most of the foreign buildings concentrated: “the French schools of the Lazarist Brothers and Sisters, the German Club, the Austro-Hungarian post office, offices of commercial representatives of Western manufacturers, [and] numerous financial establishments.”⁵

The Malta neighborhood was extensively destroyed in the 1917 fire and, afterwards, the Western inhabitants who remained in the city dispersed in the center and the extensions of Thessalonike, as all of its ethnic groups did. The area is no longer known as “Malta”; however, it maintains to a large extent the 19th century street system, and it is predominantly commercial, with the “Franks Street” still its spine. Aside from the numerous retail shops, the area continues to attract Western trade houses and offices of foreign representatives, as well as European bank branches. There are only two of its important buildings still standing, the Frankish church, and the “*Stoa Malakopis*,” both designed in 1902-3 by Vitaliano Poselli (see *Palermo*). The Stoa, a roofed commercial arcade, belonged to the Allatinis, a powerful Jewish family who had settled in Thessalonike from Livorno. Currently, the building, though it houses “sordid thrifty shops,” is described as one of many “small architecture treasures” hidden in Thessalonike. Its main façade, which today flanks the north



The Lazarists Monastery is located in the western part of the city, off Langada Street, on a site adjacent to the Zeitenlik cemetery (see *London*). It belonged to the Catholic monastic order of the Brothers of Mercy, founded in the 17th century; the name “Lazarists” derives from the Rue Saint-Lazare of Paris. The institution was built in 1886 for the care and education of poor students and for the education of Catholic priests. The buildings still surviving used to house the school and dormitory facilities, and are now restored and used for cultural activities (exhibitions and theater performances).



Main facade of *Stoa Malakopis* (a commercial arcade), designed by Vitaliano Poselli in 1902. The arcade belonged to the Allatini family, powerful Jewish merchants, originally from Livorno, who also owned the Allatini factory, now seat of the Prefecture of Thessalonike (see *Auschwitz*).

today flanks the north side of the “Financial Market” Square, “is influenced by Renaissance morphology”⁶ and still stands out from its generic surroundings.

Despite the fact that the name of Malta no longer defines this particular neighborhood, it continues to be present in another part of the city, in the eastern extension along the New Egnatia Street. There, “on the corner with Papafi Street, we meet the imposing building of the Papafian Orphanage, built with donations by Thessalonikian merchant and banker Ioannis Papafis (1792-1886). Papafis baptized the orphanage “*O Meliteus*” (“*The Maltese*”) so as to remind of *Meliti* (ancient name of Malta), where he lived and became renowned.”⁷ Thus, although by the name of the institution one could mistakenly attribute it to Western sponsors, it was in fact a Greek immigrant in Malta who brought back this name to Thessalonike. The building is a characteristic example of the neoclassical style the Greek community preferred for its public buildings in late 19th century (see *Palermo*).

1 Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 47.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 49.

4 Kostas Moskoph, *Thessalonike 1700-1912: cross-section of the ville-comptoir* (Athena: Stochastes, 1974), p. 19.

5 Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica; portrait of an era* (New York: Current books, inc., A. A. Wyn, 1946), pp. 103-104.

6 Christina Zarkada, “Eclecticism in Thessalonike,” in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 7/1983, p. 96.

7 Christos Zapheires, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athena: Exantas, 1997), pp. 270-272.



hippodrome



Of the two stadiums of the ancient city, one should distinguish the Hippodrome, which appears to have been used especially for horse and chariot races. This Hippodrome has been maintained till today, also keeping its original name. According to Felix Beaujour [1800] it is 130 meters long and 80 meters wide – but according to us, it is only 20 meters wide. Its elliptical shape, but this is no longer visible today, and also the old plane trees that occupied the center of the space do not exist anymore. Ancient writers [meaning, Byzantine] do not mention the Hippodrome in a consistent way. Eustathius [1185] names it as such, while Zonaras as “theater.” According to accounts of ecclesiastical writers, it was in here that seven, or, according to others, fifteen thousand Thessalonians were slaughtered on the command of Theodosius the Spanish, in the year 390 AD. Theodosius’s legionaries, after surrounding them, killed the people shooting arrows and javelins to them. After the slaughter, Theodosius repented and built, according to tradition, the orphanage of Thessalonike, which is still surviving and has become the church of Saint Nicholas of the Orphans.

M. Chatzes Ioannou, **Astygraphia Thessalonikes** (Athens: Ekdoseis Koultoura, 1978), pp. 60-61. Original edition: Thessalonike, 1880.

Although local historiography emphasizes on the Byzantine history of the city (see *Constantinople*), in actuality, Thessalonike was for centuries a stronghold of the Roman Empire, mainly due to the strategic importance of its location (see *Durazzo*). Its transformation into a Tetrarchic capital in late third century AD (see *Rome*) is still evident in the existing vestiges of the imperial paraphernalia with which the Roman administration had established its presence. On the other hand, the violent conflicts between Roman government and Christianity, before their ultimate amalgamation in the formation of the Christian Empire of Byzantium in the East, were also played out in Thessalonike. In this respect, the story of the Massacre in the Hippodrome was decisive for the city’s transition from Roman to Byzantine culture – a transition that was conditioned by but also influenced the one occurring in the entire Empire.

The Hippodrome, the main ceremonial space in Roman urban life, was the site where this conflict would be enacted in a most violent way in 390. The Massacre is commonly presented as a skirmish: “In 390, when the Gothic commander of the city guard in Thessalonike arrested and imprisoned a popular jockey on the eve of a chariot race, the people reacted by rebelling against the guard and murdering the commander. Their punishment was particularly cruel: the Emperor ordered a slaughter inside the Hippodrome, and a total of 7,000 [15,000 according to other sources] Thessalonians found tragic death.”¹

However, there were much more serious reasons that led to the Massacre. Since the middle of the third century AD, Roman emperors were alarmed due to the so-called “Gothic Invasions” that disturbed the Roman peace in the region of Macedonia. “The migrations of peoples began and waves of Goths came down to the Greek Peninsula. In their way stood Thessalonike, the nodal point of all the lines of communication in Macedonia and the starting point of the mighty roads into the interior of the Balkans and the Danube. In 253, 262, 269, repeated attacks by the Goths were beaten off, the former two from dry land, the latter from the sea.”² By mid 4th century, these invasions had stopped, but with what appears a very high price for the Empire: although Emperor Theodosius had conquered the Goths, “in order to

make them not only harmless but also useful, he accepted them as allies of the Roman State (*foederati*). From that point onwards the empire's local forces, which were responsible for the protection of the imperial territory, gradually became filled, for the most part, with warlike Germanic tribesmen,³ who often rose to the highest ranks in the Roman army.

Meanwhile, Christianity had already begun to lay roots in the Empire and in the city of Thessalonike itself – which had received the visit of Apostle Paul in 50 AD – there was a well-established Christian community. The presence of these foreign, barbaric peoples and their penetration and elevation in the social hierarchy caused active displeasure to the Greco-Roman inhabitants of Thessalonike, as it did throughout the Empire. “This displeasure had the result of causing serious complications within the Empire. But Theodosius, who saw, in associating and being friendly with the German tribes, peace and safety for the Empire, did not at all understand the dangers which could result from such a policy.”⁴ The apparent reason of the exclusion of a jockey from the races was but a mere opportunity for the inhabitants' grievances and animosity against the Goths, to be manifested. The people of Thessalonike did not merely kill Vuterichus, the Gothic commander, but, in the course of an actual riot against the Government, “masses of people who were dissatisfied for various reasons, including tax-collecting organization, turned the city upside-down. They trampled the public buildings underfoot, overthrew the authorities, and killed numerous royal magistrates amongst whom was Vuterichus and his soldiery as well.”⁵

The repercussions of Theodosius's decision to put down this revolution with a massive slaughter inside the Hippodrome were significant in terms of the struggle of Christianity to establish itself in the Empire. The Massacre not only was an anti-Christian act, reminiscent of pagan despotism, but, coming as a support for German legionaries, it was a threatening sign of reactionary attitude against the rising authority of Christianity. Thus, the response of ecclesiastical authorities was immediate; the Church was still at that time united, so this response came from the West. “The horrible vengeance taken by Theodosius became known in all the

The Slaughter at the Hippodrome

Not fully documented woodcut. 10.5 X 14 cm. A scene from the slaughter at the Hippodrome of Thessalonike in 390 AD after Theodosius the Great had trapped the crowd there by guile. G. S. Patieridis collection. (Source: *Thessalonike in the 15th - 19th century engravings*, plate 50)



countries of the Empire and seriously disturbed all the inhabitants. A fearless spokesman of their indignation was represented in Ambrosius, bishop of Milan. He severely criticized the emperor for his dreadful act and forced him to admit his guilt in public and to undergo a real penance.”⁶ The local tradition has added, to this verbal act of penance, a physical manifestation of Theodosius’s regret: the erection of an Orphanage, as we read in the *City Index*. Probably at the site of that ancient institution, the church of Saint Nicholas of the Orphans, rebuilt in the 14th century, still stands in the northeast part of the city. The Massacre was perpetuated in Western memories, too, for we find it depicted in a German engraving, dating probably from the 17th century. The actual historical past of Thessalonike and the “city of the imaginary” of the German artist appear to have merged into this representation. Serving as the stage set for the depicted drama, Thessalonike in the background is imagined and presented evocatively as a “Roman” town.

However, the future of the city, after the Empire’s division to East and West,⁷ was meant to be Byzantine; thus, at present day, the Roman period preceding it is regarded as “era of Roman occupation.”⁸ During Byzantine times, according to local tradition, the Hippodrome, haunted by such terrible memories, “was never used again.”⁹ As we read in the *City Index*, however, this is not accurate, because Byzantine writers as late as in the 12th century appear to mention it as existing in the city. Nevertheless, and quite similarly to Constantinople, Roman buildings such as the Hippodrome were, in fact, put out of use, especially towards Late Byzantine epoch. While the city was increasingly threatened by continuous attacks and economically weakened at the same time, the Byzantines did not hesitate to dismantle these, for them, useless edifices in order to reuse the building materials. As the Hippodrome was becoming derelict, for example, “pieces from the marble tiers were used for repairing the western city walls”¹⁰ in the 12th century.

Even after the Ottoman conquest of Thessalonike in 1430, the extended site of the deserted Hippodrome was never built up totally but became a square, which was practically the only open public space of the city in Ottoman times. Located at the

center of the Greek district, it maintained a slightly altered version of its name (it was called “*Prodromi*”) and “was adorned with beautiful plane trees, which travelers describe with admiration.”¹¹ However, the early 20th century photograph included in the *City Index* shows the “Ancient Hippodrome” deprived of any natural or other kind of attraction, and indeed, the citation from Ioannou provides the information that the plane trees no longer existed in 1880, the time he writes.

Curiously enough, in people’s conscience, the haunting memory of the place has persisted throughout centuries and in spite of physical transformations. It was in this square that “the neomartyr Cyril martyred in the fire in 1566, punished by the Turks for his refusal to convert to Islam.”¹² Most recently, in the 1978 earthquake that hit the city, a seven-story apartment building located in the Hippodrome Square collapsed and fifty-one people died. The infamous “building at the Hippodrome” is still remembered by the locals, since, although there were many damages overall, the inexplicable collapse was the only major catastrophe the earthquake caused in the city.

At present day, the square has been embellished by the recent erection of the building that houses the *Center of History of Thessalonike*. This is a public-sponsored research institute, which also holds a major historical archive of the city; often, in the gallery located on the ground level of the building, there are periodic exhibitions of maps and engravings related to the history of the city, which usually have a very small turnout.¹³ The fact that the building lies where “thousands of human beings appeased the ghost of Vuterichus with their blood,” a tragic past repetitively reenacted on the site, could be an inspiration for a much more imaginative exhibition. Advertised by the provocative title “Thessalonike, The Perennial Tragic,” it would use the historical evidence to present en masse the tragedies (see also *Spalato, Auschwitz, Warsaw*, etc.) that have shaped Thessalonike into what she is today. This exhibition could also travel in Greece and abroad, disseminating the city’s history.

**front of Center of History of
Thessalonike, facing Hippodrome
Square, with exhibition banners**





Interior view of the gallery space of the *Center of History of Thessalonike*.

1 Alkmini Stavridou-Zafra, "Byzantine Thessalonike," in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), volume 1, pp.115-116.

2 Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 18.

3 Ibid., p. 24.

4 Ibid., p. 25.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 26.

7 "A few years after the Massacre, in 395, Theodosius died and divided his state between his two sons. To Honorius he bequeathed the western part with Rome as capital and to Arcadius the eastern with Constantinople as capital." See Ibid. In this decisive split, which has since marked world history, Thessalonike found itself in the latter part, in what would become the Byzantine Empire, and led a life of more than a thousand years holding second place to the capital (see *Constantinople*).

8 See, for example, Emmanuel Voutiras, "Thessalonike during Roman occupation," in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 102-113.

9 Stavridou, Ibid., p. 116.

10 Ibid.

11 Christos Zapheires, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athens: Exantas, 1997), p. 72

12 Ibid.

13 The observation that very few people are interested in the Center's exhibitions is based on personal experience. Last January, when I visited the exhibition "Points in the city: Seven proposals by eight visual artists," on show in the *Center for the History of Thessalonike*, the guard was surprised to see a visitor, and in fact, I was the third person to sign the visitors' book, although the exhibition had been open for a month. The exhibition included proposals for public installations/interventions in eight nodal points in the city: White Tower (see *Pisa*), Plateia Navarinou (see *Rome*), Analipsi, State House (see *Palermo*), Acropolis (see *Toledo*), Hippodrome, Diagonios, Hagia Sophia (see *Constantinople*), Aristotelous Square (see *Spalato*), and Kamara (see *Rome*). Although the projects were perhaps too avant-garde for the average viewer, the curator notes in the exhibition catalog that "the Center for the History of Thessalonike wanted, faced with the challenges of a new century, to allow to some of the city's artists, as well as to three artists who have developed close relations with Thessalonike, to close their eyes and see the city with the characteristic peculiar vision of the artist." See Haris Savvopoulos, Introduction to *Points in the city: Seven proposals by eight visual artists*, published by the Center for the History of Thessalonike (Thessalonike, 1999).

city index



state house



In the last 20 years of Ottoman occupation, there was remarkable building activity, both public and private; schools, hospitals, churches, synagogues, and mosques, designed in eclectic, neoclassical, and westernized styles, transformed the entire appearance of the city. One of the winners in this construction orgasm was the Italian architect Vitaliano Poselli, who designed several of the most important buildings in Thessalonike during that period.

Ioannis Chasiotes, "The first after the first one" in **Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization**, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. p. 34.

In the period 1890-1912, the Ottoman government, in an effort to establish its presence in the city, builds a series of impressive public buildings: the State House (1891), the Military Headquarters, the *Idadje* (now College of Philosophy, 1888), all designed by Vitaliano Poselli. These buildings, designed in neoclassical or mainly eclectic style, are representative of the Empire's attempt to walk beside Europe.

Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou & Evangelos Hekimoglou, "Thessalonike under Turkish Occupation: The organization of the city and the monuments" in **Archaeologia kai Technes** 64, p. 96.

The late 19th century modernization process of the Ottoman Empire literally transformed the city of Thessalonike from "Ottoman" in the 1870s to "European" in the 1910s: this was manifested in urban terms with the demolition of the walls and the implementation of modern planning principles in the city's extensions (see *Istanbul*). In architectural terms, on the other hand, the "westernization" of the city was made apparent through "a turn from traditional Balkan, Byzantine, and post-Byzantine architecture to Eclecticism,"¹ to a great degree facilitated by the presence and activity of foreign architects, French, Austrian, and mainly Italian.

The Ottoman State House, which today houses the (Greek) Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, is a typical example from a series of public and private buildings designed by Sicilian architect Vitaliano Poselli (1838-1918).² After a short stay in Constantinople, Poselli came to Thessalonike in 1888 with his wife and eight children (whose names corresponded to the Italian numerical order – Primo, Secondo, Terzo, Quarto, etc.) and he resided in the city until his death. His family tomb is in the Zeitenlik cemetery (see *London*). Apart from the State House, Poselli was also the architect of the Villa Morpurgo (see *Cannes*), the now Old School of Philosophy (see *Athens*), the Catholic Church and the *Stoa Malakopis* (see *Malta*), and the *Yeni Djami* of the Dönme (see *Smyrna*).

Poselli's stay in Thessalonike coincided with a period of extraordinary prosperity during which all of the city's communities – Ottoman, Greek, Dönme, and Jewish – were involved in extensive building activity. The unprecedented economic development coincided with the Tanzimat reforms (see *Istanbul*) and the decree of unitary regulations for all Ottoman subjects independently of religion and thus gave the impetus for each minority, apart from domestic architecture, to erect its own hospitals, schools, orphanages, etc. In this new framework, influenced as the city was by contemporary European prototypes, architectural styles were selected and used in order to express the ideology of each minority. As we read in an article on "Eclecticism in Thessalonike":

The buildings of the Greek community follow the model of formal neoclassicism adopted by the official Greek State in Athens – the Papafian [see *Malta*] Orphanage is one of them. On the other hand, the architecture of the Dönme, a community of mixed culture – European, Jewish, and Muslim – is characterized by its ornamental eclectic facades, in which Renaissance and Baroque elements blend with Byzantine, Islamic and neoclassical influences. Finally, the official architecture of the Ottoman authorities follows mainly neoclassical lines: the State House (1891), the two hospitals (Hippocratic and Municipal, 1891), the contemporary School of Philosophy (1887), the Military Headquarters (1890) – all these public buildings are designed by Vitaliano Poselli.³

One has to point out that in the article there is no mention whatsoever of the architecture of the Jewish community – although one of the hospitals that the author attributes to the Ottoman authorities, was in fact “built for the Israelite community with donations by Austrian industrialist Hirsch”⁴ (see *Auschwitz*). Following the destiny of all of the “noble” buildings erected in this period (and quite independently of their original use or author), the Hirsch hospital has become Greek State property and is currently called “Hippocratic.” Nevertheless, the author of the article does point out the contribution of the Jews in this transformation of the city:

Undoubtedly, it was the Jewish minority of Thessalonike that transfused the Beaux Arts spirit in the city. Thessalonike became the center of eclecticism in Greece. The rich merchants, financiers, and industrialists, in close contact with the West, wanted to transfer its spirit to their own houses. Influenced by the European trend, which had as center the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, the late 19th century image of the city is reminiscent of the trade urban centers of Europe at the same period: Trieste, Barcelona, Marseilles, Vienna, Bucarest, and Paris.⁵

Viewed in the historical context of their era, the numerous notable eclectic facades dispersed throughout the city do not merely render Thessalonike “the center of Greek eclecticism.” Perhaps more importantly, eclecticism in Thessalonike played out a political role, being a prevalent symbol of “Europeanization” of the city, which until then was on the margins between the Ottoman and the Balkan vernacular. This became apparent in the way the new, Greek sovereign, upon the annexation of the city in 1912, embraced the eclecticism in the city’s architecture, notwithstanding its

**Turn-of-the-century eclectic
architecture in Thessalonike**

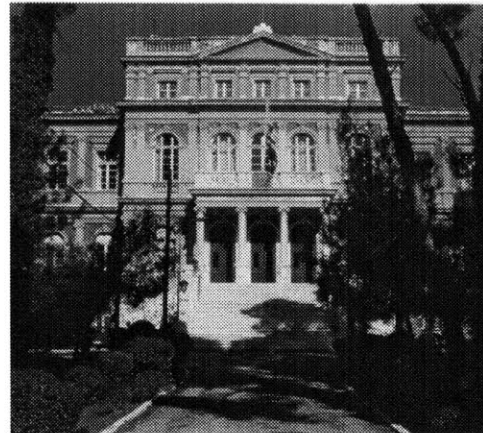
- a. "*Idadie*" Ottoman School of Administration (1888), designed by Vitaliano Poselli; now called Old School of Philosophy, it is part of the Aristotelian University campus (see *Athens*)
- b. Hirsch Hospital of the Jewish community (1891), designed by Vitaliano Poselli; now Greek state-owned hospital, named "Hippocratican." (see *Auschwitz*)
- c. Orphanage "*O Meliteus*" ("The Maltese" - 1903), designed by Xenophon Paionides (see *Malta*) for the Greek community; it is still used as an orphanage.
- d. Yeni Djami (1902), mosque of the Dönme, designed by Vitaliano Poselli (see *Palermo*). It housed the Archaeological Museum of the city and is currently used as exhibition space.



a



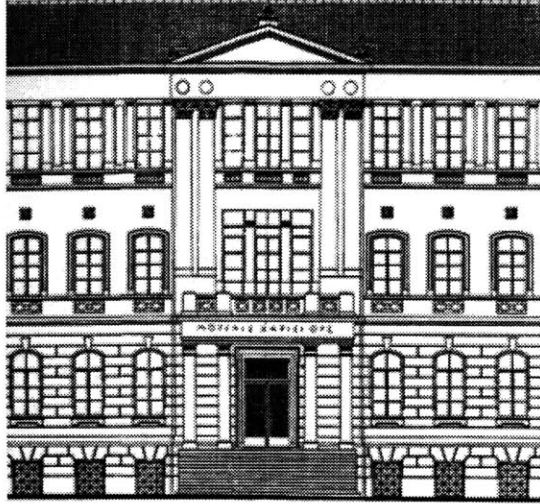
b



d



c



Idadie School of Public Administration (now Old School of Philosophy – see *Athens*), designed by Vitaliano Poselli in 1888; detail of facade elevation showing Greek inscription above the main entrance. The inscription – which was added after 1925 and probably replaced a preexisting Turkish one – means “Sacrifice, Study, for the Muses’ sake.”

connections with the Ottoman period. Similarly to the aforementioned case of the Hirsch hospital, Ottoman public buildings were transformed into Greek public buildings, in most cases maintaining the same use, administrative, educational, or military. Almost all of them works of Poselli’s, their neoclassical facades did not evoke in the least an “Ottoman” style; rather they were imitating a “Western” one and thus were deemed acceptable for the new image of the city after 1912.

These buildings continue to house public uses to the present day: the hospitals still operate as hospitals; the Ottoman State House, as mentioned, is the seat of the Minister of Macedonia and Thrace; the Ottoman Military Headquarters have become the headquarters of the Third Greek Army Division. It is characteristic that the only physical change most of them underwent was in the level of signs – for example, an inscription in ancient Greek over the main entrance of the original “*Idadie*” Ottoman School of Administration conspicuously transformed it into the [Greek] School of Philosophy of the Aristotelian University (see *Athens*). Further evidence to this interesting transmutation of meaning, is that of all the mosques in the city, the only one that the Greeks showed attention to was the *Yeni Djami*, which until the 1970s housed the Archaeological Museum (see *Smyrna*). In its eclectic ostentatious architecture, the edifice, built for the Dönme community, does not really resemble a mosque – and one is not surprised to discover that its architect was the ubiquitous Vitaliano Poselli. Eclecticism contributed essentially to the appropriation of these Ottoman buildings and their integration in the new, Greek culture. Architectural style enabled these edifices to survive despite the fact that the Hellenization of the city was to a large extent based on the effacement of its Ottoman past, namely the demolition or conscious neglect of mosques and other Islamic buildings (see *Stuttgart*).

1 Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou & Evangelos Hekimoglou, “Thessalonike under Turkish Occupation; The organization of the city and the monuments,” in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 64, p. 95.

2 See V. Kolonas and L. Papamathaiaki, “The Architect Vitaliano Poselli and his oeuvre,” in

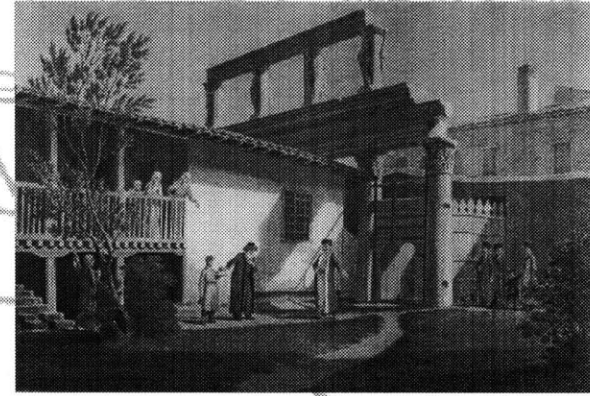
Thessalonike: 19th century (Thessalonike, 1980).

3 Christina Zarkada, "Eclecticism in Thessalonike," in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 7/1983, p. 93.

4 Christos Zappeires, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athena: Exantas, 1997), pp. 269-270.

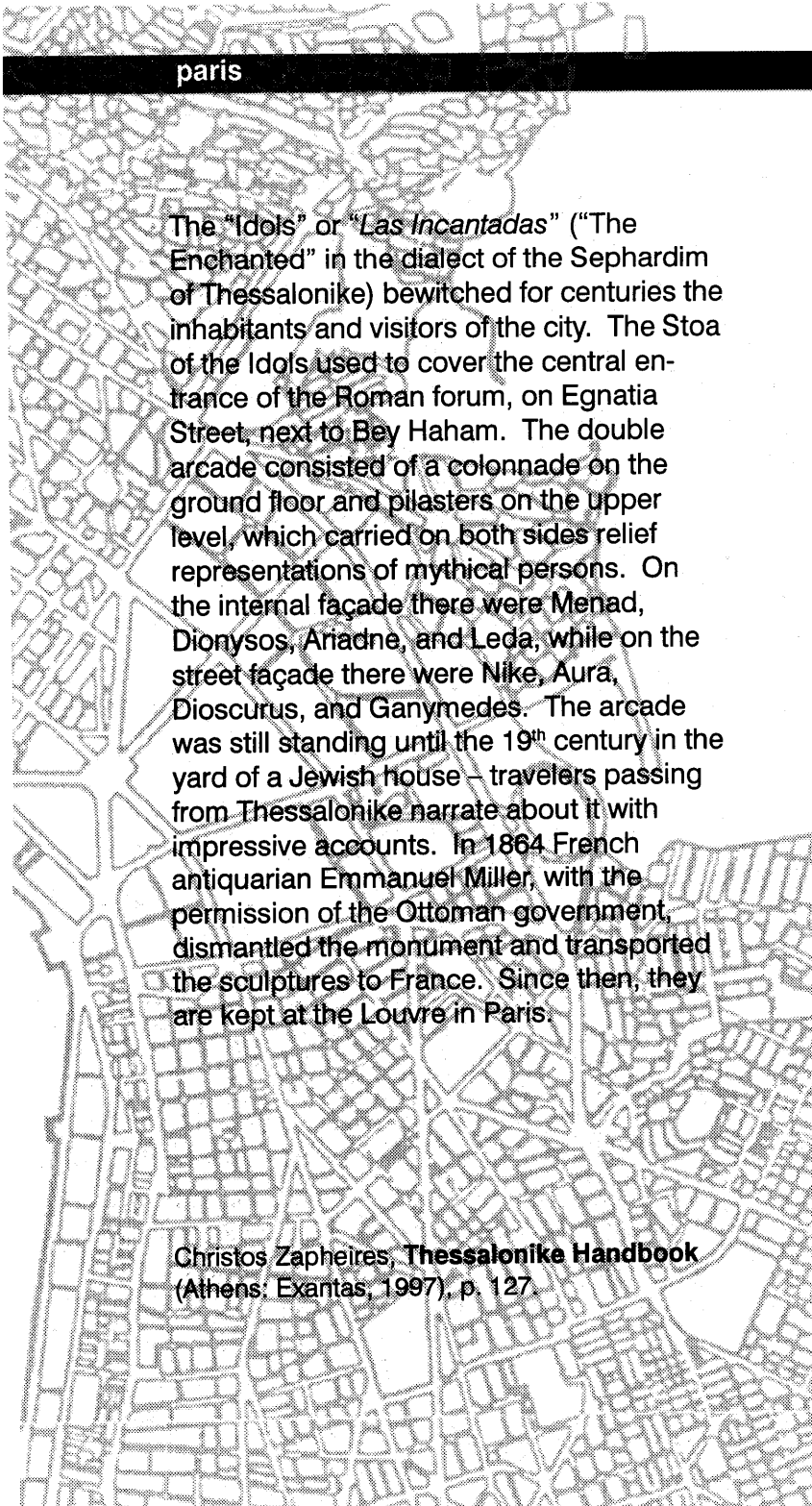
5 Zarkada, *Ibid.*

city index



las incantadas





The “Idols” or “*Las Incantadas*” (“The Enchanted” in the dialect of the Sephardim of Thessalonike) bewitched for centuries the inhabitants and visitors of the city. The Stoa of the Idols used to cover the central entrance of the Roman forum, on Egnatia Street, next to Bey Haham. The double arcade consisted of a colonnade on the ground floor and pilasters on the upper level, which carried on both sides relief representations of mythical persons. On the internal façade there were Menad, Dionysos, Ariadne, and Leda, while on the street façade there were Nike, Aura, Dioscurus, and Ganymedes. The arcade was still standing until the 19th century in the yard of a Jewish house – travelers passing from Thessalonike narrate about it with impressive accounts. In 1864 French antiquarian Emmanuel Miller, with the permission of the Ottoman government, dismantled the monument and transported the sculptures to France. Since then, they are kept at the Louvre in Paris.

Christos Zapheris, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athens: Exantas, 1997), p. 127

Although present-day commentators – alongside with the majority of the academe of the Western world – tend to criticize the appropriation and transportation of artifacts from their original location to museums in Europe and North America,¹ this attitude was in fact until recently perfectly acceptable. Even a Greek writer, commenting on the “abduction” of “*Las Incantadas*” (“The Enchanted”) from Thessalonike, acknowledges, in 1880, that “we owe gratitude to the French for preventing further deterioration of the objects, which wherever they are, are always of Thessalonike.”² The event of the transportation of this monument to the Louvre seems to have been received with a lurking sense of pride among the locals, since such an “honor” was actually an exceptional case for the city at that time. In contrast to the southern part of Greece, notably Athens, Olympia or Delphi, very few parts of Thessalonike “could be characterized as classical.”³ Thus, until the mid 19th century, Thessalonike and its region did not enjoy the “privilege of drawing the attention of travelers, who were in search of ancient Greek historical artifacts or connotations.”⁴ The city was an uncharted territory for scholars of the Classics to such extent that the engraving of *Las Incantadas* itself, one of the most often reproduced in Europe, was mistakenly entitled *The Antiquities of Athens*.

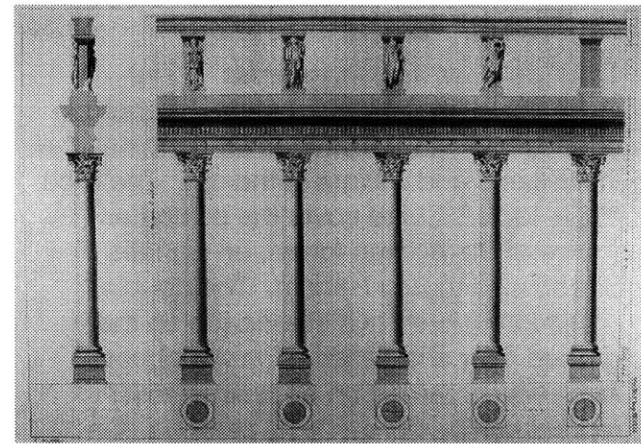
This situation changed radically towards the end of the 19th century, as the growing scholarly interest for the Byzantine civilization in Western Europe, transformed Thessalonike into a place of destination for many, especially French, historians and archaeologists. Treatises on the city’s history and archaeology start to get published in Paris, and among them is the famous *Topographie de Thessalonique* by Oreste Tafrali in 1902. Like most Western scholars of the time, Tafrali marvels at the plethora of Byzantine monuments found in the city, but is conspicuous about his disdain for the “post-Byzantine,”⁵ namely Ottoman, history of the city (see *Stuttgart*). Moreover, the advent of this first generation of Byzantinologists seems to have contributed to a change even in Ottomans’ attitude towards Byzantine buildings – until then treated with indifference. For example, a photograph taken at the end of the 19th century shows the then mosque of Hagia Sophia (see *Constantinople*) in an almost unrecognizable state; however, “following the recovery of the mosaics in

Hagia Sophia by M. Le Tournau, the church is repaired in 1908 by the Ottoman authorities under the supervision of Charles Diehl.”⁶

Nonetheless, the French impact in the city of Thessalonike was not restricted to the change of attitude towards its own history; more importantly, through the connections made via the Jewish community, the city forms strong cultural links with French culture. It is characteristic how major an influence the establishment of French schools had on the city’s youth, as Leon Sciaky, a Salonican Jew, narrates:

Le Petit Lycee Francais opened its doors early in the year 1904. The score of children who made up the two initial classes represented a fair cross-section of the heterogeneous population of Salonica. The lower group, in which I was placed, was made up of three French boys, one Greek, four Spanish Jews, a Serb, a Mamin [Dönme], an Armenian, a Turk, and a Montenegrin boy who had come from Cetinje expressly to join us. While we all spoke French with fluency, we had come from communal schools or private tutors, and none of us had had more than casual contact with any children but those of his own nationality.⁷

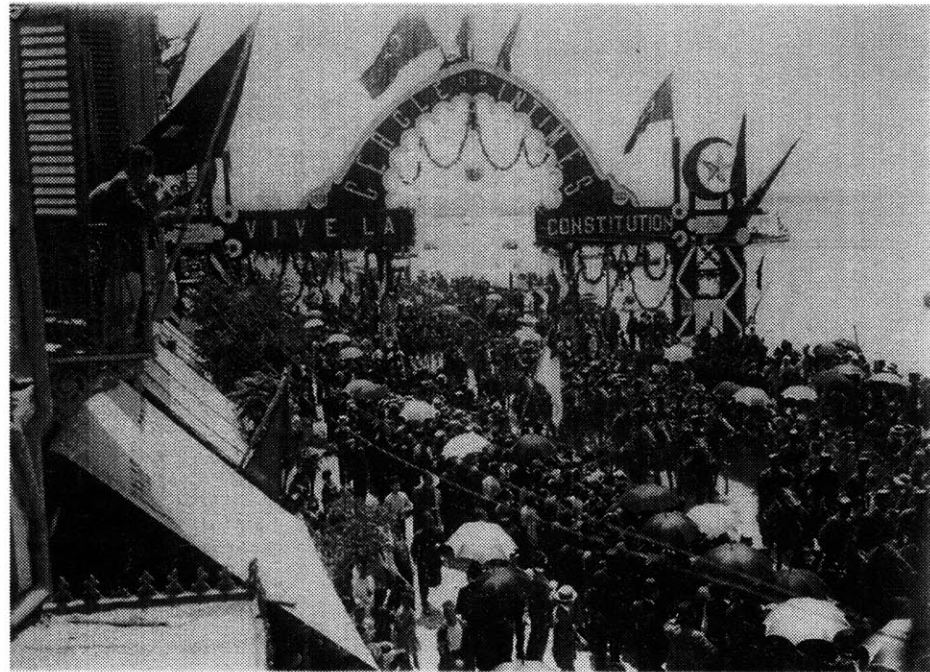
It is noteworthy that it was through a Jewish organization, the *Universal Alliance Israelite* – an organization based in Paris, whose founders (French Jews) advocated the political claims of Jews – that the initial cultural links with France were formed. The Alliance, already present in the Mediterranean basin since the 1860s, “opens its first school in Salonica in early 1970s and its influence is enormous. Attracting the children of the upper classes of the community, it gives them a French education (the principal language taught being naturally French).”⁸ The quality of education which Sciaky, for example, acquired in Thessalonike, would be tested when his family moved to New York in 1907. To our surprise, we read that, among other reasons, he was distressed with “...the schoolwork itself.” Sciaky writes: “It bored me with its superficiality and shallowness. Longfellow seemed pale and inconsequential after Voltaire; arithmetic dull, after algebra was far behind; and the geography uninspiring after studying the economic geography of the world. [...] For it was a naively provincial America, that of the first decades of the century.”⁹

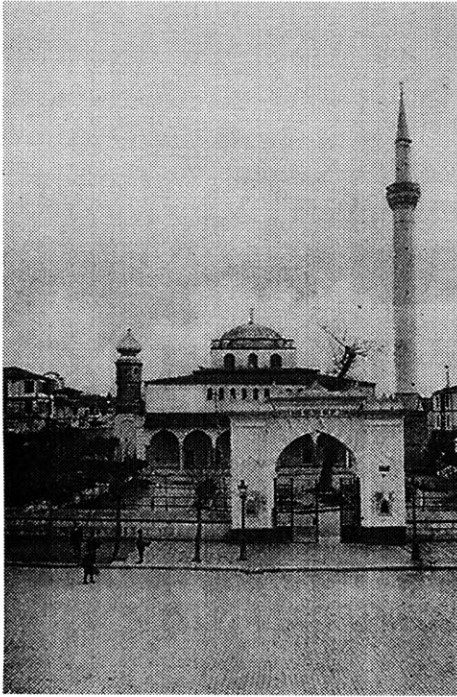


Copperplate engraving of “*Las Incantadas*” of Thessalonike (46 X 33 cm). It is entitled “The antiquities of Athens” (J. Stuart - N. Revett; London, 1794).

Vive La Constitution

Celebrations in Thessalonike for the first anniversary of the Young Turks revolution on 23 July 1909. Turkish soldiers parading along the Old Quay avenue, under the great arch put up by the Jews of the *Club des Intimes*, a club of socially active young Thessalonikian Jews, who - influenced by French prototypes - supported the modernization of the community and its political incorporation in the local society. The slogan reads "Long Live the Constitution."





The church of Hagia Sophia photographed in 1916, after the French-Ottoman restoration (compare to its dilapidated state in late 19th century - see *Constantinople*).

Sciaky's family actually returned back to Thessalonike in 1909, upon hearing the "great news"¹⁰ of the Young Turks revolution (see *Ankara*). His story is most interesting in terms of the history of the Jewish population of the city: his comments prove the extent in which the French influence, by the early 20th century, had tarnished the impetus of their ancient Spanish tradition and "generated a 'Frenchization,' characterized by some as 'Gallomania.'"¹¹ Fascination with French language and culture was not, however, a characteristic only of the Jewry in Thessalonike; travel accounts of the late 19th century mention that among the multilingual and multiethnic population of Thessalonike, the common language for everyday communication is French. The city's inhabitants, those of the upper middle classes at least, in constant contact with the West, were eager to be disassociated from the stagnant Orient and to follow "the train of Europe." It is characteristic that when the first train from Paris arrived in Thessalonike's central station on 7th May 1888, "the crowd welcomed it shouting out of joy."¹² In the official festive dinner at the hotel Colombo, there are the Ottoman administration and military representatives, the consular body, and notable citizens, Ottoman, Jews and Europeans. It is noteworthy that the Greek element is absent from the "train welcome" reception, a fact that Greek newspapers expressed great disappointment. Ironically, no such celebrations were registered when the first train from Athens arrived in Thessalonike, with a considerable delay, in 1926. By that time, the city had entered a new phase in its history. The 1912 annexation to the Greek State had brought an abrupt end in the city's "French romance"; Thessalonike was becoming increasingly "national," in juxtaposition to its "cosmopolitan" predecessor and this influenced the Jews of the city far and foremost. Under the new status quo, the Jewish community predicted a deterioration of its position – characteristically, Sciaky writes on the advent of the annexation of the city to Greece:

How was all this to end? What else was in store for us and for our city? What was Salonica, once the outlet of a vast hinterland of thousands of kilometers to become, with the restrictions of boundaries reaching down to its very doors? There was talk of making a free city of it, a kind of modern Venice serving as the warehouse and emporium for all the Balkan states. But such a project, still

nebulous, required a cooperation and good will we felt was far from reality. And what chance had we, we with a purely French education and knowing little or no Greek? “I am going away,” Philip announced one day.” “I am going to Spain, to Barcelona.”¹³

Sciaky and his family at the end left the city the following year (1913) and settled in New York, where his Farewell to Salonica was published in 1946. Other Jewish families, who had already cultivated with France privileged links, chose that country for their immigration. But most of the Jews of Thessalonike stayed in the city; their history continues in *Berlin* and *Auschwitz*.

1 An example of the bitter comments on the event: “Miller, an illicit dealer of antiquities, obtained legal permission from the Ottoman authorities and transported the sculptures to the Louvre – from which the Municipality of Thessalonike contests them in vain.” See Christos Zaphereis, *Thessalonikes Topiographia* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1990), p. 92.

2 Michael Chatzes Ioannou, *Astygraphia Thessalonikes* / Original edition: Thessalonike, 1880 (Athena: Ekdoseis Koultoura, 1978), p. 56.

3 “The domination of Classical architectural forms and theories prevented appreciation for much of the century of non-Classical buildings.” See C. J. C. Thacker, *Attitudes of European travellers in the Levant (1696-1811)*, Doctoral Thesis: 1963, p.197.

4 “The pictorial preservation of the landscape is selective, and its fields of view are determined by the itineraries and preconceptions that underlie each observation and representation. Certain landscapes are therefore more favored than others, especially when their historical monuments or classical connotations draw the attention of the travelers, notably in the case of Attica from the late 18th century onwards. Thessalonica was not to enjoy this privilege: its monuments did not conform to the ideals of classicists.” See Spyros Asdrachas, *Thessalonica of the 18th century; Before and After* (Athens: Themelio/Eikona, 1996), p. 19.

5 The term “post-Byzantine” is still commonly used in Greece to characterize the historical period of the Ottoman dominion and its cultural artifacts (see for example, *Thessalonike, 2300 years: Post-Byzantine Era, 1430-1912* (Thessalonike: Sfakianakis, 1985). On the other hand, the term “pre-Ottoman” is used in Turkey to refer to monuments built in the Byzantine period.

6 Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou & Evangelos Hekimoglou, “Thessalonike under Turkish Occupation; The organization of the city and the monuments,” in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 64, p. 96.

7 Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica; portrait of an era* (New York: Current books, inc., A. A. Wyn, 1946), pp. 125-126.

8 Odette Varon-Vassard, “Salonique la multiculturelle” in *Qantara* 32, p. 35.

9 Sciaky, *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

10 “The exciting news [of the Young Turks movement] reached us in New York and we



1. La Tour de Manuel Paléologue. Côté Nord.

Tafrafi in his *Topographie de Thessalonique* (1902) devotes much more attention to the city’s Byzantine fortifications than to its churches or Roman monuments. Most of the pictures in the book show various parts of the walls and always include a Westerner (Tafrafi himself?) in black suit and hat standing next to them.

rejoiced wildly, happy at the thought that Turkey would take its reserved place unashamed, alongside the democracies of Europe.” Sciaky, *Ibid.*, p. 180.

11 Varon-Vassard, *Ibid.*

12 Alexandra Karadimou-Yerolymou, *Between East and West: Northern Greek towns at the times of Ottoman reformations* (Athena: Ekdoseis Trohalia, 1997), pp. 209-210.

13 Sciaky, *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

city index



white tower



The "Proposal for Two Towers (the White Tower of Pisa and the Leaning Tower of Thessalonike)" is a composite project inspired by the two towers. The artist, Maria Papademetriou, stated that she chose Pisa because its belfry is leaning and Thessalonike because it is the only city in Greece with a tower of such importance. Both towers are established symbols of their cities, and Papademetriou intended to juxtapose them in the project. In Thessalonike, she presented the first half of the work: a gigantic laser projection of the Tower of Pisa in front of the White Tower, along the spacious waterfront. This spectacular effect was, however, temporary and ephemeral; when, at dawn, laser machines were turned off, it existed only in the viewers' memories. What remained was a large white fluorescent cloth, stretched on the waterfront pavement, upon which Pisa was projected in a straight position. The project, rather than a reconfirmation of our history and heritage and a verification of the universality of the Greco-Roman tradition, is a validation of a world that is getting smaller, striding towards a united Europe and a universal uniformity, as a consequence of the continuously advancing media technology.

Katerina Kalfopoulou, "Proposal for two towers" in *Teychos* 12/13, p. 208.

The White Tower ("*Beyaz Kule*" in Turkish, "*Torre Bianca*" in Sephardim) is the most famous monument of Thessalonike and one cannot overemphasize how literally identified it is with the modern city; located at the terminus of the Old Quay (see *Jiddah*), it occupies a prominent location on the city's waterfront and also marks the transition between the historic core and the eastern extension of Thessalonike. The tower used to be part of the city's fortifications, at the point where the eastern part of the walls met the sea walls, and functioned as a defensive citadel, encircled by an additional ring of lower walls, octagonal in shape. This is how an Austrian traveler in 1897 narrates the "Legends of the White Tower":

With the range and the explosive power of modern canons, "*Beyaz Kule*," which was always prominent on the Thessalonike port and marked the end of the city walls to the east, has no military importance any more. But the round, wide, and solid building with its dented ramparts, surrounded by an octagonal wall, is still an ornament to the city and the southeastern waterfront, sealing its end with its characteristic stamp. One of the Muslim military officers narrates with some pleasure that the tower in previous times was called "bloody" – which is now forbidden – and justly so, for it was not just red but dyed with the blood of Christians. But whether the legend is true, I have not succeeded to know.¹

Historical sources indicate that the "legend" was most probably true. In the 19th century the tower "was called 'Kanli Kule,' which in Turkish means 'Tower of Blood,' because it was a prison for long-term convicts, and there were frequent executions on top of the ramparts. The blood from the victims dyed the external surface of the tower and caused horror to the passers-by. Each execution was announced to the inhabitants by a cannonade. The tower was at this historical period the "Bastille" of Thessalonike, as the historian M. Hatzi Ioannou writes. In 1890, Nathan Guedi, a convict imprisoned in the tower, was granted his freedom for painting the tower with white paint and from then on it was referred to as 'Beyaz-Kule,' that is, 'White Tower.'"² The whitewashing of the tower was not merely an aesthetic embellishment but also a symbolic act of modernization of the Ottoman authorities (see *Istanbul*), in a string of changes towards the "Europeanization" of the

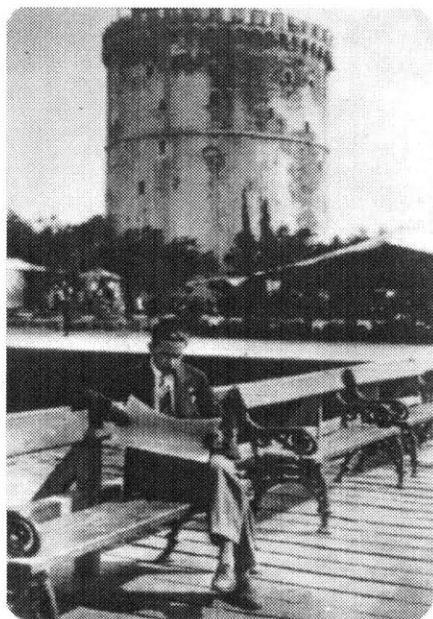
city which had started with the demolition of the sea walls and the creation of the waterfront promenade. Not only was the defensive function of the tower historically obsolete, but also – as soon as the quay was formed – its emerging role as an urban landmark and a point of reference became apparent.³

For more than a century now, the Tower has been an “ornament” for the city; forming an attractive ensemble with the Old Quay, its bulky figure has been the stage set for the life of Thessalonikians, public and private as well. Its surrounding area, especially after the demolition of the low octagonal wall around it in 1908, became the city’s main public space, where major events would be symbolically represented – for example, during the First World War, a Zeppelin aircraft was placed in public display in front of the tower. The promenade at its ramparts is still one of the most visited places in the city, offering a panoramic view of the city going up the hill as well as of the port and the stretch of the sea towards south. Even the building as a physical object has been used “decoratively”; during the years Greece was a kingdom, a royal crown out of wire “decorated” its top and was lit at night. Since its restoration in 1984, in time to celebrate the city’s 2300 years of history, the monument houses the Museum of the History of the City, displaying a significant collection of Byzantine Art. It is still called “White Tower,” although after it was painted in camouflage colors during the Second World War, it never recovered its white aspect; since 1984 its external masonry, made of semi-chiseled stones of various kinds,⁴ has become visible. In this, rather beige, shade, the White Tower is omnipresent; its multiple representations, in postcards, book covers, comic strips, and commercial advertisements, disseminate its image as the symbol of the city.

Despite the ubiquity and symbolic predominance of the monument, there is in Thessalonike a significant pseudo-history about its origins: “local tradition attributes its erection to Venetian masons,”⁵ during the occupation of Thessalonike by the Serenissima in 1423-1430. Undoubtedly, since the city walls are Byzantine (see *Durazzo*), there must have been a Byzantine tower in the same location. However, it is indicative that while all towers of the fortifications, about 60, are orthogonal,

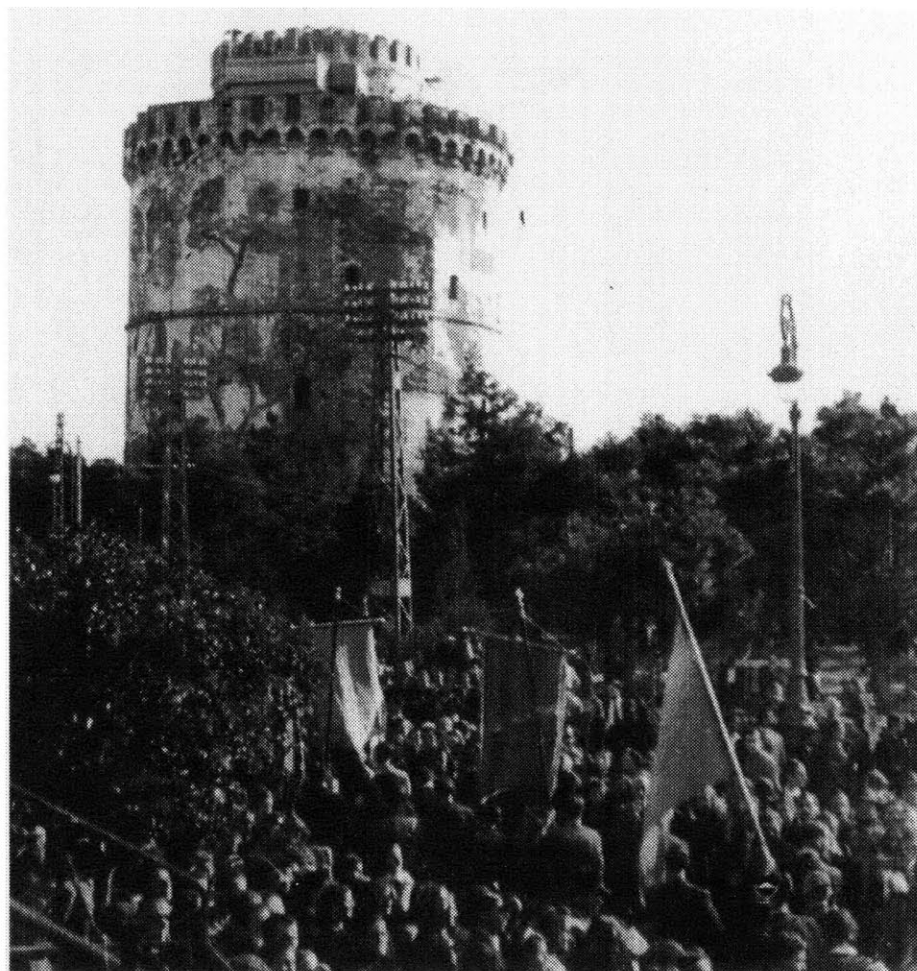


On May 5, 1916, during the First World War, the Allies (see *Kosovo* and *London*) shot down a German Zeppelin, performing a night raid over Thessalonike. The crew of the aircraft was caught as prisoners and its metal skeleton was placed in display in front of the White Tower.



The city symbol

For the portraiture of Thessalonikians, the White Tower has been a privileged site. The street photographers, who even today wait for customers in the surrounding area (now with a Polaroid camera in their hands), have immortalized thousands of faces with the monument as the backdrop. Parades and rallies along the waterfront avenue have also been commemorated in front of the Tower, like, for example, the festive demonstration for the end of the German occupation in 1944. The monument was at the time camouflaged for protection from air raids. “The fact that the Tower predominates in the picture is not accidental but indicates a conscious analogy between the human crowd and the mass of the building.” (Source: *Waterfront-Ports-White Tower: The battle of memory*)



triangular, or polygonal in plan, the White Tower is one of the only two which are round, the other round tower being located in the northeast corner of the perimeter of the walls. “Both towers, sharing the same stylistic characteristics, most probably date from the early Ottoman period.”⁶ In support of these speculations, recent historical and archaeological research has dated the monument, in its existing form, with accuracy in 1535/6, a date which “coincides with recent [1993] dendrochronology of pieces of wood by Dr Peter Jan Kuniholm.”⁷ Nonetheless, in a city guide, published in 1997, the tower is still referred to as the “Byzantine symbol of the city.”⁸ The incontestable fact that the White Tower is an Ottoman building is persistently obscured in the modern history of Thessalonike.



The Greek flag flapping over the parapets of the White Tower.

In actuality, the tower is the only Ottoman monument in Thessalonike which, contrary to the few surviving mosques and other public Ottoman buildings (see *Palermo* and *Stuttgart*), has been appropriated and transformed into a city symbol. The interpretation of the complicated past of the monument in Greek historiography is not irrelevant to this transformation; on the contrary, it has supported and facilitated this alteration of meaning, since the tower is presented as intrinsically related with the “sufferings of the nation” under Ottoman occupation. Vacalopoulos, for example, interprets the 1890 whitewashing as a desperate attempt of the Ottoman State to appear as “modern” but the underlying argument is that centuries-long oppression of the Greeks would not be white-washed as easily. He writes: “After the Russo-Turkish wars and the Congress of Berlin, the Great Powers of Europe now kept a close check on the Ottoman Empire. Wishing it to appear that he was eagerly seeking to europeanize and civilize his domains, the Sultan gave instructions for the white-washing of *Kanli Kule* (The Tower of Blood), the main place for the torture and butchery of Christians, and for its being converted into a simple prison.” He adds in a sarcastic tone: “It now projected onto the horizon painted a cheerful white.”⁹

Today, cut with a Greek identity, the monument is a “proud” symbol of Hellenism, as the flag at its ramparts indicates. Interestingly enough, in the project discussed in the *City Index*, the artist’s elucidation is not centered on the shift from the Turkish to the

Greek history of the monument. “Papademetriou consciously chooses two sites swarming of History and tradition. However, with the dislocation and inversion, traditional, stagnated ideas become subverted.”¹⁰ The project uses the site of the White Tower to juxtapose the traditional idea of the monument, static and timeless, with the rapidly changing world of the everyday, where technology, eliminating physical distances, tends to replace local histories with a universal culture. To do this, the artist, instead of simply using what there is already in site, namely the rich history of the White Tower, proposes and fabricates new links between the local history and another city’s history. In its ephemeral character, the project also manifests the inevitable temporary character of any “embedded meaning,” cultural or national, of urban artifacts, a salient characteristic of the White Tower itself.

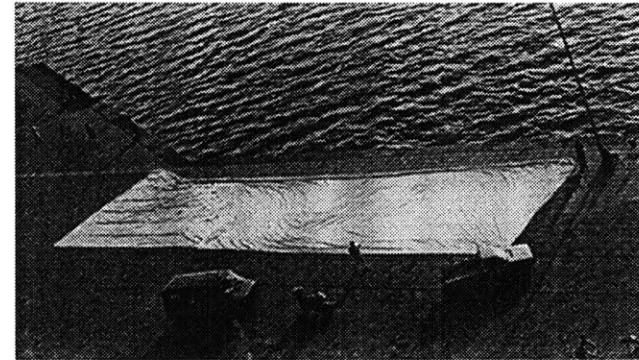
1 K.A. Fetcher, traveling in Thessalonike in 1897, as quoted in *Polychrones K. Enepekides, Thessalonike and Macedonia, 1798-1912: German, Austrian, and French politicians, diplomats, and scholars narrate the life, and the events, the politics, and the institutions, as well as the historical topography of Macedonian towns* (Athena: Vivliopoleion tes “Hestias” I.D. Kollarou, 1982), p. 111.

2 Anna Klimentidou-Papadamou and Anna Zombou-Asimi, “The White Tower of Thessalonike,” in *Restoration-Preservation-Protection of Monuments and Ensembles* (Athens, 1993), p. 138. The authors are the archaeologists who designed and supervised the restoration project in 1984.

3 The definition of “landmarks” by Kevin Lynch is quite pertinent to the case of the White Tower, whose bulky, cylindrical figure, eminent on the city’s waterfront, is the most identifiable artifact and a point of orientation in the city, even at present day. As Lynch writes: “Landmarks become more easily identifiable, more likely to be chosen as significant, if they have a clear form; if they contrast with their background; and if there is some prominence of spatial location.” See Kevin Lynch, *The image of the city* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 78-79.

4 Klimentidou-Papadamou, *Ibid.*, p. 140.

5 Christos Zapheires, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athena: Ekdoseis Exantas, 1997), p. 50. Another “pseudo-history” is presented in Jack Handeli’s autobiographical work, entitled in Hebrew “From the White Tower to the Gates of Auschwitz.” Handeli writes: “In Byzantine times, there were eight towers in the walls that surrounded Salonica. In 1423, the city’s ruler sold it to the city-state of Venice. When the Ottomans [recaptured] Salonica in 1427, the tower that later came to be called the White Tower was called “Kanli-Kuleh” – the Tower of Blood. Another war between Venice and the Ottoman Empire in 1430 left the tower in



The morning after the project “The White Tower of Pisa and the Leaning Tower of Thessalonike.” what remained was a large white fluorescent cloth, stretched on the waterfront pavement, upon which Pisa was projected in a straight position.

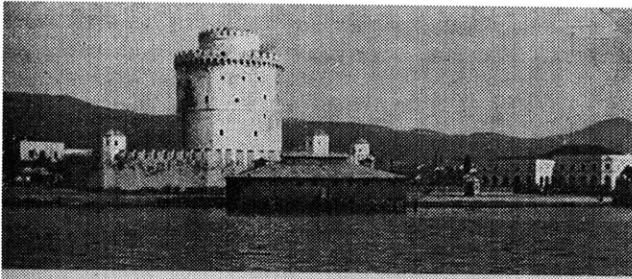


Fig. 2. — La Tour Blanche ou Beyaz-Coulé.
(Photographie communiquée par M. G. Ozou).

The White Tower in a photograph included Tafrafi's *Topographie de Thessalonique*, published in Paris in 1902.

Ottoman hands. The Ottoman ruler Ghazi Suleiman Khan (1520-66) repaired the tower and painted white. Henceforth, it would be a symbol of the city." See Ya'acov (Jack) Handeli, *A Greek Jew from Salonica remembers* (New York: Herzl Press, 1993), p. 8. On the other hand, in the *Lonely Planet Guide to Greece*, the author (though much closer to historical truth than Handeli, as far as the construction of the Tower is concerned) attributes its white-washing to the Greek authorities. "After independence it was whitewashed as a symbolic gesture to expunge its Turkish function. The whitewash has now been removed and it has been turned into a very fine Byzantine Museum with splendid frescoes and icons." See *Lonely Planet: Greece* (Melbourne-Oakland-London-Paris: Lonely Planet Publications, 2000), p. 353. Nonetheless, there are numerous photographs that predate the 1912 annexation to Greece and show the Tower white – including a picture from Tafrafi's *Topographie de Thessalonique* (Paris: 1902).

6 Monuments of Thessalonike (Thessalonike: 1984), p. 19.

7 Klimentidou-Papadamou, *Ibid.*, p. 153.

8 Zappeires, *Ibid.*, p. 52.

9 Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 113.

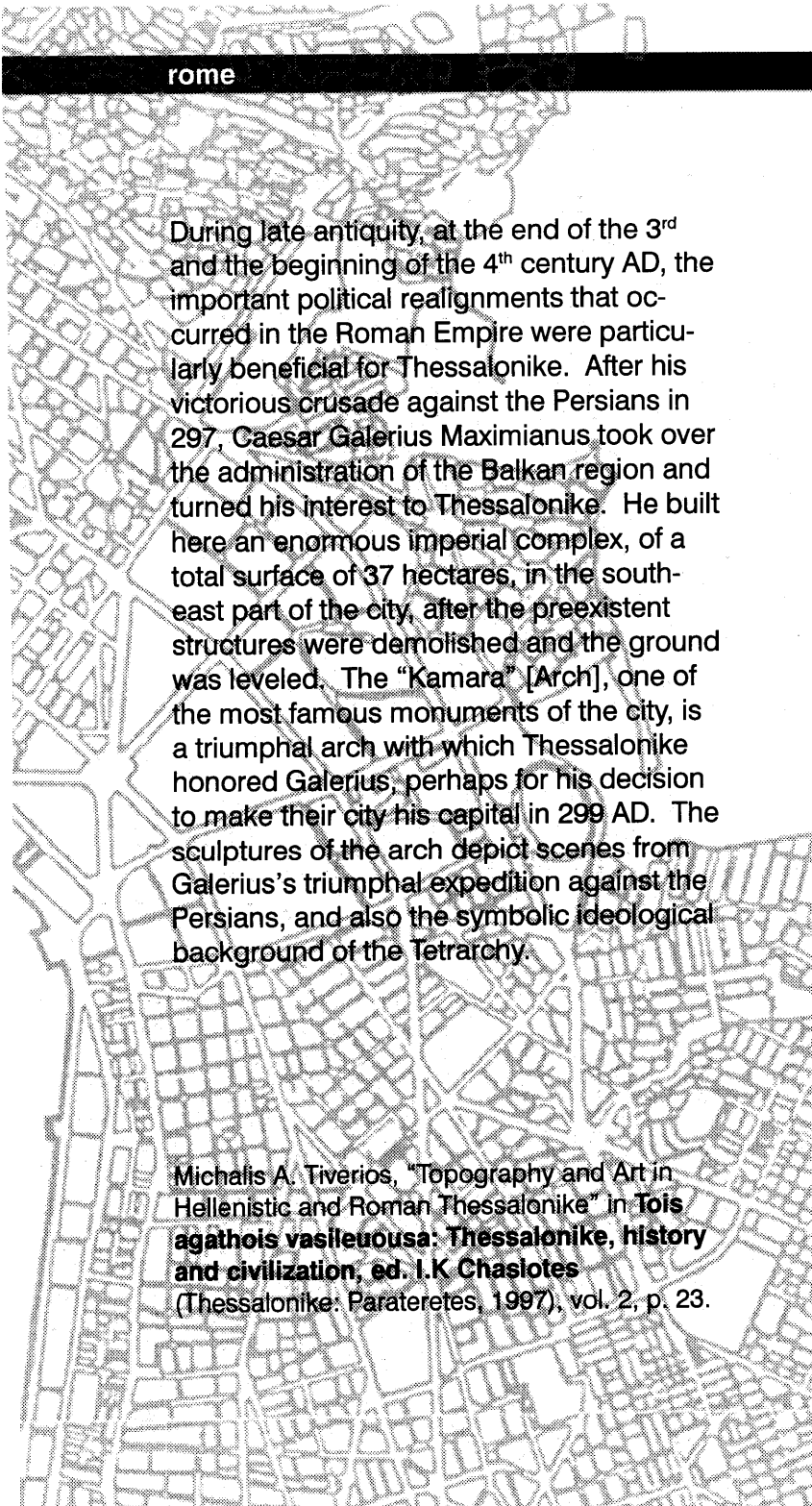
10 Katerina Kalfopoulou, "Maria Papademetriou: 'Proposal for two towers'" in *Teychos* 12/13, p. 208.

city index



galerian complex





During late antiquity, at the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century AD, the important political realignments that occurred in the Roman Empire were particularly beneficial for Thessalonike. After his victorious crusade against the Persians in 297, Caesar Galerius Maximianus took over the administration of the Balkan region and turned his interest to Thessalonike. He built here an enormous imperial complex, of a total surface of 37 hectares, in the southeast part of the city, after the preexistent structures were demolished and the ground was leveled. The “Kamara” [Arch], one of the most famous monuments of the city, is a triumphal arch with which Thessalonike honored Galerius, perhaps for his decision to make their city his capital in 299 AD. The sculptures of the arch depict scenes from Galerius’s triumphal expedition against the Persians, and also the symbolic ideological background of the Tetrarchy.

Michalis A. Tiverios, “Topography and Art in Hellenistic and Roman Thessalonike” in **Tois agathois vasilouousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization**, ed. I.K Chaslotis (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 2, p. 23.

Currently, in the heart of the city of Thessalonike, the group of monuments dating from the Tetrachic period of the Roman Empire stand in stark contrast with the dense surrounding urban fabric. The “Galerian complex,” as it is known, used to occupy the southeast part of the walled city and nowadays consists of the monumental Arch, the Rotunda, the archaeological site of the Palace, and the Hippodrome Square, where the site of the Late Roman circus was (see *Milan*).

Undoubtedly, the most prominent parts of the complex are the Arch and the Rotunda, which used to be connected with a monumental passageway, a double covered colonnade.¹ The main west-east thoroughfare of the city, Egnatia Street (see *Durazzo*), which ran through the Arch for centuries, is currently an avenue with four lanes of traffic, and thus no longer passes underneath. Instead, the Arch is left standing on its own to the north side of the street, forming an ensemble with the bulky Rotunda, which survives in very good condition. This cylindrical edifice, modeled after the Pantheon in Rome, probably owes its good preservation to the fact that it has been uninterruptedly used. It was converted into a church in Byzantine times and into a mosque in the Ottoman period. In fact, the minaret of the Rotunda, a leftover of its life as a mosque, is the only remaining one in modern Thessalonike, which must have had more than thirty minarets in the 19th century (see *Stuttgart*). Today, the Rotunda, with its fabulous Early Christian mosaics – covered with plaster in Ottoman times – revealed once again, is an important monument, used as a museum. In its constant transformations and shifting meanings, the edifice is a characteristic example of Thessalonike’s history, “where everything starts, wants to be, to become something, and nothing continues quite the way it began.”²

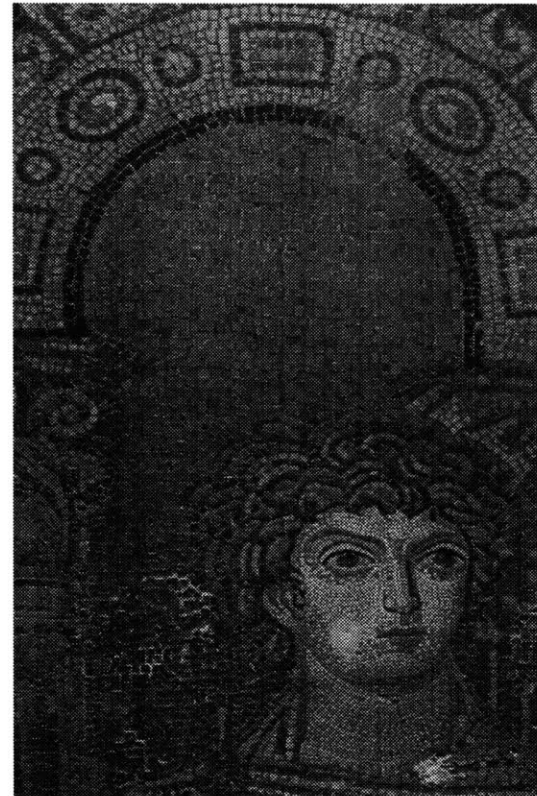
Significantly, the Arch had a much more picturesque aspect before the rationalization of the city plan in 1917 (see *Spalato*); as it can be seen in old photographs, the monument was literally encrusted in the dense urban fabric and completely incorporated in clusters of houses. One of these postcards also shows the tram, still drawn by horses, passing underneath the Arch.³ The subsequent destruction of its surroundings and the resultant isolation of the monument coincides with its current

status as one of the two landmarks of the city, the other being the White Tower (see *Pisa*). As mentioned in the *City Index*, the Arch was erected to perpetuate the victory of Galerius Maximianus, one of the four Tetrarchs, against the Persians. In a circular reaffirmation of history, what was erected as a monument, an expression of pride on behalf of the Roman administrators of the city, has become a symbol of civic pride for modern Thessalonike.

The site of the Palace, on the other hand, is an open archaeological excavation in one of the most central parts of the city. The complex was destroyed in an earthquake in the 7th century and was never rebuilt, since it was probably deserted by that time. The site was only rediscovered in the 1930s – for centuries, it was only known through oral tradition. In 1880, for example, Ioannou could only speculate about it:

It is known that Maximian and other Roman emperors stayed in Thessalonike for some time, so he must have built a palace of some sort. The oral tradition in the city, however, attributes to Diocletian most of the works of Maximian. In the interior of the dyer's shops, there are still arches, probably remains of an arched colonnade, which people say started from the Arch and ended at the seashore. This colonnade must have been the substructure of Diocletian's palace. There is a confused idea in the people about this issue, but they say that the palace must have been near the Hippodrome, just as the one of Constantinople was.⁴

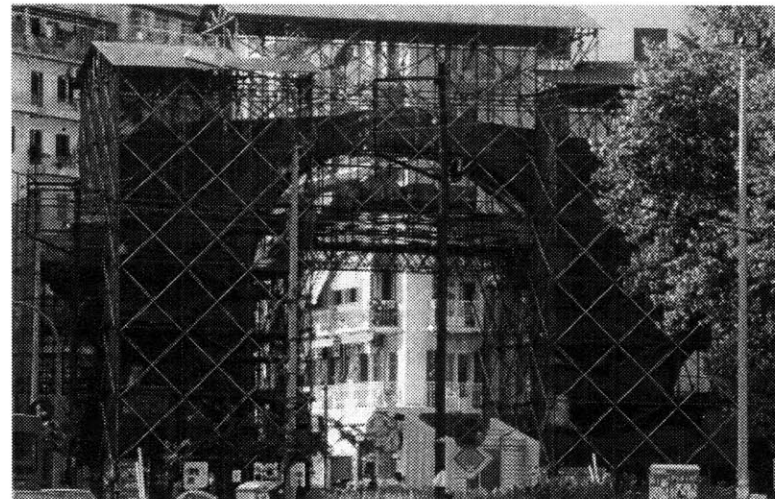
The area was built over and occupied by a residential quarter, one of the oldest Greek neighborhoods in Ottoman Thessalonike. However, the houses were razed to the ground and in 1935, German and Danish archaeologists began the excavations, which brought to light the site of the Palace, thus providing archaeological evidence for a centuries-long “myth.” The excavations “revealed that the whole of that part of the city [south of the Rotunda] had been adorned by Galerius Maximianus with buildings of splendid architecture, among them a large, stately, octagonal building which resembles the Mausoleum of Diocletian at Split but which encloses three times as much ground.”⁵ In modern day Thessalonike, the Roman complex is proudly portrayed in city guides as an exquisite ensemble of monuments of a glorious past and



Mosaic from the Rotunda. The cylindrical edifice was originally a Roman pagan temple, and was transformed into a Christian church in 400 AD. The mosaics, dating from this early period were covered with plaster for five centuries, during the Ottoman period, while the Rotunda was used as a mosque. They were revealed once again after 1912, when the Rotunda became once again a church. Today it is a museum and exhibition space.

The clearing-up of monuments

Until 1953, Egnatia Street, the *Via Regia* of the Roman plan (see *Durazzo*), passed underneath the Arch, and so did the tram, first horse-ridden and after 1909 electric. In the late 1950s, the “Kamara,” as the Arch is known, was cleared from the adjacent houses and since then it stands on the side of the street, at the center of a small square. The ornamental relieves covering the pillars of the Arch, depicting scenes from Galerius’s victorious expeditions to Persia and portraits of the four Tetrarchs, suffered many damages in later years from traffic-related environmental pollution. In 1990, the Kamara was wrapped with scaffoldings to facilitate the restoration process, aimed to clean up the destroyed artworks. However, the temporary scaffolding remained for an entire decade; the monument was only uncovered in December 1999, just in time for the new millennium.





The Rotunda today with its minaret under reconstruction. It is noteworthy that this is the only surviving minaret in Thessalonike, whose skyline was described in Ottoman times as a “forest of proud minarets” (see *Stuttgart*).

the palace site as a precious archaeological finding, not only for the city but also internationally. In one of these “promotional” guides, for example, compiled by local archaeologists and historians, we find beautiful photographs taken inside the complex, in a way that the ruins of the buildings are framed only by the blue sky above.⁶ Evidently, the photographs contradict factual truth: the site of the remains is currently submerged, due to the rise of the ground, and surrounded by multistory apartment buildings, a common situation for many a monument in Thessalonike (see also *Constantinople*).

The fabricated reality such pictures represent is not unrelated to a dominant cultural ideology that projects the past as a “parenthesis,” claiming that “history” can be read autonomously and independently of the context of the modern city. Nonetheless, this static and timeless perception of history is hardly applicable in Thessalonike, where all too often “the ruins do not return you to the past, but coexist in the same plane with the live buildings.”⁷ In the past decade there has been an often heated, public dialogue about the “future” of the site: how the area could be integrated, functionally or otherwise, in the life of the inhabitants. The still unresolved controversy is polarized between scholarly interests and the city’s everyday needs, notably for usable open space. In terms of the ideological subtext of the debate, one could discern two different definitions and perceptions of “parenthesis” that inform the two opposite sides, archaeologists and city representatives. To the majority of the inhabitants, the site, occupying the center of *Plateia Navarinou*, for the most part inaccessible and bordered by fence, is there just to be looked at, perceived as belonging to a separate sphere from their everyday lives; the “parenthesis” is an ineffective, if not a disruptive one. On the contrary, for the local academe of the Department of Archaeology and History, the ruins of the palace are the main (and only) focus; the “parenthesis” has eliminated its context, just as in the photographs the surrounding buildings have become invisible.

In reality, the question of (in)visibility occupies a central position in the problematics of the area. For example, the people living in apartments in the surrounding build

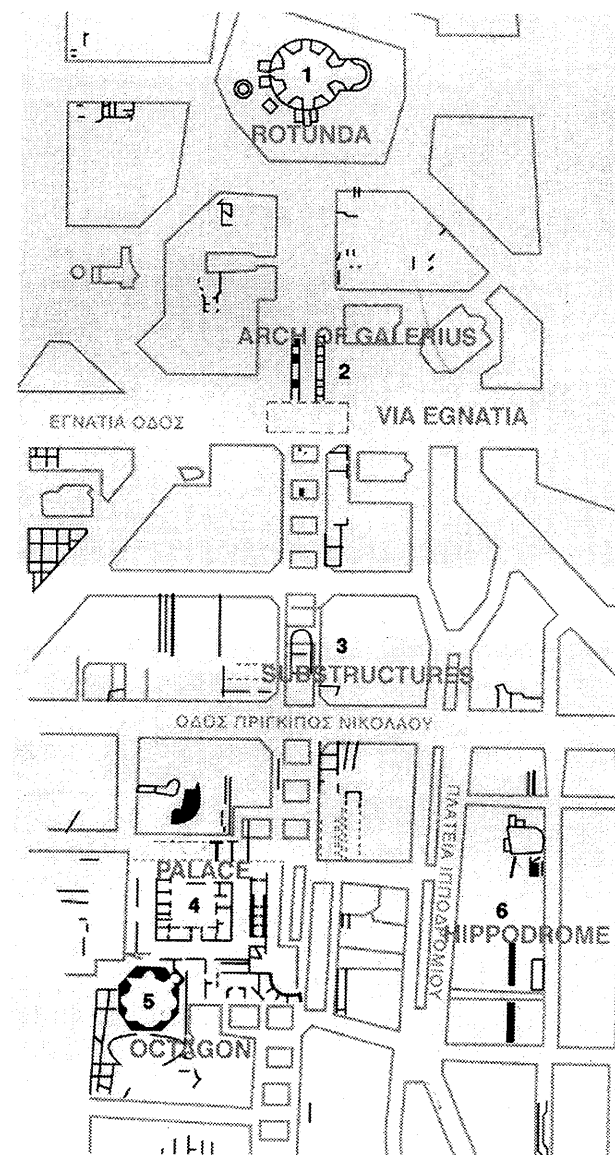
ings, undoubtedly enjoy a privileged view: overlooking the site, seeing it “in plan,” as it often happens, the illusion of existence of these buildings – the rectangular court, the octagonal mausoleum – becomes almost real. On the other hand, some of the buildings on the perimeter have “blind” facades facing the area, with no windows at all, waiting for the adjacent lot to be built up – another “problem” often pointed out. With the discovery of the palace, however, the building up will never happen. The existence of such “blind,” originally gray, facades is quite a common problem in Greece, and the recent solution given is painting them with cheerful colors, or even creating fictive rows of windows. A proposal addressing both problems, the “blind” facades and the lack of integration of the area, is the following: On the vertical surface of the surrounding buildings, one could paint, instead of any arbitrary scheme, the plan of the excavation site, in scale. This drawing will be accurate and informative, based on the survey drawings already produced by the archaeologists. In this way, Thessalonikians will be more aware of what exists inside the “big hole” which takes up a large open space in the middle of their city and the surrounding buildings, instead of being “problematic,” will become truly self-conscious, contextualizing appropriately the ancient remains.

1 The Arch of Triumph was originally “composed of four pillars which supported a cupola. However, after the fall of the cupola two of the pillars were ruined and destroyed, so that in the end there were left the two remaining ones which are visible today.” See Apostolos E. Vakalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 19.

2 Nikos Gavriel Pentzikes, *Metera Thessalonike: keimena se pezo* (Athena: Kedros, 1970), p. 69.

3 The photograph must have been taken before 1909, because that year, Schiaky, a Salonican Jew, upon his return to the city after a short stay in New York, was wondering: “Would we be happy in Salonica, now that we had traveled so far and seen the world? But Salonica, too, had changed. Electricity had come to the city while we were away, and now lighted our main streets, the public buildings, and even some of the homes. No longer did one hear the raucous trumpeting of the horse-drawn streetcars. American-made trolleys had replaced the old vehicles, and now they changed their way under the Triumphal Arch of Galerius, and under the shadow of the White Tower on the quay.” See Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica: portrait of an era* (New York: Current books, inc., A. A. Wyn, 1946), pp. 185-186.

4 Ioannou, Michael Chatzes. *Astygraphia Thessalonikes* / Original edition: Thessalonike,



Plan of the Galerian Complex.



An (in)visible parenthesis

First page of *To Vima*, the leading Sunday newspaper in Greece (above): the picture is from the Palace site and the title reads “How Thessalonike will change.” The archaeological site is shown as it is, surrounded by the modern city. On the other hand, in the photograph of the same site, included in a recent city guide, edited by a renowned archaeologist, the city has disappeared and the emphasis is obviously on the antiquities. The caption to the picture reads: “Thessalonike possesses fabulous monuments of imperial art and architecture.

Ambitious building programs, large-scale constructions and rich ornamentation all express the court ideals.”

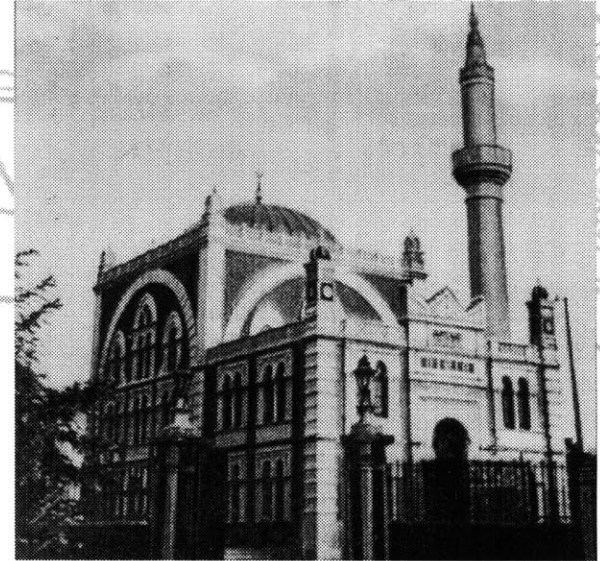


1880 (Athena: Ekdoseis Kouloura, 1978), pp. 50-51.

5 Vakalopoulos, *ibid.*, p. 20.

6 *Thessalonike: the metropolis of Macedonia* / text and documentation by Dimitrios Pandermalis (Thessalonike: Syndesmos Exagogeon Voreiou Hellados, 1992), p. Pandermalis is a Professor in the Department of Archaeology and History at the Aristotle University of Thessalonike; note that the publisher of this volume is the Association of Export Manufactures of Northern Greece.

7 Pentzikes, *Ibid.*



yeni djami



smyrna

A prosperous city where the Jews predominate and the Turks are only a small minority: this characteristic of Thessalonike renders the city quite distinguished from others of the Ottoman Empire. However, the paradox of Thessalonike does not end here; the Macedonian capital also shelters a separate community: the *Dönme*. The creation of this Jewish sect dates from the second half of the 17th century, when a Rabbi from Smyrna, Sabbetai Zevi, decided that he was the Messiah of Israel and came to preach the word of God in Thessalonike. He managed to proselytize to his dogma a considerable number of Jewish families, especially of the upper class. The Sultan, worried about potential revolutionary movements and upheavals that could be provoked among the Jewish subjects, suggested to Sabbetai Zevi to choose between death and Islam. The latter chose to convert to Islam. Many of his supporters followed his example, and they were named by the Turks "*Dönme*" ("Renegades").

François Georgeon, "Selanik' of the Muslims and the Dönme," in **Thessalonike 1850-1918: the "city of Jews" and the awakening of the Balkans** (Athens: Hekate, 1994), p. 127. Originally published in French in 1992.

The appearance of the "Messiah from Smyrna" in Thessalonike and the subsequent appeal his creed had on many a Jew of the city, constitute a phenomenon that extends the religious attributes and the spatial limits of the prominent Jewish community of Thessalonike. In actuality, it is intrinsically related to the economic and political decline of the Ottoman Empire in mid 17th century. The involvement of the Empire in a series of wars, most importantly the Venetian-Turkish long struggle over the island of Crete, and the recession of Venetian activity in the Eastern Mediterranean brought about a profound economic crisis in general, but particularly to the Jewish community of Thessalonike. The Jewish merchants, whose trade activity was based on commercial relationships with Italian ports, and especially with Venice, suffered a severe economic depression¹ and their grievances would soon find an outlet in a religious defection, whose reasons were nevertheless deeply political.

The "Sabbetaian storm" broke in the midst of this overcast climate and coincided with what a contemporary Jewish historian Albertos Nar describes as "an intellectual decline, which came as a result of the economic one. During this period Biblical studies will be largely abandoned in favor of mysticism and apocryphal studies, namely through the study of the Cabbala."² It was under these circumstances that Sabbetai Zevi, born in Smyrna in 1622, started his career in his native city, where "he was distinguished for his deep knowledge and saintly presence."³ However, when he claimed to be the new Messiah, his fellow citizens excommunicated him; forced into exile, he found refuge in Thessalonike. The accounts about Sabbetai's creed, which had remarkable resonance among the Jews of the city, are confusing and often contradictory. Most Jewish historians see in it "only hysteria and charlatanism."⁴ Nar, for example, writes that "he proclaimed himself to be 'the Savior of Israel,' managing to convince some members of the Jewish community, but the majority thought of him as a paranoid impostor."⁵ Sciaky wrote that "the uncontested master of Smyrna proceeded to issue decrees nullifying age-old tenets and rites of the orthodox synagogue. Traditional and revered fasts and days of prayer were declared henceforth unnecessary, and were replaced by orgiastic feasts recalling the Bacchanalia of ancient Greece."⁶

Sociologist Edgar Morin has provided a more complex interpretation of Sabbetai's dogma: "Sabbetaism conveys a new Gospel, which, based on Cabbalistic cosmogony and the idea of redemption for the entire world, proposes a richer, more complex and mystical view of the relationship between Good and Evil. A new religion was about to be born in the Sephardim community, after the Marranos' experience and the new anti-Jewish prosecutions; a meta-Judaism that would be open even for the disciples of other religions."⁷ This interpretation could serve to explain what followed after Sabbetai's arrest. Under the Sultan's blackmail, the prophet chose to become a Muslim on September 24, 1666; nevertheless, many of his followers saw his conversion not as a debacle but as a fulfillment of his secret message. For the next ten years of his life, Sabbetai continued to move between Judaism and Islam. The situation would become gradually clear: after a period of hesitation among his believers, ten years after his death, "in Salonica some 15,000 exchanged the Torah for the Koran, to escape possible reprisals while waiting for the reappearance of Sabbetai."⁸ Thus the city saw the formation of yet another distinct community, the Dönme or "Renegates," who nonetheless called themselves "*Maminin*," or "True Believers."⁹

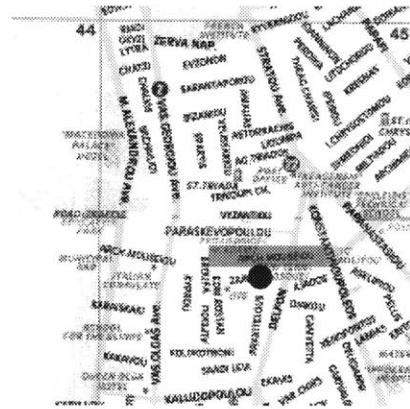
The converted Jews followed the Muslim religious rules, went to the Mosque, were called Muslim names, and spoke Turkish. However, they also secretly persisted in following Jewish rites and used their maternal language. "Among the doctrines of the Donme (who formed two groups in Thessalonike, the "Jacobines" and the "Smyrnians") was the following: 'Follow the acts of the Turks and every other external expression of theirs, but avoid to unite with them with the bonds of marriage.'¹⁰ Nothing differentiated them externally from other Muslims, "except perhaps for the greater freedom women had in the family realm."¹¹ In fact, they represented, in their Sephardim origins and inter-cultural education, "the most emancipated spirit in the Empire; [they were] people without prejudices."¹²

The Dönme community of Thessalonike, the largest in the Ottoman Empire, maintained its distinct identity even in the 20th century, despite the fact that, contrary to the Sephardim, "they had gradually abandoned the use of Spanish and used Turkish in

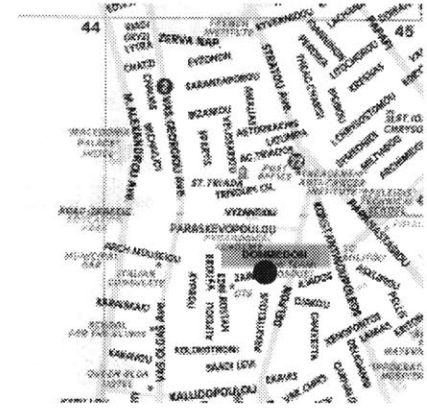


The New/Old Mosque/Museum

The *Yeni Djami* (meaning “New Mosque”), designed by Vitaliano Poselli in 1902, belonged to the affluent Dönme community of Thessalonike. When it became the Archaeological Museum of the city in the 1930s, an inscription in Greek was added over its main entrance. Currently, despite the fact that the museum was transferred to a new building in the 1960s, the “Archaeological Museum” sign still stands on its facade and the street that passes in front of the edifice is called “Archaeological Museum Street.” Ironically, today the Yeni Djami is known as the “Old Archaeological Museum.” The proposal is to rename the street to “Street of the Dönme.”



Existing condition: “Odos Archaeologikou Mouseiou” (Archaeological Museum Street)



Proposal: “Odos Donmedon” (Street of the Dönme)

Source: *Thessalonike City Guide* published by the National Bank of Greece (1999). The red dot indicates the location of the Yeni Djami.



A typical example of residential architecture of the Dönme is the building now known as “Cultural Center of the National Bank of Greece.” The architecture of the building, a sampling of neoclassical, Western European, and Oriental features, seems to have particularly fitted the cross-cultural identity of the Dönme of Thessalonike. The villa is one of the few surviving in the legendary neighborhood of the Castles (see *Cannes*); built between 1890 and 1895, it belonged to Mehmet Kapantzi, a prominent merchant who also served as Mayor in 1908. In 1912, with the entry of the Greek army, it became the residence of Prince Nicolaos, heir to the throne, and later, in 1917, the headquarters of Venizelos during the National Defense Movement (see *Istanbul*). Under German occupation, in the Second World War, it housed Nazi military officers. In the postwar period it was a High School, until it passed to the National Bank of Greece.

their everyday life.”¹³ In the changing political scene of the Ottoman Empire, this community, would become “the avant-garde that would disseminate the ideas of justice and progress in Turkey.”¹⁴ In 1908, the Young Turks movement would find its most fervent supporters in the Dönme community of Thessalonike,¹⁵ which however dispersed a few years later. In the exchange of population, the Dönme “reluctantly followed the other Muslims on their flight from the city, thus escaping the tragedy that would come to their compatriots in 1943”¹⁶ (see *Auschwitz*).

Interestingly enough, the community of the Dönme is highly praised in Greek historiography, as “the most educated portion of the Muslim population, which grafted the stagnant, Oriental, Turkey with Western culture.”¹⁷ Even the most prominent trace that the community left behind in the city, the *Yeni Djami* (“New Mosque”) has been treated quite differently to other Muslim monuments.¹⁸ An exquisite mixture of Islamic and European culture, just like its sponsors, the building, designed by Vitaliano Poselli (see *Palermo*) in 1902, is the only of the three surviving mosques in Thessalonike that was immediately put into cultural use and is still praised for its architectural qualities. Until 1978 it housed the famous collections of the Archaeological Museum of the city and is currently used as a municipal exhibition space. The street that passes in front of the mosque is still called “Archaeological Museum Street”; this name, referring to the most recent – and Greek – past of the building, is significantly obliterating its highly important history as a major monument of the Dönme community. Contrary to the contemporary city, however, the Dönme were, throughout their history, “true believers”: “to the very end of the Turkish rule in Salonica in 1912, a delegation of seven was wont to go to the gates of the city every morning to scan the roads and see whether Sabbetai was coming back that day.”¹⁹ The street should be renamed to “Street of the Dönme” as a token of faith, a symbolic return of this lost piece of Thessalonike’s multicultural palimpsest.

1 The war between Venetians and Ottomans for the control of Crete lasted 25 years (1645-1669) and affected negatively the safety of maritime routes in the Aegean. Jewish merchants of Thessalonike became so desperate with the subsequent depression that many of them, a few

thousand at least, migrated back to their origins, namely the great “free” Italian harbors (Livorno, Ancona, Trieste), or to other commercial centers of the Ottoman Empire, like Constantinople and Smyrna. See I.K.Chasiotes, “Thessalonike during Turkish occupation: the first period (15th century – 1830),” in *Tois agathois vasileousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, ed. I.K. Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 1, p. 141.

2 Albertos Nar, “Communal organization and activity of the Jewish Community of Thessalonike,” in *Tois agathois vasileousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, Ibid., vol. 1, p. 279. It is noteworthy that Nar describes the phenomenon from the side of the opponent, himself being a descendant of the Jews who kept their faith and did not convert to Sabbetaism.

3 Gilles Veinstein, “An immemorial paradoxical phenomenon: the Spain of the Balkans” in *Thessalonike 1850-1918: the “city of Jews” and the awakening of the Balkans* (Athena: Hekate, 1994), p. 65.

4 Ibid.

5 Nar, Ibid.

6 Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica; portrait of an era* (New York: Current books, inc., A. A. Wyn, 1946), p. 119.

7 Quoted in Veinstein, Ibid., pp. 65-66.

8 Sciaky, Ibid., p. 120.

9 Ibid.

10 Veinstein, Ibid., pp. 66-67.

11 Francois Georgeon, “‘Selanik’ of the Muslims and the Dönme,” in *Thessalonike 1850-1918: the “city of Jews” and the awakening of the Balkans*, Ibid., p. 127.

12 Ibid., p. 130.

13 Sciaky, Ibid., p. 120.

14 Georgeon, Ibid., p. 130.

15 When in 1908 the Young Turks movement led to the restoration of the Constitution and the formation of the “Committee of Union and Progress,” with the intent of reforming the Empire through a process of democratization, the most progressive representatives were those of the Dönme of Thessalonike. Such was their involvement that “the indigenous conservative press, in some cases owned by Greeks, sought the scapegoat for Unionist policies in the Jews and so-called ‘crypto-Jews’ (the Dönme) of Salonica.” See Feroz Ahmad, “Unionist relations with the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire; The Functioning of a Plural Society* / Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. (New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), p. 425.

16 Christos Zapheires, “The devastated ‘Mother of Israel’” in *Thessalonikes Topiographia* (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1990), p. 93.

17 Ibid., pp. 93-94.

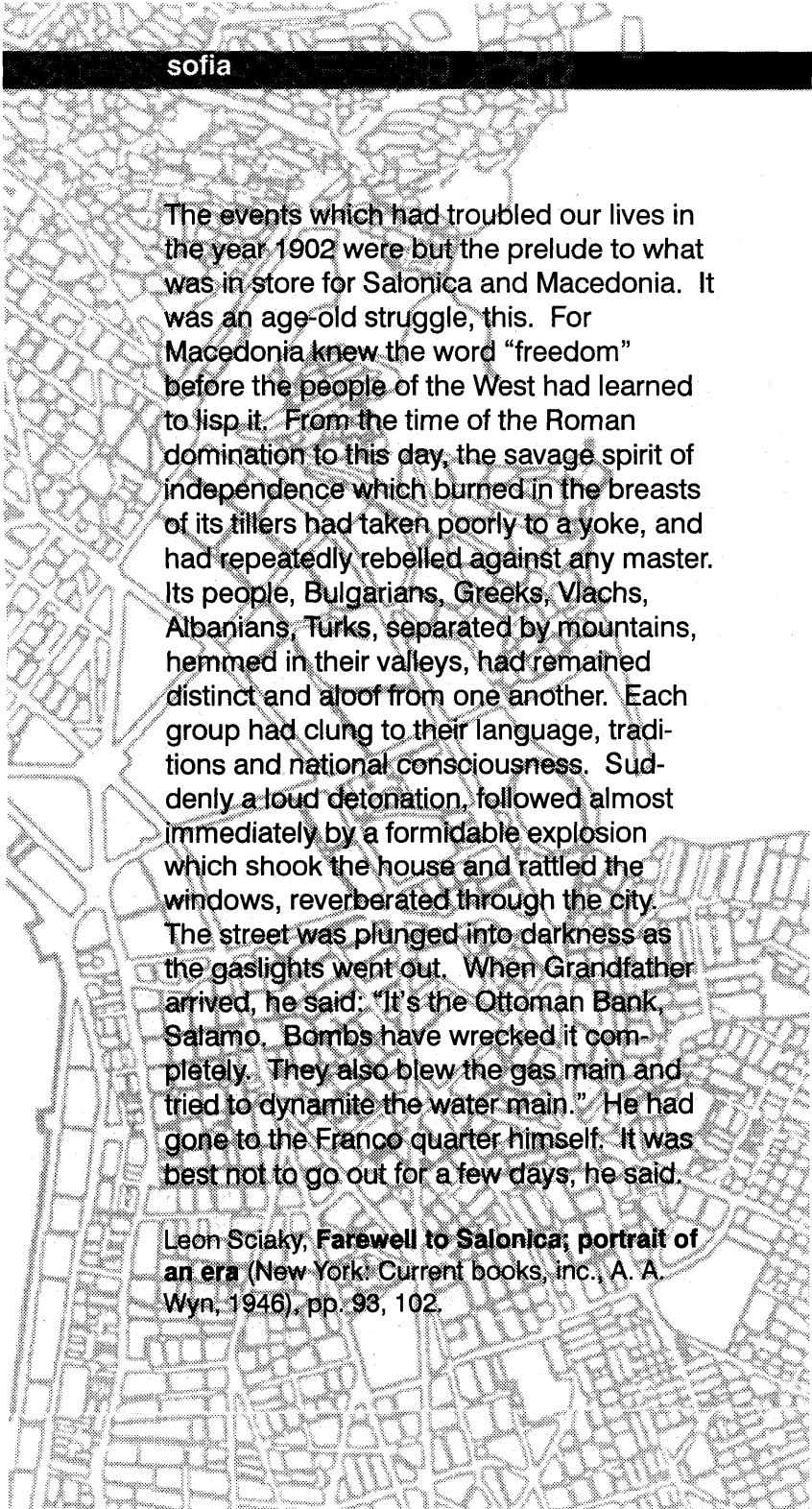
18 The *Yeni Djami* is the only public building of the Dönme community to survive, however there are many private residences, which were built for and owned by affluent Dönme, still standing in the area formerly known as “The Castles” (see *Cannes*).

19 Sciaky, Ibid., pp. 120-121.



ottoman bank





The events which had troubled our lives in the year 1902 were but the prelude to what was in store for Salonica and Macedonia. It was an age-old struggle, this. For Macedonia knew the word “freedom” before the people of the West had learned to lisp it. From the time of the Roman domination to this day, the savage spirit of independence which burned in the breasts of its tillers had taken poorly to a yoke, and had repeatedly rebelled against any master. Its people, Bulgarians, Greeks, Vlachs, Albanians, Turks, separated by mountains, hemmed in their valleys, had remained distinct and aloof from one another. Each group had clung to their language, traditions and national consciousness. Suddenly a loud detonation, followed almost immediately by a formidable explosion which shook the house and rattled the windows, reverberated through the city. The street was plunged into darkness as the gaslights went out. When Grandfather arrived, he said: “It’s the Ottoman Bank, Salamo. Bombs have wrecked it completely. They also blew the gas main and tried to dynamite the water main.” He had gone to the Franco quarter himself. It was best not to go out for a few days, he said.

Leon Sciaky, **Farewell to Salonica; portrait of an era** (New York: Current books, inc., A. A. Wyn, 1946), pp. 98, 102.

In the center of the Frankish quarter of the city, facing the “Road of the Franks” (see *Malta*) still stands the building known as the Ottoman Bank, which was initially built by the rich merchant Abbott. When Abbott went bankrupt, the Ottoman Bank, the state-run Turkish central bank, bought the building and used it as its headquarters in Thessalonike. However, the edifice that survives today is not the original one, since that “was destroyed in 1903, blown up by Bulgarian terrorists.”¹ Soon thereafter, Turkish architects Barouch and Amar designed the new building, in a “neo-Baroque style, with many French and neoclassical influences; at present day, it has been modified to house the State Conservatory of the city.”²

It seems quite puzzling why Bulgarians would perform terrorist acts inside Thessalonike, at that time still under Ottoman rule. In fact, the blowing up of the Ottoman Bank was the first of a series of episodes that took place in the city during the so-called “Struggle for Macedonia.” “From late 19th century onwards, Thessalonike and its region, still under Ottoman rule, had become an ‘Apple of Discord’ between the European and Balkan countries. Especially Bulgaria had its eye on Thessalonike, ever since the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 ended with the Treaty of St. Stephen and the creation of a great Bulgarian State.”³ Other European forces, too, became involved in the competition, including Austria (see *Vienna*) and Italy. After the 1897 Greek-Turkish war, in which Greece (at that time still a relatively small kingdom in the southern part of modern day Greek State) was defeated in a humiliating way, the competition between Greece and Bulgaria for Macedonia became more and more intense. “It became obvious to both sides that a race for Macedonia had started. Bulgaria launched a vigorous and systematic campaign, featuring particularly the foundation of schools and started preparing the ground for future encroachments. The Bulgarians in those days, full of fire and enthusiasm, made no secret of their ambition to appropriate the whole of Macedonia and Thrace.”⁴

Although in Greek historiography Bulgaria’s claims on Thessalonike and its region are presented as unfair and unjustified, the “Macedonian question,” which was first

manifested with the formation of the Bulgarian national state, was, and still is, a very complex one. The Greek national identity of Macedonia, taken for granted by the Greeks, was based on a political ideology that was much contested by the rest of the Balkan nations, especially by Bulgaria. In the context of the “Greek patriot dreaming of a ‘Megali Hellas,’ a Great Greece,”⁵ this ideology propagated that Greece as a sovereign state had the right to claim as its own the lands and peoples once-upon-a-time encompassed by the Byzantine Empire. This was not historically unsustainable, to a large degree, since Greeks could claim that they had a continuous presence in these territories. In addition, Greeks, represented by the Patriarch of Constantinople, had been the leaders of all Orthodox Christian populations in the Balkans (see *Kiev*), as the Ottomans treated all their Christian subjects, regardless their ethnic identity, as one nation, the “Byzantine nation” (“*Millet-i Rum*”). However,

It was the emergence of an independent Greek state in 1830 which rendered inevitable the eventual demise of the *Millet-i Rum*, although it was formally to survive for almost another century. For only some three-quarters of a million of the approximately two million Greeks under Ottoman rule were contained within the frontiers of the new Greece, and for much of the first century of its independent existence the entire *raison d’être* of the Greek state was the redemption of the “unredeemed” Greeks of the Ottoman Empire, even if sizeable numbers of these Ottoman Greeks were quite happy to accept the existing status-quo.

This quotation, taken from an article by a scholar of Ottoman history, would hardly appear in any Greek historical analysis; for Greeks, the struggle for Macedonia and Thessalonike was not an imperialistic policy of the newly founded Greek kingdom, as this writer suggests. Instead, it is considered a true liberation from a dynastic rule, the Ottoman, who for centuries oppressed the Hellenic population of these lands; numerous hardships, the Greek descendants of the Byzantines maintained their language, religion, and identity as Greeks, and longed for their “redemption.” However, Leon Sciaky, being a Jew and a witness from the era when these arguments, from both sides, were fabricated, provides us with his own, possibly fairly objective, opinion:



The former Ottoman Bank, now State Conservatory of Thessalonike. Detail of its facade on Franks Street (see *Malta*).

Bulgarians, Serbs, and Vlachs, people ethnically distinct and with political aspirations counter to one another's and to those of the Greeks, found themselves grouped in the "Millet-i Roum," under the absolute power of Greek bishops. The Greeks, with the dream of the eventual reconstruction of the Byzantine Empire ever in their minds, proceeded to a ruthless Hellenization of their Christian brothers. Greek priests in Bulgarian villages were primarily political teachers; speaking and teaching of Bulgarian in schools was forbidden; books were burned; and with the help of the Turkish prefect, a help he could demand and obtain by virtue of his office, the priest persecuted the recalcitrants as heretics and put down any attempt at rebellion. The Bulgarian owed not a little of the preservation of his identity and of his growing national consciousness to the stubborn resistance he offered to his Greek tormentor.⁷

In this light, we can read the accounts of the Greek-Bulgarian confrontation having in mind the multiple political interpretations of the controversial "Struggle for Macedonia," especially in the context of the city of Thessalonike, which was at the storm center of this struggle. For the Greek historian, "it was thanks to this struggle that Macedonia preserved her consciousness of being Greek – it prepared the sortie of 1912 and the liberation of the Greeks who were enslaved."⁸ In 1912, during the First Balkan War, in which the Orthodox Balkan Powers of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Montenegro formed a single front against Turkey, the Greek army succeeded in entering triumphantly into Thessalonike; however, the Bulgarians, disappointed with the outcome, continued to reside in the city. These events led rapidly to the Second Balkan War, between the former allies, Greece and Bulgaria. As Sciaky remembers, "regrettable incidents' had a way of occurring and of further exacerbating an already tense situation. In Salonica, where the 15,000 Bulgarian troops had come unbidden, tempers were reaching the end of their tethers. Dark, muttered threats followed vehemently denied insults or alleged provocations: Bulgarians sitting at café tables eying Greek brothers-in-arms at other tables; Bulgarian officers choosing to commandeer the equipment that the Greek army happened to be most in need of; Bulgarian soldiers singing and laughing merrily in the streets, seeming ignoring the fact that their very presence in the old Byzantine city was a constant irritation to the Greek patriots."⁹



Arrival of the Greek Army in Thessalonike on October 26, 1912. The Greeks reached the city just a few hours before the Bulgarians did (see also *Kiev*).

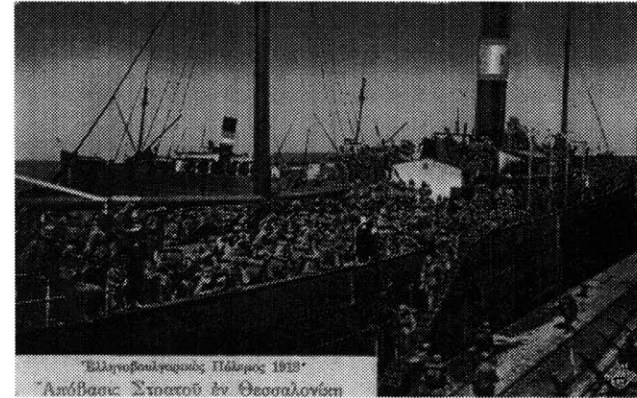
Upon the refusal of the Bulgarians to quit Thessalonike, savagely fought clearing-up operations started on June 16th, 1913, right inside the city. “The oldest residents still remember the fighting with horror even today. This was the Battle of Thessalonike. The Bulgarians had taken up fortified positions in barracks, schools, and the church of Saint Sophia, at six different points in the city. The night was a grim nightmare, but ended with the surrender of the Bulgarians. The victorious conclusion of the Second Balkan War set the seal upon the definite incorporation of Thessalonike within the domain of Greece.”¹⁰

If this actual battle for Thessalonike marked the official annexation of the city to Greece, celebrated and commemorated extensively, as postcards of that time show very graphically **, the fact is that the Macedonian question is still pending. It was brought to surface once again after the dismissal of Communism in Eastern European countries, particularly the “democratization” of former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Rumania. The opening up of new possibilities for Thessalonike (see *Kiev* and *Kosovo*), namely due to the fact that Greece is the only Southeast European country that is a member of the European Union, has also brought the resurrection of problems regarding minorities and foreign-speaking peoples residing in Greek Macedonia.

On the other hand, inside Greece itself, there is a split between South (which is called also “Old Greece,” with Athens as its center) and North (namely, Macedonia and Thrace), in which the problematic ethnic identity of Thessalonike and its region often resurfaces, in most cases lightheartedly. It is characteristic, though it is hardly ever discussed, that soccer fans of Thessalonikian teams are called “Bulgarians” by those of South Greek teams.¹² In this joking, yet telling, way, Thessalonike remains even in the Greek consciousness of our times, a territory of mixed identity, a “state in itself” (see *Alexandria*), as it has historically been.

1 Christos Zappeires, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athens: Exantas, 1997), p.163.

2 Ibid.



Greek troops landing in Thessalonike’s port during the Second Balkan War. The caption reads: “Greek-Bulgarian War, 1913. Landing of the [Greek] Army in Thessalonike.”

“Greece in Thessalonike”

Contemporary postcard commemorating the 1912 annexation of the city to the modern Greek State after 482 years of Ottoman sovereignty. The personification of Greece is flanked by the portraits of King Georgios and Prime Minister Venizelos (see *Istanbul*). Note the White Tower (see *Pisa*) in the background.



3 The Treaty of St. Stephen marked the end of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 and established the creation of a great Bulgarian independent state. According to the treaty, which was never recognized diplomatically by Greece, the southern border of Bulgaria “almost skirted the city of Thessalonike and included nearly the whole of Macedonia. Although this treaty was upset, thanks to the opposition of the great European powers, in particular that of England, at the congress of Berlin (1878), the Bulgarian frontier of the Treaty of St. Stephen became deeply impressed on the minds of Bulgarian politicians as a national objective.” See Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), pp. 124-125.

4 Ibid., p. 126.

5 Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica; portrait of an era* (New York: Current books, inc., A. A. Wyn, 1946), p. 215.

6 Richard Clogg, “The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire; The Functioning of a Plural Society* / Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. (New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), p. 193.

7 Sciaky, Ibid., p. 112.

8 Vacalopoulos, Ibid., p. 128.

9 Sciaky, Ibid., p. 215.

10 Vacalopoulos, Ibid., p. 131.

11 Recently the term provoked a great debate in Greek public opinion, showing how sensitive the society is about the question of “national identity.” In 1996, a new dictionary was published; under the entry “Bulgarian,” the author – Yiannis Babinotis, a notable professor of Linguistics – had included the information on its metaphorical use to characterize a fan of Northern Greek athletic teams, particularly of Thessalonike. There was immediate reaction, especially by Thessalonikian politicians; after a long and fierce debate, this first edition of the dictionary was banned. It was only reprinted after this entry (and others, equally contested) had been rewritten.

city index



aristotelous square



spalato



The plan is an ingenious combination of contemporary trends and site-defined elements; it introduces, for the first time in such a scale in Greece, elements like classical lines, axes, diagonals, the hierarchy of street network, the administrative center, the promotion of monuments. The heart of the center took shape in the form of two squares connected with an avenue vertical to the quay, offering marvelous views towards Mt. Olympus. The first square, on the site of the Roman forum, was intended to serve as the administrative hub of the city. The second, Aristotelous Square, designed as space for recreation and luxury shopping, formed a real piazzetta on the waterfront and became the “balcony of the city.”

Alexandra Yerolympos, “The portion of the fire,” in *Thessalonike 1850-1918: the “city of Jews” and the awakening of the Balkans* (Athens: Hekate, 1994), pp. 283-4. Originally published as “Un urbanisme cosmopolite,” in *La “ville de Juifs” et la reveil des Balkans*, ed. G. Veinstein (Paris, 1992).

On August 18-19, 1917 there was the greatest fire in the history of Thessalonike; there has been a great deal of speculation about what caused it and who benefited from it, however, most commentators agree that the fire started by accident from a Jewish house. Enrique Saporta y Beha, a Sephardic Jew, describes vividly “the landscape of Apocalypse that presented itself when, after 33 hours, the fire was put down. It was a large, silent, wretched space, full of ruins; a spectacle of death, devastation, and horror.”¹ The fire destroyed 128 hectares of the historic core of the city, leaving more than 70,000 homeless, of which 80% were Jews. “The fire was a terrible blow for the Jewish community, from which it never managed to fully recuperate, since 53,737 Jews found themselves homeless. In addition, most of the administrative buildings of the Community, thirty Synagogues, public benefit establishments, the schools of the Alliance and ten more schools were destroyed completely.”² The great archives of the Israelite community, which included one of the greatest collections of religious and secular Jewish literature, were also perished in the fire – “and whatever was saved, was finally destroyed in the Holocaust in 1943.”³

The immense destruction of Thessalonike was in the news around the world – even on the front pages of newspapers in New York. Since it coincided with the period of World War I (see *London* and *Kosovo*), it also shattered the soldiers of the Allies who resided in the city and watched the city perish – “the city that for them was the only contact with life.”⁴ A French correspondent wrote that he saw “the city dying in the triple agony of flames, ashes, and smoke.”⁵ Another eyewitness narrates that “from all the grand cafes that made the city so attractive and were reminiscent of Paris there is nothing left – only the ‘Stein’ is still standing on Venizelou Street”⁶ (see *Vienna*). In short, it was a lamentable event from all points of view... Three months after the fire, a French newspaper published in Thessalonike during the years of the war, *L’echo de France*, included an open forum for ideas for the new plan. Some of the proposals were: “to fill the port and make it the central urban square of the city; to demolish the Arch of Triumph (which is ugly) and use its pieces to construct a tower as tall as that of Eiffel; to transform the Freedom Square into a cemetery; and to

maintain some of the burned buildings as monuments to the fire.”⁷ Unfortunately, none of these imaginative ideas were taken into account in the new plan. The Greek government, immediately after the fire, formed a scientific “Committee for the Redesign of Thessalonike,” in which the principal designer was Ernest Hebrard, architect and planner serving the French army stationed in Thessalonike. Hebrard was interested in archaeology; before coming to Thessalonike he had worked on the restorations of Diocletian’s Palace in Spalato (Split in modern Croatia) and upon his arrival, he had conducted excavations in the ancient site of Mikra, where the modern airport is located.⁸ Thus, the coincidence of the great fire and the commission of the new design offered an almost ideal opportunity for Hebrard’s Beaux Arts training and historicist tendencies to take shape. In the plan, “all the documents of the Greek past of the city, with emphasis on the Byzantine ones, are freed from their contacts and are promoted through studied perspectives, having as a background the non-competitive, homogeneous architecture of the surrounding space.”⁹ The urban fabric is redesigned through the introduction of the urban block, “a strong compositional pattern that defines new parameters in the urban landscape, new forms of everyday life and appropriation of space.”¹⁰ In terms of architectural forms, the style that is selected “adopts a morphology reminiscent of the glorious Byzantine past of the city, which is regarded as the last before the Ottoman occupation metamorphosis of Greek civilization, and not of the more recent past of the city, namely the Macedonian vernacular.”¹¹ The only area that maintained its traditional architecture was the Upper Town, which for centuries was the Turkish quarter in the city (see *Ankara*).

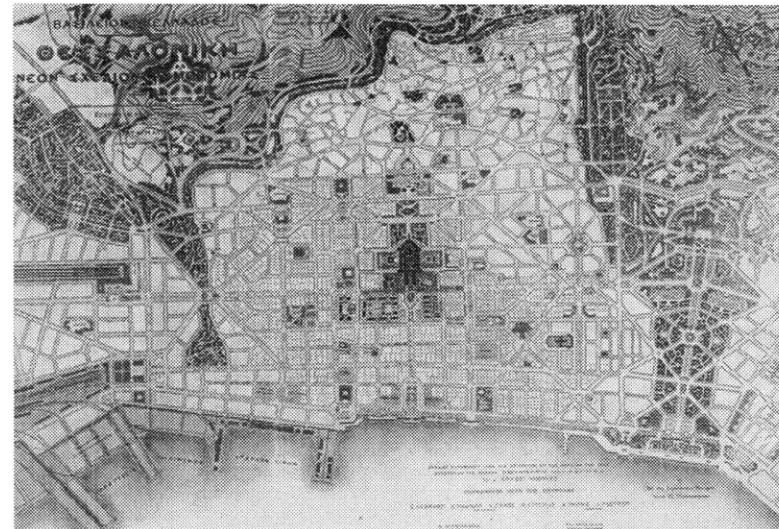
The 1917 fire happened at a crucial point in the city’s history; “the fundamental event of the annexation of the city to the Greek State had just preceded and the exchange of populations and the settlement of refugees were about to follow.”¹² Thus, what is often described as “the radical effacement of the traditional city”¹³ reflects the successive ruptures taking place in the function, form, and life of the city. Thessalonike in the 20th century acquired a new identity and a new role, a new population and a new space. The type of urbanism that was actualized, envisioned by its French designer, was aligned with the political aspirations of the central



The south part of the city center photographed a few months after the fire. The rubble has been cleared up for the implementation of Hebrard’s plan.

The city reborn from its ashes

Shortly before the end of World War I, Thessalonike was hit by a great fire that in August 1917 destroyed the greatest part of the city, leaving about 70,000 homeless. With the initiative of Alexandros Papanastasiou (see *Athens*), the government of Venizelos (see *Istanbul*) proceeded immediately to the commission of a new plan to a special scientific committee of Greek and foreign urban planners, under the direction of Ernest Hebrard, architect and urban planner who was at the time serving the French army stationed in the city. An article published ten years after the catastrophe in the *New York Times* provides some impressions from the rapid reconstruction process. "There, where the 1917 fire destroyed the entire commercial area and the houses of about 100,000 people, the new city of Thessalonike has been erected to replace the old one. To the east and west of the bay, where Turkish houses used to be, new and marvelous residences with red roof line up along straight roads. This city reminds us of the ancient beauty of Athens and the modernity of New York. Everywhere new buildings, new docks, new railway stations, new schools, new theaters, new parks, and in a while, also a new subway system connecting the two train stations. The reconstruction of Thessalonike has been the opportunity for a people living in the land of Herculean traditions to show all of its virtues."





The northern end of the Aristotelous axis. In Hebrard's plan the site was designated as "government center" for the modern city. However, when building construction started, the Roman Forum was discovered. The excavations are still in process.



The southern end of the axis, Aristotelous Square; located on the waterfront, it is the civic piazza of Thessalonike *par excellence*. Flanked by strictly organized facades, in a neo-Byzantine style, it is the only part of the city where the Hebrard plan was thoroughly implemented.

authority of the country, which imagined Thessalonike as the "most beautiful" city of the new, extended Greek State. Indeed the plan has been much admired in Greece as the first actualized vision of modern town-planning principles. Nevertheless, in the context of the urban planning discipline, the plan has been accused of having "obliterated to a large degree the particular character of Thessalonike and transformed it into an anonymous urban center."¹⁴ A famous statement is also that "Urban planning as an art was forgotten in Thessalonike; as a technique, it is a commendable effort."¹⁵ Nevertheless, the attributes of the plan that appear as its shortcomings (for example, its "generic" formal patterns or its "lack of particular style"), were actually its strongest points. What the new authority intended for the city was exactly to remove it from its status of "particularity"; the city had to be shaped in an easily recognizable Western urban typology, so as to present itself as modernized and progressive and to abort its stagnant, Oriental character. "The rationalism, evident in the implementation of Hebrard's plan, affected the typology of the urban fabric, the layout of plots though the reparceling of urban land, and the introduction of the urban apartment block."¹⁶

In this respect, the fire and the subsequent Hebrard plan lay for Thessalonike the foundations of modern architecture and town planning. In terms of the city's history, The transition from its Ottoman veneer to its modern, Greek image was to a large degree based also to its projection as a Byzantine city, to a physical reconfirmation of its Greek-speaking past. To accomplish this, the city "stops" its history in the Byzantine monuments and treats with disdain all the more recent ones – this dominant ideology was crystallized in Hebrard's design. In the plan, Aristotelous Street was designed as the epitome of the plan's formal and programmatic intentions; this vertical axis connected the basilica of Saint Demetrius (see *Kiev*), the hearth of the city's Byzantine history, with the Roman Forum and ended in a waterfront piazza opposite Mt. Olympus. From the original plan for the monumental axis and the two squares, described in the *City Index*, only the lower part was actualized, "giving to the city its most beautiful urban space with the strictly organized facades, perhaps its only modern monument."¹⁷ Recently, there was an international competition for the

redesign of the square and the homonymous street.¹⁸ Among more than a hundred contributions from all over the world, the winner was a Greek-Italian design team, whose proposal was based on an indigenous integration of the archaeological site that lies underneath, practically, the entire city. The project, anticipating the discovery of archaeological remains throughout the axis of Aristotelous Street, proposes that all open spaces, where the sites will be revealed, be covered with a grid of transparent paving. Evocatively entitled “*A la recherche du temps perdu*,” the proposal was distinguished for its enabling the coexistence of both strata: the “lost past” and the contemporary, quotidian, present.

1 Enrique Saporta y Beha, *En Torno de la Torre Blanca [Around the White Tower]* (Paris: 1982), reprinted in “Genius Loci: Thessalonike in literature,” in *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 2, p. 415.

2 Albertos Nar, “Communal organization and activity of the Jewish Community of Thessalonike,” in *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, Ibid., vol. 1, p. 287.

3 Haralambos Papastathis, “The cultural life in Thessalonike under Turkish occupation” in *Tois agathois vasileuoussa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, Ibid., vol. 2, p. 225.

4 Vassilis Kolonas, “Thessalonike during World War I,” in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 7/1983, p. 54.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 “The Army of the Orient also left scientific work, with the archaeological excavations inside the city and in the area of Mikra conducted by the Special Archaeological Department, under the direction of the planner Ernest Hebrard, who would become Head of the committee for the redesign of Thessalonike after the 1917 fire.” See Christos Zappeires, *In Thessalonike: 1900-1960* (Athens: Exantas, 1994), p. 55.

9 A. Yerolymou and V. Hastaoglou, “Catastrophes and transformations; the making of modern Thessalonike,” in *Art + design in Greece* 23/1992, p. 19.

10 Ibid., p. 18.

11 Alexandra Karadimou-Yerolymou, *The reconstruction of Thessalonike after the 1917 fire* (Thessalonike: University Studio Press, 1984), p. 169.

12 A. Yerolymou and V. Hastaoglou, Ibid., p. 18.

13 Alexandra Yerolymou, “The portion of the fire,” *Thessalonike 1850-1918: the “city of Jews” and the awakening of the Balkans* (Athens: Hekate, 1994), p. 284.



Nikiforidis, Cuomo, Tarani (1997). *Redesigning the Aristotelous axis*. Prizewinners. Perspective view of the proposal for the Roman Agora, the northern end of the axis.

14 Ibid.

15 The quote is from French urban historian Loyer (1966), as cited in Alexandra Karadimou-Yerolymou, *The reconstruction of Thessalonike after the 1917 fire*, Ibid., p. 169.

16 Nikos S. Kalogirou, *Architecture and Urban Planning in Postwar Thessalonike* (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis Barbounakis, 1995), p. 5.

17 A. Yerolymou and V. Hastaoglou, Ibid., p. 19.

18 For a full documentation of the competition entries, see *Restructuring the city : international urban design competitions for Thessalonike, under the auspices of the U.I.A* / ed. Vilma Hastaoglou-Martinidis (Windsor, U.K.: Andreas Papadakis, 1998).

city index



alcazar



stuttgart

In May 1876 an event transformed Thessalonike into the epicenter of Europe. The “Slaughter of the consuls” was the cry that started from Thessalonike and brought turmoil to the European conscience – unfortunately, only for a few days. The Turkish mob slaughtered the consuls of France and Germany inside one of its mosques. The reason was the attempt of the Greek Orthodox population to postpone for a few days the conversion of a 14-year-old Christian Bulgarian girl to Islam. Fatal coincidences, misunderstandings, frauds, and medieval fanaticism on behalf of the outraged Muslim mob led to the terrible slaughter of two completely innocent diplomats. The Great Forces, as they used to do in similar cases, sent their battleships to the Thermaikos Bay. The “Slaughter of the Consuls” passed into History as a stigma of barbarism.

Polychrones K. Enepekides, **Thessalonike in the years 1875-1912: German politicians, diplomats, and writers narrate the life, institutions and historical topography of the city** (Thessalonike: Ekdotikos Oikos Aphon Kyriakide, 1981), p. 107.

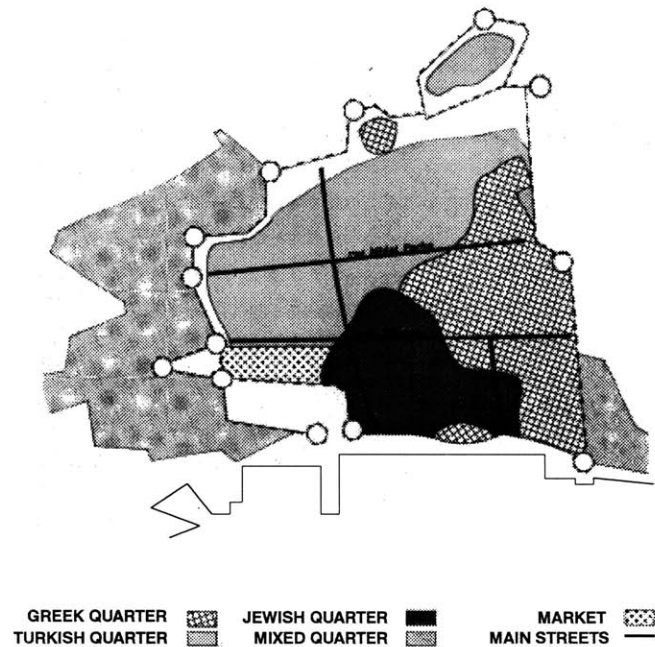
After the fall of the city to the Ottoman Turks, ex-Byzantine Thessalonike entered a new era in which its predominant characteristic as an urban agglomeration would become its cosmopolitanism, or, alternatively, its multiculturalism. The waves of Jewish arrivals in late 15th and early 16th century came to add to the Greek-Turkish polarization of the inhabitants a new, and probably much needed, third element. By the beginning of the 17th century, the city would have 48 Muslim districts, 56 Jewish districts and 16 occupied by Greeks and Armenians.¹ In relation to the city’s inhabitants in the 17th century city, the Greek historian, based on travelers’ accounts, describes their external differences in the demeanor, style and color of clothes and especially of hats, and concludes: “All this variegated, colorful and arresting mass of people – inhabitants, clergy, soldiers, and so on – filled the markets, purchasing or loitering in front of the merchandise; entered the courtyards before the mosques and churches; halted devoutly before the Muslim shrines. Generally speaking, Thessalonike had the swarming, vigorous life of the cities of the East.”²

It seems inevitable that this picturesque imagery of colorful mixing of races and “ethnic types,” conveyed through travel accounts of Western travelers, would be applied in Thessalonike. Nevertheless, when one comes across stories like the “Slaughter of the Consuls,” described in the *City Index*, there is a sudden awareness that the differences inside this “variegated mass,” often invisible to the external observer, the transient visitor, were in fact dramatic. Fernard Braudel notes that “Théophile Gautier, in his *Voyage à Constantinople* (Paris, 1853), gives a minute description, at every port of call, of the spectacle of this overwhelming carnival. At first one shares his enthusiasm, then one finds oneself skipping the inevitable description – because it is always the same; everywhere he finds the same Greeks, the same Armenians, Albanians, Levantines, Jews, Turks, and Italians.”³ Braudel suggests that, in his effort to “unsnarl the tangled threads,” the cultural historian “might almost in the end be tempted to say with Gabriel Audisio that the essential Mediterranean race is that which inhabits its extravagant cosmopolitan ports: Venice, Alexandria, Livorno, Marseilles, Salonica, Barcelona, Constantinople, to name only the largest – a single race embracing all others. But this is patently absurd. The very

multiplicity of color indicates a diversity of elements: the variety proves there has been no amalgamation, that distinct elements remain and can be isolated and recognized as one moves away from the big centers where they are hopelessly tangled.”⁴

In the context of Braudel’s argument, the organization of the city of Thessalonike in the Ottoman period could be viewed as a physical manifestation of a palimpsest of isolated distinct elements. (* plan with sectors). The Moslem population occupied “the northern, hilly side of the city, the Upper Town, where the climate was healthier and the danger of fire limited”⁵ (see *Ankara*). The Greeks were located in the southeast part, around the Arch and the Hippodrome (see *Milan*). The Jews lived in the southwest part, near the harbor and the markets, in the densest and dirtiest neighborhoods. The Frankish quarter (see *Malta*), formed as early as at the time of the Latin occupation of the city, was at the center of the market, in close proximity to the port. These were residential quarters, however; during daytime everyone met in the bazaars inside the city and in the purely commercial district, which was outside the walls, along a narrow waterfront strip that communicated with the Gate of the Port. There were practically no other public places or occasions for common gatherings. Thus, the diverse ethnic groups shared the same urban entity, enjoyed the economic advantages of its space of production, but were culturally distinct.

The recognition on the part of the Ottoman administration that religion was the attribute that conditioned the status of its subjects, far from being democratic, was in a sense a major contribution to a social consensus, necessary for relatively peaceful cohabitation. On the other hand, it was through distinction and difference that the autonomy of its group was actually maintained and remained practically intact for centuries. After almost five hundred years of Ottoman occupation, Leon Sciaky, a Thessalonikian Jew, notes characteristically that “the Jew, the Greek, the Bulgarian, the Turk, each lived within himself. They were as so many strangers, with as many distinct attitudes and ideas, with so many ways of life. They lived together within the same political boundaries, in the same city, in the same neighborhood, yet separated from one another by divisions less scaleable than walls of stone and mortar; they



were kept apart by barriers of language, customs, and political dreams more insuperable than material obstacles. Five centuries of close proximity had brought about no common unifying belief, no hyphen, no understanding.”⁶

One should note that the transformations in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century brought about changes in this social segregation, and already by early 20th century there was a conscious recognition from all parts that ethnic difference could be secondary to the benefit of the city. Sciaky himself describes such an occasion of manifested unity in his discussion of the Young Turks revolution (see *Paris*), as contemporary photographs also powerfully illustrate.

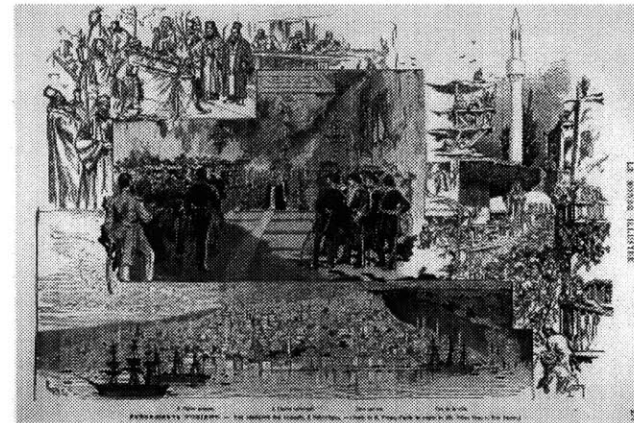
The Slaughter of the Consuls, on the other hand, was a manifestation of extreme animosity among the city’s communities. In regard of the incident, the Greek historian, cited in the *City Index*, follows the accounts of the events as narrated by an eyewitness, the German politician Karl Braun-Wiesbaden (1822-1893). In the second volume of the three-volume work *A Journey in Turkey*, published in Stuttgart (1876-1877), Braun narrates his memories from his stay in Thessalonike. Karl Braun, a long-time Parliament member of the Reichstag on the side of Bismarck, includes a detailed description of the infamous Slaughter, which he analyzes politically, in terms of its reasons, as well as its repercussions. He writes: “No one would ever imagine that such a fanatic act – like the slaughter – would ever take place right inside a mosque, that is, a symbol of religious tolerance, especially in Thessalonike, which Fallmerayer [see *Vienna*] himself praises as the city of different faiths but simultaneously of the most perfect inter-religious peace.”⁷ In actuality, the incident, more than a manifestation of local animosities, was profoundly influenced by exogenous developments happening in the political field of the Empire. The Turkish population of the entire Empire, included that of Thessalonike, was deeply dissatisfied with Sultan Abdul Aziz for a number of reasons, like his reformation policies granting rights to non-Muslims, the imposition of taxes, but mainly the failure of the military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina earlier that year. “This last reason for discontent,” the kidnapping of a girl who was going to convert to Islam, came along and exacerbated the feelings of

the Turks in Thessalonike; it was the “last drop” after the “repeated humiliations they had experience of late.”⁸ Such was the impact of the event, that “just twenty four days after the murders in Thessalonike a politico-military coup in Constantinople deposed the Sultan Abdul Aziz from his throne and elevated Prince Murad.”⁹

Nonetheless, all too often, Greek historians refer to the “tragic assassination of the Consuls of France and Germany” as the manifestation of the religious fanaticism of the Turks and their hatred for the Christians, even of their overall “lower” mental status. The nationalistic exploitation of this kind of incidents contributed to the increased tension engendered in the relationships between Greeks and Turks, a tension that was decisively “solved” in the course of two wars, in 1912 and 1922. Greece and Turkey, as national states thereafter, have been formed on the basis of this policy of polarization and growing enmity. The political climate between the two countries is manifested in the deliberate policy of “benign neglect” for the other’s cultural monuments happening to reside in one’s land. For example, the effacement of Ottoman presence, so explicitly and manifestly dominant by the plethora of minarets “powerfully rising upwards”¹⁰ throughout the city, happened immediately with the advent of the annexation to the Greek state:

The minarets, the pride of Muslim art, more than 50 of them, gave to Thessalonike an Ottoman aspect; the minaret of Alaca Imaret, adorned with multicolored ceramic tiles, stood out among them all. These structures – as reminiscent of the sufferings of our nation... – were demolished; the ones of the old Byzantine churches after the liberation [1912], the ones of mosques proper after the exchange of population [1922]. With a great struggle, the minaret of Rotunda, though truncated, has been preserved to our days; the building is attributed to architect Sinan.¹¹

Significantly, the author of the above quote is Kostas Moskoph, a social historian from Thessalonike, one of the few Greek scholars who have researched the Ottoman period quite objectively. Undeniably, under the Ottomans, the city had been adorned with significant public architecture that was not merely religious: covered markets (including the “Bezesteni,” an impressive orthogonal building with its six lead-



The Slaughter of the Consuls as depicted in *Le Monde Illustré*. The collage includes a view of the city from the sea.

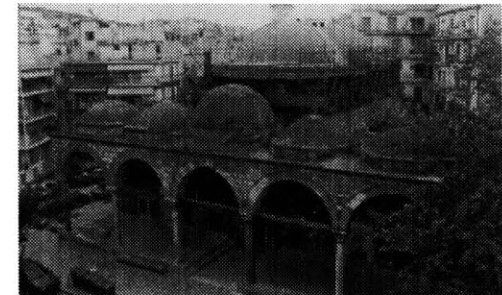
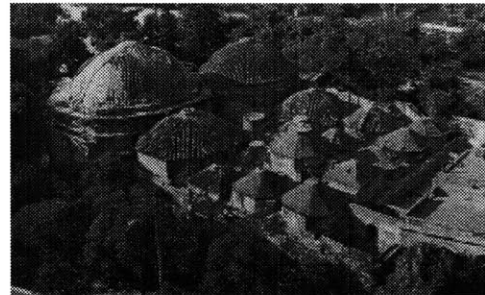
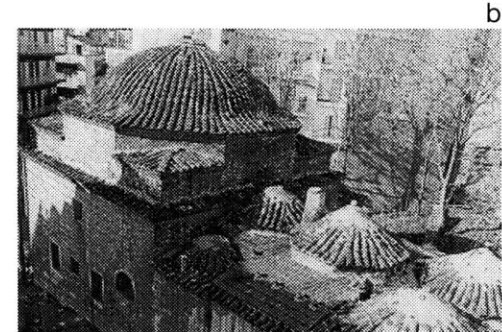
Ottoman buildings in Thessalonike

a. Bezesten (16th century): great market-hall for silk fabrics and jewelry, covered with six lead domes; it still traditionally accommodates jewelry shops.

b. Pasa Hamam (1467-68): now known as Hamam "Phoenix," it operated as public bath until the 1978 earthquake.

c. Bey Hamam (1440): now known as Hamam "Paradeisos," it was recently restored (1997) and housed the exhibition *Secular architecture in the Balkans from the 15th to the 19th century*.

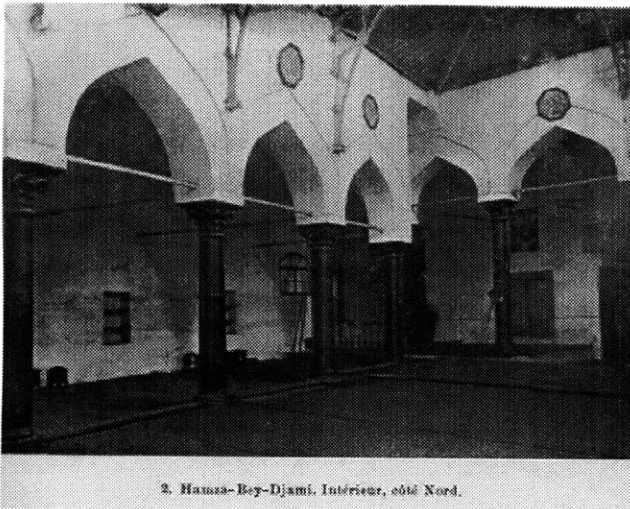
d. Alaca Imaret (1484): mosque and imaret (Islamic institution for the distribution of food to the poor), named "Alaca" ("Colorful") because of the multicolored tiles that decorated its minaret, which was demolished after 1912; it is now used as an exhibition space.



covered domes where the luxury goods and jewelry market was), numerous public baths, “imaret” (poverty houses), “mendrese” (religious schools), mausolea, hans, and fountains, rendered Thessalonike an Ottoman city. That is how she was represented in all the engraved views, before photography (see *Jiddah* and *Vienna*). And there is not a single photograph from the early 20th century Thessalonike without at least one minaret showing up somewhere in the skyline.

However, the contemporary Greek attitude towards Ottoman buildings should not be attributed to national or political reasons only. This ideology has also substantial roots on the doctrines of Western historians, who from mid 19th century onwards, visited the city repeatedly and studied its architecture and art: for them, Islamic architecture was in essence invisible. French Oreste Tafrali writes in 1902 in the last page of his *Topographie de Thessalonique*: “We have excluded from this study the monuments built by the Turks and by the Israelite community of Thessalonike, because they are insignificant from the point of view of art. We have not studied but the ancient and Byzantine monuments.”¹²

The only picture of an Ottoman building – the very last in Tafrali’s book – is that of the interior of Hamza-Bey Djami; it is a view of its interior colonnaded courtyard, which Tafrali includes merely to point out the existence of Early Byzantine capitals in second use. Ironically, this is one of the two mosque buildings that exist in modern day Thessalonike. The Hamza Bey Djami holds a special position in the Ottoman history of the city, for it was the first mosque built, in 1467-8, by Hafsa Hanum, daughter of Hamza Bey, officer of the Sultan. Following the flight of the Turks “it sheltered various commercial activities, and in the postwar period it was transformed into a movie theater, the ‘Alcazar,’ with small alterations of the initial structure. The inner courtyard was roofed to function as the cinema hall and shops were housed in the smaller spaces. After the 1979 earthquake it had several damages, but its restoration is behind schedule.”¹³ In fact the building is slowly becoming derelict. The “Alcazar,” as it is known to locals, has been misused and neglected for years, and currently very few people actually know that it was a mosque, hidden as it is behind



2. Hamza-Bey-Djami. Intérieur, côté Nord.

Photograph of the interior courtyard of the Hamza-Bey Djami (now “Alcazar”) in 1902, which Tafrali included in his *Topographie de Thessalonique* to show the Early Christian capitals in second use.

wild greenery and commercial signs. In a sense, the Alcazar stands as a forgotten remnant from a past era of “cold war” against Ottoman buildings; nowadays there is a growing interest in the study of Islamic architecture even in Greece. Recently, other Ottoman monuments in the city, including the Alaca Imaret, have been restored and are used for cultural events, like concerts, periodic exhibitions, etc. Nonetheless, local historians continue to claim that “the two surviving mosques, the Hamza Bey Djami and the Alaca Imaret do not compete in grandeur with the brilliant Byzantine churches.”¹⁴

It is hard to speculate what the future of the monument will be. There has been so much destruction in the city in relation to the Ottoman buildings, so much “cleaning up,” that, once one becomes aware of this, even the present maintenance of five or six of them seems an act of despair. Thessalonike boasts about the abundance and expertise of both scientific and technical personnel in the field of historic preservation, but the priorities, from scholarly as well as political point of view, have always been the Roman and Byzantine monuments. Under this light, the restoration of Hamza Bey Djami is an emergency, the stalling and continuous deterioration a conscious act of provocation. The mosque should be restored thoroughly in all its parts, including the minaret, without which it would be incomplete. It should not house anything (of cultural, artistic, or other nature) but *emptiness* – just as the Turkish element is absent from the city the last 78 years.

1 Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 83.

2 Ibid., p. 84.

3 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the mediterranean world in the age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972-73.p. 334), p. 763.

4 Ibid.

5 Thalia Mantopoulou-Panagiotopoulou & Evangelos Hekimoglou, “Thessalonike under Turkish Occupation; The organization of the city and the monuments” in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 64, p. 94.

6 Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica; portrait of an era* (New York: Current books, inc., A. A. Wyn, 1946). p. 112.

7 Polychrones K. Enepekides, *Thessalonike in the years 1875-1912: German politicians, diplomats, and writers narrate the life, institutions and historical topography of the city* (Thessalonike: Ekdot. Oikos Aphon Kyriakide, 1981), p. 107.

8 Vacalopoulos, p. 121.

9 Ibid., p. 121.

10 Kostas Moskoph, *Thessalonike 1700-1912: Cross-section of the ville-comptoire* (Athena : Stochastes, 1974), p. 183.

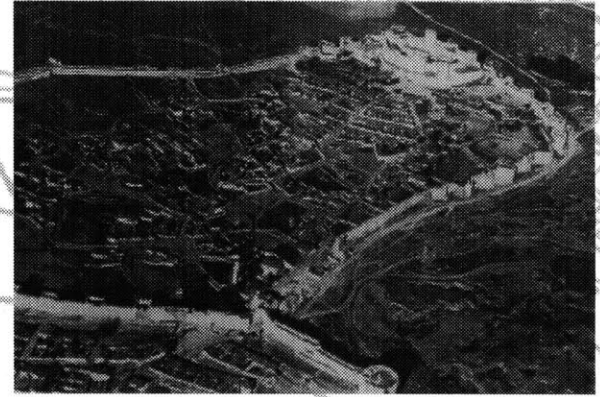
11 Ibid.

12 Oreste Tafrafi, *Topographie de Thessalonique* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1913), p. 203.

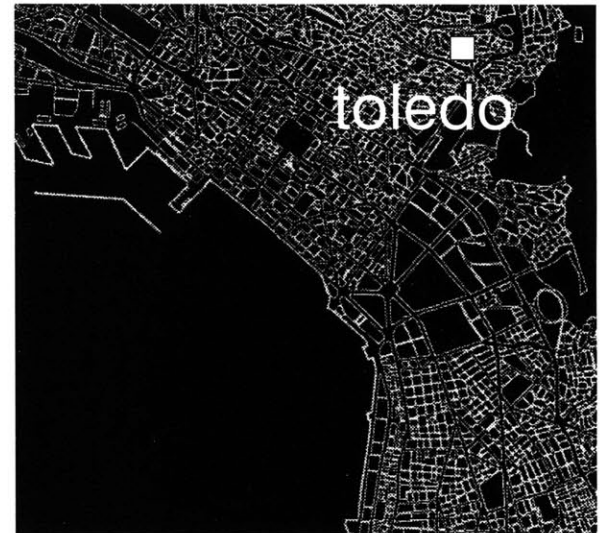
13 Christos Zapheires, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athens: Exantas, 1997), p. 151.

14 Mantopoulou, Ibid., p. 95.

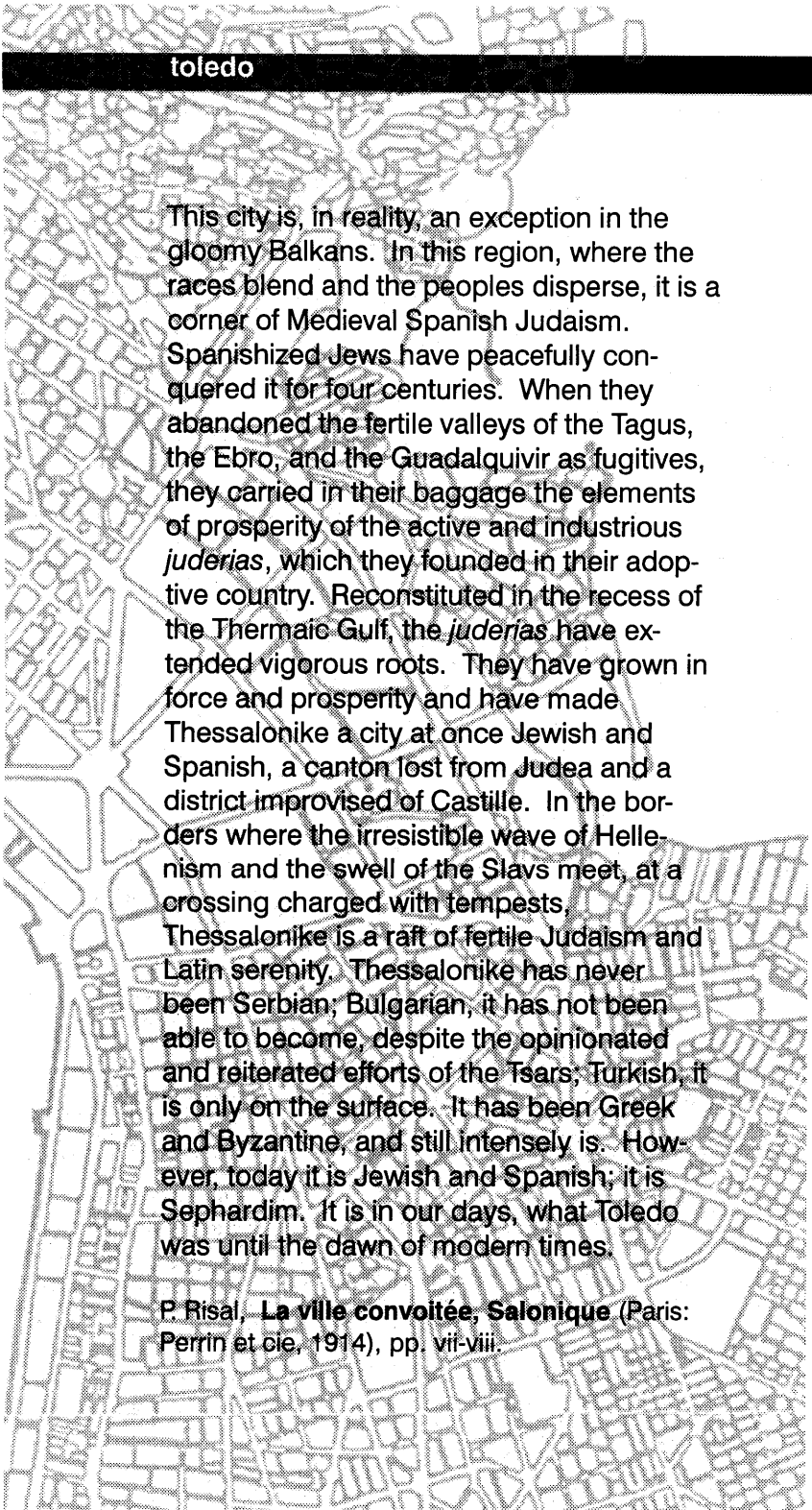
city index



acropolis



toledo



This city is, in reality, an exception in the gloomy Balkans. In this region, where the races blend and the peoples disperse, it is a corner of Medieval Spanish Judaism. Spanishized Jews have peacefully conquered it for four centuries. When they abandoned the fertile valleys of the Tagus, the Ebro, and the Guadalquivir as fugitives, they carried in their baggage the elements of prosperity of the active and industrious *juderias*, which they founded in their adoptive country. Reconstituted in the recess of the Thermaic Gulf, the *juderias* have extended vigorous roots. They have grown in force and prosperity and have made Thessalonike a city at once Jewish and Spanish, a canton lost from Judea and a district improvised of Castille. In the borders where the irresistible wave of Hellenism and the swell of the Slavs meet, at a crossing charged with tempests Thessalonike is a raft of fertile Judaism and Latin serenity. Thessalonike has never been Serbian, Bulgarian, it has not been able to become, despite the opinionated and reiterated efforts of the Tsars, Turkish, it is only on the surface. It has been Greek and Byzantine, and still intensely is. However, today it is Jewish and Spanish; it is Sephardim. It is in our days, what Toledo was until the dawn of modern times.

P. Risal, *La ville convoitée, Salonique* (Paris: Perrin et cie, 1914), pp. vii-viii.

The presence of Jews in Thessalonike dates from the second century BC; not long after the city was founded (315 BC) the first Jews arrived, originating from the prosperous Jewish community of Alexandria in Egypt.¹ According to tradition, the oldest synagogue in Thessalonike was that of “*Es Haim*” (“Tree of life”); it was there that Apostle Paul delivered his sermon when he visited the city in 50 AD. This synagogue was still standing on the corner of Kalapothaki Street and Dimosthenous Street, in close proximity to the ancient port, and was destroyed in the 1917 fire (see *Spalato*). During Roman and Byzantine times, this ancient Jewish community continued to live in the city, but it was always very small. When Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela came to Thessalonike, “this grand maritime city,” in 1159, “he found about 500 Jews.”² Two centuries later, the first wave of Ashenazim Jews from Hungary and Germany found refuge in the city, although they had nothing in common with the ones of the local community, who by that time used the Greek language. Following the Ottoman conquest in 1430, the arrivals became more and more frequent. The event however that transformed the city completely was the “Reconquista” of the Iberian peninsula from the Arabs, which ended in 1492. Ferdinand and Isabella, who were called “Spanish Kings of the Three Religions” during the war, became exclusively “Catholic Kings” and issued a decree on March 13, 1492, obliging the Jews to convert to Christianity or abandon the country. Most of the 250,000 who preferred to leave than change their faith found refuge in the Ottoman Empire, and many of them, about 20,000 chose Thessalonike for their settlement, since the city was almost deserted, after the violent conquest and the flight of its Greek inhabitants. Soon after the Spanish, the Portuguese Jews followed, being prosecuted by Emmanuel, the King of Portugal in 1496. It is with the dismantling of the prosperous *juderias* of the Iberian that the story of the “Jerusalem” or rather, the “Spain” of the Balkans, which Thessalonike was about to become, started.

Throughout the 16th century and up to early 17th century, new waves of refugees, from Provence, Poland, Italy and North Africa arrived in the city. “Until the end of the 17th century it was rare that a ship would arrive in the port of Thessalonike without bringing some Jews.”³ By 1613, 68% of the population of the city, a total of

7,557 families, were Jewish.⁴ Each community had its own synagogue and kept its autonomy; otherwise, it would have been quite impossible for the various groups, coming from different traditions, to cooperate and inhabit the same space. The names of their synagogues “Italia,” “Sicilia,” “Aragon,” “Catalan,” “Castilia,” “Puglia,” “Evora,” “Lisbon,” “Mayorca,” “Mograbis” [Maghrib] persisted in reminding their homelands and revived in the physical space of Thessalonike the Sephardim communities of the elsewhere and the faraway.⁵

Braudel has argued that the frequent expulsion of Jews from Western Europe is a proof of the overpopulation of Mediterranean Europe after the end of the 15th century. Jews “were driven out of Castile and Portugal in 1492, from Sicily in 1493, from Naples in 1540–41, from Tuscany in 1571, and finally from Milan in 1597. In countries whose population was too great for their resources, as the Iberian Peninsula under Ferdinand and Isabella may already have been, religion was as much the pretext as the cause of this persecution.”⁶ These involuntary exiles found themselves welcome in the Ottoman Empire, and especially in the devastated Thessalonike, where – as Greek historian Vacalopoulos notes – they proved to be the agents of the great economic progress of the city in the 16th and 17th centuries. “In contrast to the laborers and craftsmen of the Jewish community in Byzantine times, these men were daring and hard-working merchants. By their extensive journeying and through their close contact with their fellow Jews in Venice, Genoa, Amsterdam and all the Germanic cities, they contributed to the speedy economic development and prosperity of Thessalonike. They brought the city into close contact with Europe. They transformed it once again into a bustling commercial center, as it had been in the Roman and Byzantine epochs.”⁷

The Jews from Spain, typical “indispensable immigrants” of the Mediterranean, were also carriers of an advanced and sophisticated urban culture, that was much needed in Eastern Europe at that time, and played an exceptional role in transfers of technology. To Thessalonike, they brought the art of printing, the woolen and silk industry, “and, if some statements are to be believed, the secret of manufacturing gun-carriages.” As

Glossary

T—Turkish
S—Spanish
A—Arabic
B—Bulgarian
F—French
G—Greek
C—Corrupted
I—Italian

Ajaba (T)—Perhaps
A la Franca (S)—In the Western style
Alij-ba (T)—The Turkish ABC
Allahu ekber (A)—Allah is greatest
Aman (T)—Expletive. May be rendered as “Mercy on us!”
Araba (T)—Cart, wagon or carriage
Arabadji (T)—The driver of an *araba*
Arnaout (T)—Albanian
Arshin (T)—Unit of length. Approximately one yard

Baba (B)—Grandmother, old woman
Baklava (T)—A pastry prepared with nuts and honey
Basinas (S)—Large shallow copper pans used for laundering
Bey (T)—A title given to landowners
Beyaz Kulle (T)—White Tower
Beylik (T)—The domain of a bey, specifically his manor house
Billah! (A)—By God!
Bisnona [from *bir*, twice, and *nona* (I), grandmother]—Great-grandmother
Borrekias (CT)—Corruption of Turkish *burak*. Cakes filled with meat, cheese, or spinach
Brazicas (S)—Diminutive of *brazas*. Embers
Bueno (S)—Good

217

First page of the *Glossary* which Sciaky includes as an appendix to his *Farewell to Salonica* (1946). The idiom of Thessalonike comprised words from several languages: Turkish, Spanish (Ladino), Arabic, Bulgarian, French, Greek, Italian, and “Corrupted.” Note that Sciaky refers to the famous White Tower (see *Pisa*) with its Turkish name (“Beyaz Kule”).

Braudel writes, “These were useful gifts!”⁸ The first printing press in the Orient operated in Thessalonike in 1506 by two Sephardim Jews. The newcomers, “at first retail merchants in Salonica and Constantinople, gradually built up their businesses until they were competing successfully with Ragusans, Armenians, and Venetians.”⁹ Settled in their “new Spain,” the Jews from mid 16th century, “under the protection and tolerance of the Ottomans, began to enjoy the fruit of the meeting of their talents – money, capabilities, knowledge – with the opportunities offered in their adopted country.”¹⁰ In 1552 the poet Samuel Usque wrote of Thessalonike that “this city is deeply rooted in the foundations of faith. The prosecuted and exiled Jews, from Europe and other places, take shelter and find themselves welcome with warmth, as if this city was Jerusalem itself, our own mother of Israel.”¹¹ Numerical superiority and economic prosperity of the Sephardim in Thessalonike was accompanied with intellectual progress. “The Spanish Jews and their great scholars and scientists, doctors especially, furthered intellectual progress and organized the Jewish community in an exemplary fashion, making it a true “state within a state.” Amongst other things they had synagogues, good schools, seminaries for rabbis, libraries and foundations for social welfare.”¹²

Throughout the Ottoman period, although influenced considerably by the economic recession of mid 17th century, the arrival of the “Messiah of Smyrna,” and the subsequent formation of the Dönme community (see *Smyrna*), the Jews continued to predominate in Thessalonike. The important role the Jews had in the city’s commerce was also due to the fact that they were “born interpreters of all speech; without their help much business would have been impossible or difficult.”¹³ In the 19th century, “the Jews who live in Turkey ordinarily speak four or five languages: Those of them who left Spain, Germany, Hungary and Bohemia have taught the languages of those languages to their children; and their children have learnt the languages of the nations in which they have to live and speak, it might be Greek, Slavonic, Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, or Italian”¹⁴ Despite their cosmopolitanism, the Sephardim remained loyal to their origins and spoke their own language, *Ladino*, Renaissance Spanish, a fact which Braudel mentions as “linguistically curious.”

Even in the 1940s, the Jews who remained in Thessalonike continued to speak their language: Jack Handeli's mother could not communicate with her Greek neighbors, because she didn't speak any Greek (!) – “she had no need for Greek. Her job was buying cloth for seamstresses to make clothes for her daughters. She bought the cloth from Jewish merchants who knew Ladino. Her friends and relatives all spoke Spanish.”¹⁵

However, it is certain that the majority of the Jews of Thessalonike, the male population at least, was much more educated than the Muslims or the Greeks. Especially when the Alliance Israelite started its educational project in the city (see *Paris*) from mid 19th century onwards, Jewish schools, for boys and girls, multiplied. Leon Sciaky narrates a very interesting story about his father's endeavors with foreign literature.

Ever anxious to increase his proficiency in literary Turkish, Father read the works of Dumas in that language, translating into Spanish as he went along, for our benefit. Every now and then, he would interrupt himself to find the exact meaning of a word in a thick dictionary, while we waited in silence. Wherever Father went he took with him one or another of these novels, studying the language assiduously. Once, on a trip to Albania, alone in the compartment of the train, he was reading *The Queen's Necklace* when, at a small station, a venerable old Turk entered his compartment and took a seat opposite him. After the usual polite greetings Father closed the book on his lap and placed it on the seat next to him. From across the way the old Turk surveyed him for a moment, then, arising, he picked up the book, kissed it reverently and laid it on the rack above Father's head. “My son,” he remonstrated kindly, “praised be Allah! It is praiseworthy of you to be reading the words of our prophet. But you should never treat the Holy Book with such disrespect as to place it where people sit.”

“Why didn't you tell him it was a novel?” Mother asked.

“A novel!” Father exclaimed smilingly. “To the simple old man, what other book could I have been reading but the Koran? What other book is there but the Holy Book?”¹⁶

In Braudel's seminal work on the Mediterranean there is a map showing the distribution of populations in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, to which is annotated:

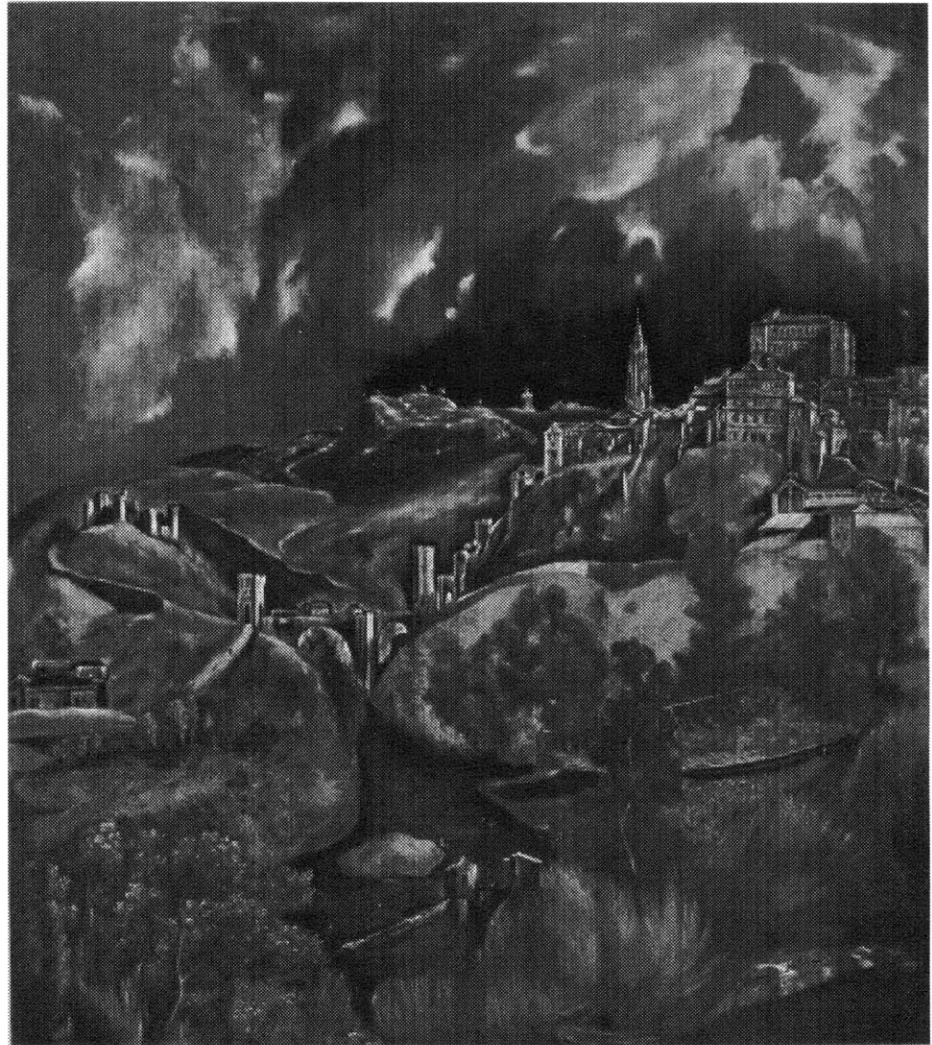


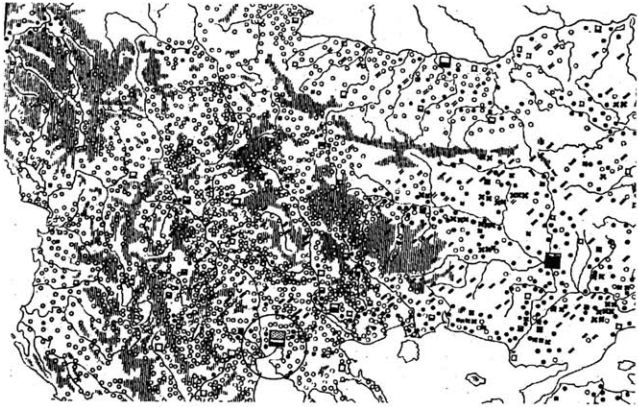
The upper part of the walls of Thessalonike and the fortress of the Acropolis in a photograph taken probably in the 1910s – compare with El Greco's *Toledo in a tempest*.

“The Greek of Toledo”

Domenikos Theotokopoulos. *Toledo in a tempest*. Circa 1608. New York Metropolitan Museum. (47 X 41 ¾ inches). The artist, known as “El Greco,” was born in Crete, near Candia, and after a short stay in Italy, he came to Toledo, which at that time was in a high religious fervor.

The Jews and Moors of the city, “which was more ecclesiastical than Rome,” were forced in exile. Following the prosecutions, the city of Toledo complained to the Emperor that “whole streets were deserted and entire handicrafts had died out.” Theotokopoulos himself occupied the palace of the Marqués de la Villena, in the former Jewish quarter. At the same time that many a persecuted Sephardim Jew would find a new “Toledo” in Thessalonike and bring to the city, abandoned as it was after the Ottoman conquest, prosperity and sophisticated culture, El Greco himself made Toledo famous through his unique art. “The Greek of Toledo discovered painting once more for himself, as an art he had made all his own, that he had learnt from no one, and that he could transmit to no one, an art unsuitable to reproduce this visible world, but apt to record the world of his own visions” (Goldscheider, 1938). His work, characterized by a syncretism, in which Venetian, Byzantine, Early Gothic, and Mannerist influences are traceable, reflects his interests in both theology and humanism, as “El Greco, a ‘thinking’ artist, was addicted to both sciences, as may be inferred from the library mentioned in the inventory of his effects.” Like the multilingual Sephardim of Thessalonike, he spoke four languages – Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish.





In cities: ■ MUSLIMS □ CHRISTIANS ◻ JEW
 In the country: ● MUSLIMS ○ CHRISTIANS

Map of the southern Balkan peninsula showing distribution of ethnic populations in mid 19th century according to Ottoman census data (after Braudel).

“Note the density of the Moslem population in Bosnia and the large Jewish colony in Salonica.” The chart, based on census data, shows graphically that half of the city’s population was Jewish. Up to early 20th century, the Sephardim community had been numerically superior to those of the Greeks and the Turks, and thus marked with its presence the physiognomy of the city. “All of the city’s shops, whether Jewish or shops, were closed on Saturdays and on Jewish holidays, up until 1923 when Sunday was defined as obligatory holiday. The Jews also had control over the social and political developments in the city, since they published most of the newspapers and magazines in Thessalonike. From 1865 to 1918, forty publications (33 in Ladino and 7 in French) expressed all political tendencies.”¹⁷ In 1914, Risal, cited in the *City Index*, paralleled it with Toledo; many years later Pentzikis would write that in its often overcast atmosphere, Thessalonike, viewed from the acropolis, reminded him of El Greco’s work “*Toledo in a tempest*.”¹⁸ There is also a physical resemblance between the Greek city that was nicknamed “*Sepharad* of the Balkans” and the Spanish city that became Domenicos Theotokopoulos’s adoptive homeland¹⁹ – two places, two cultures, merged in the identity of Thessalonikian Jews.

Even after the annexation of the city to Greece, the 1917 fire (see *Spalato*), which devastated the Jewish quarters, and its rapid Hellenization, Thessalonike, grafted with Spanish-Jewish influences in its dialect and music, would maintain its “peculiar” character. By the 20th century, Thessalonike had not only been a “Jewish city” but also a Spanish-speaking city for more than four hundred years. In 1943, despite the demographic changes (see *Ankara*), the Jewish community still amounted to 50,000 people, which seemed enough for Eichmann to characterize the city a “*Jugendstadt*” (see *Berlin*). As a reminder of what the city could have been, had the Holocaust not happened, Greek state authorities should finance the publication of a Spanish-Turkish dictionary, like the one Sciaky’s father used to have. The dictionary, to be distributed gratis in public spaces, would be a glossary of the city that existed but is now only remembered; in its uselessness, it would remind of and alert public consciousness about the helplessness of humanism to prevent irrational acts, such as genocide and ethnic cleansing, from happening, even to the present day.

- 1 For a comprehensive overview of the history of the Jewish community in Thessalonike see: Albertos Nar, "Communal organization and activity of the Jewish Community of Thessalonike" in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization*, ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 266-295.
- 2 Ibid., p. 270.
- 3 P. Risal, *La ville convoitee, Salonique* (Paris: Perrin et cie, 1914), as quoted in Ibid., p. 275.
- 4 Gilles Veinstein, "An immemorial paradoxical phenomenon: the Spain of the Balkans" (pp. 45-68) in *Thessalonike 1850-1918: the "city of Jews" and the awakening of the Balkans* (Athena: Hekate, 1994), p. 49.
- 5 The geographically-specific names of Thessalonike's synagogues is also noted by Braudel: "Loyalty to their origins persisted too in the names of the Jewish communities at Salonica – Messina, Sicilia, Puglia, Calabria. Such fidelity was not without its drawbacks: it created categories. Several Jewish nations could be distinguished and there was sometimes conflict between them." Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the mediterranean world in the age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972-73), p. 809.
- 6 Braudel, Ibid., p. 336.
- 7 Apostolos E. Vakalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 79.
- 8 Braudel, Ibid., p. 336.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Veinstein, Ibid., p. 52. It is generally accepted, by historians of the Jews as well as by historians of the Ottoman Empire, "that the Jewish experience in the Ottoman Empire from its very beginning was a calm, peaceful, and fruitful one." See also Joseph R. Hacker, "Ottoman policy toward the Jews and Jewish attitudes towards the Ottomans during the fifteenth century," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* / Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. (New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), pp. 117- 126.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Vakalopoulos, Ibid., p. 80.
- 13 Braudel, Ibid., p. 809.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ya'acov (Jack) Handeli, *A Greek Jew from Salonica remembers* / Original Hebrew edition: "From the White Tower to the Gates of Auschwitz" (New York: Herzl Press, 1993), p. 19. See also footnote 4 in the Berlin chapter.
- 16 Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica: portrait of an era* (New York: Current books, inc., A. A. Wyn, 1946), p. 62.
- 17 Rena Molho, "The renaissance," in *Thessalonike 1850-1918: the "city of Jews" and the awakening of the Balkans*, Ibid., p. 77.
- 18 Nikos Gavriel Pentzikes, *Metera Thessalonike: keimena se pezo* (Athena: Kedros, 1970), p. 75.
- 19 Domenikos Theotokopoulos, known as "El Greco," was born near Candia, Crete in 1541; he went to Toledo in 1577 and lived there until his death in 1614. At the time, "the Emperor,

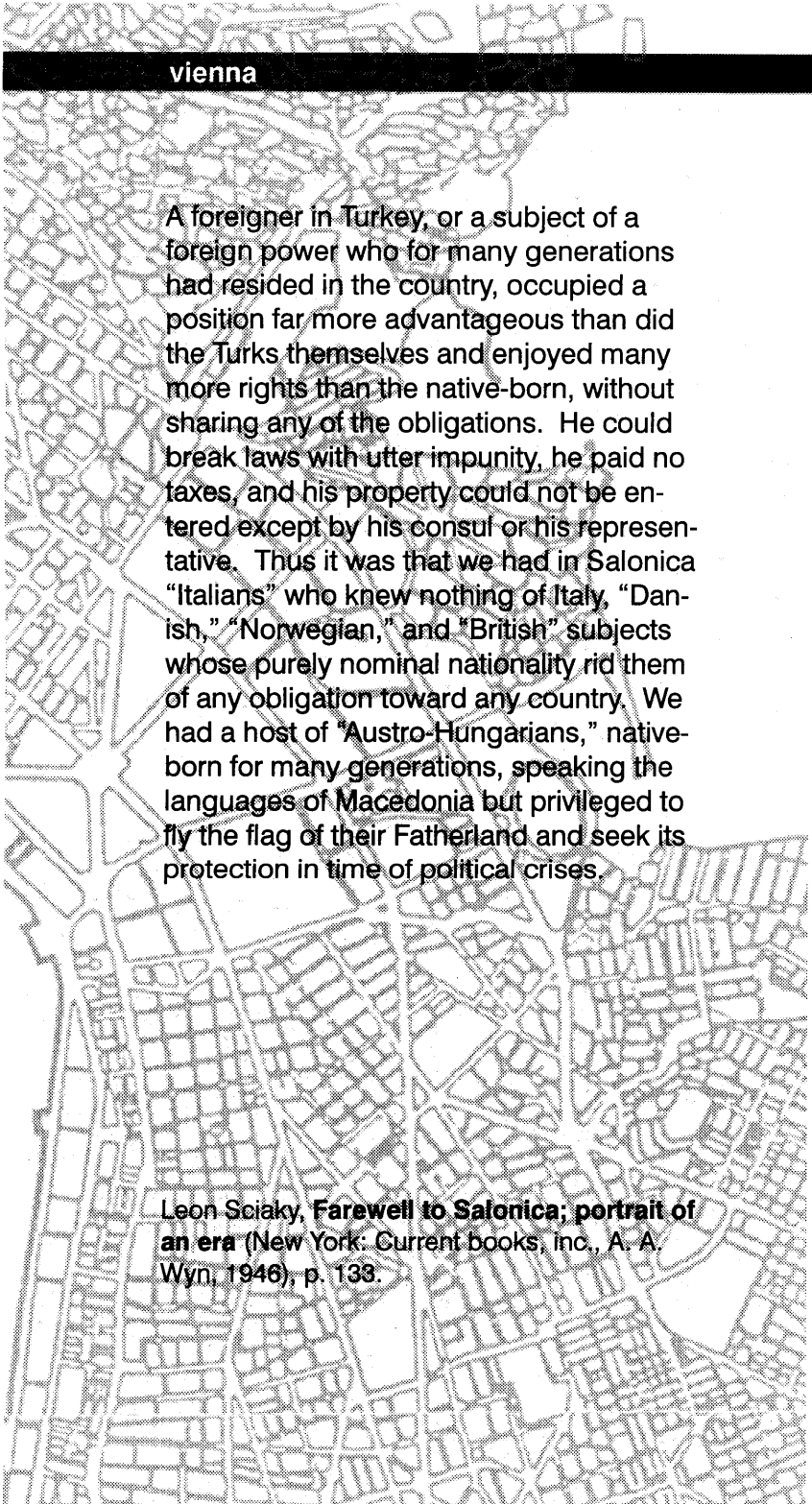
Philip the Second was more Catholic than the Pope, Toledo more ecclesiastical than Rome,” as Ludwig Goldscheider writes in the preface of his *El Greco: Paintings, drawings and sculptures* (London: The Phaidon Press, 1938). It is unclear why Theotokopoulos chose to settle in the city; two years after his arrival, during a lawsuit about a fee, “he was asked why he had come, and declined to answer.” Goldscheider notes that “Toledo must have seemed more congenial to him than Rome; here he found the pines and olives of his native isle again, and the Mohammedan East in many buildings, melodies, and customs. Greco was enamored of this city, perched on a high bare rock, up which the houses climb like jetting stones, surrounded by a deep abyss, through which the Tagus drives its waters.” Theotokopoulos would include Toledo cityscapes in the background of many of his religious paintings, and as Goldscheider notes that, for El Greco, “Toledo became Gethsemane.” Although Toledo was a bustling city, famous for “the most flexible sword-blades, the finest silk fabrics, the most artistic tiles,” all prosperity had died out by the time of his death. “This gigantic spiritual fortress of Toledo was at war with the world for God. Just as we are not shocked to see a person executed for high treason, so that age was not shocked to see traitors to the Lord of Lords executed.” The main square of the city, surrounded by “thousands of monasteries,” was the execution-ground of the Tribunal of the Inquisition. “People and books were burnt, the orthodoxy of art strictly controlled, and Jews and Moors were expelled from the country. Moral and economic disintegration went on apace, whole streets were deserted, entire handicrafts had died out and the sites were worthless.” See *Ibid.*, p. 11.

city index



stein building





A foreigner in Turkey, or a subject of a foreign power who for many generations had resided in the country, occupied a position far more advantageous than did the Turks themselves and enjoyed many more rights than the native-born, without sharing any of the obligations. He could break laws with utter impunity, he paid no taxes, and his property could not be entered except by his consul or his representative. Thus it was that we had in Salonica "Italians" who knew nothing of Italy, "Danish," "Norwegian," and "British" subjects whose purely nominal nationality rid them of any obligation toward any country. We had a host of "Austro-Hungarians," native-born for many generations, speaking the languages of Macedonia but privileged to fly the flag of their Fatherland and seek its protection in time of political crises.

Leon Sciaky, **Farewell to Salonica; portrait of an era** (New York: Current books, inc., A. A. Wyn, 1946), p. 133.

Throughout the Ottoman period (1430-1912), Thessalonike had close relationships with Western Europe. Western merchants and their families inhabited the Frankish neighborhood of the city (see *Malta*), situated near the harbor. Thessalonikian merchants, especially the Jewish, traveled on business, especially to Italian cities, since a large proportion of the city's maritime and inland commerce was conducted with non-Ottoman lands. On the other hand, there were also many Western visitors coming to Thessalonike, especially from late 18th century onwards – diplomats, scholars, or simply travelers. These foreigners' accounts, published at the time in their respective countries, serve today as significant primary evidence for the history of the city. Besides, the only pictorial representations we have of Thessalonike before the advent of photography, are also foreign, mainly German engravings. As Spyros Asdrachas mentions, in their early phase, "these representations, highly conventional, transpose German towns into the East, those Gothic towns whose caption reads 'Constantinople,' 'Athens,' or 'Thessalonica,' but whose only features that correspond to reality are the city walls and the sea. They are more city-signs than tests of the imagination."¹

Of the written material, the accounts and impressions of German and Austrian politicians and diplomats from Thessalonike and its region are the subject of two anthologies by Greek philologist P. Enepekides, a professor in the University of Vienna. Among them, the case of Austrian writer Fallmerayer, who is usually referred to as "pseudo-historian" in Greek historiography, is particularly worth mentioning. J. F. Fallmerayer (1790-1861) visited Greece, still under Ottoman rule at the time, observed its inhabitants, and came up with a theory that the presumed "Greeks" had actually become "Slavs" and "Albanians" by that time. This is what this "pervert," as Enepekides calls him, has to say about Thessalonike, which he visited in 1840 and evidently "fell in love with":

The stretch of the city, its position in relation to the sea, the calm sky, the quick and safe communication with the West, the lively swarming of foreigners, and the religious tolerance of all peoples – they all render Thessalonike so enchanting that no other city in European Turkey can compete with it, neither Athens

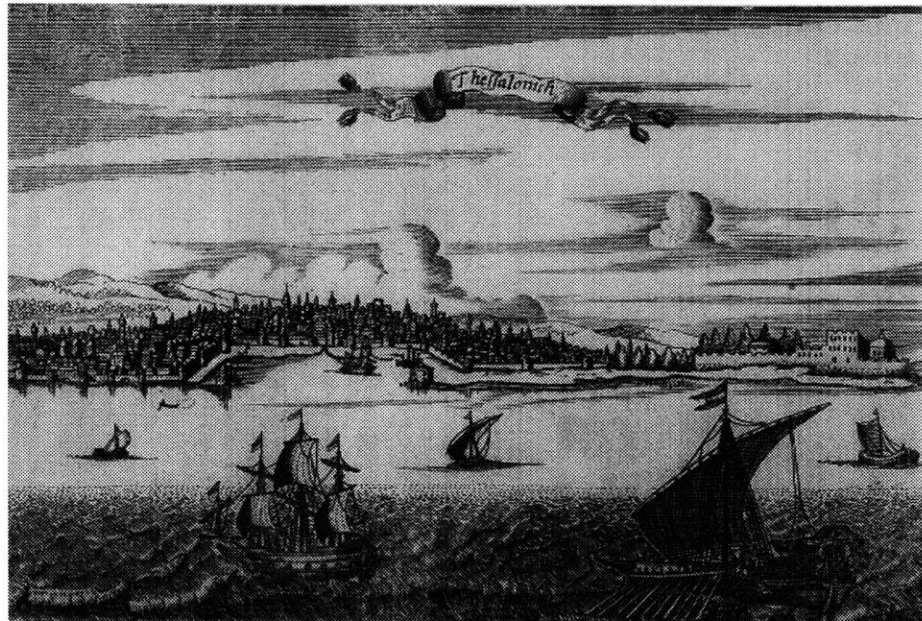
or Constantinople. Feeling much happier than other travelers - who are always in a hurry and have left from the beginning half of their hearts back in Europe, in their scholarly circles and professions – I, contrary to them, left myself free from every tie, in the stream of gaiety and stayed a whole month in this city of luxurious, easy pleasures.²

The Greek historian adds bitterly that, “although Fallmerayer’s theory about the “slavization” of contemporary Greeks has been refuted by great German historians and experts in Slavic studies, its distant echo continuous to harm the tender tree of Hellenic resurrection, when it is heard by ignorant and unsophisticated readers of his work.”³ In a way, however, Fallmerayer’s description is not dissimilar to early 19th century pictorial representations of the city. Just as written accounts, often these scenes “indicate otherness. For those scenes do not express the consciousness of those depicted, of the world, that is, of the Eastern Mediterranean. The scenes are not created in order to perpetuate its existence or to record the place in which they live: these people and their space are the object of observation by others, who, despite the osmosis of cultures, belong to a different, indeed a dominant, culture, whose artistic language is not that of the people depicted.”⁴

Quite similarly to pictorial representations, often literary ones are misinterpreted in their “translation,” and not due to lack of proficiency of the foreign language. The case of Enepekides is revealing in this respect, for he always seems to read in these accounts a pro-Hellenic sentiment on behalf of Western Europeans. For him, the observations of these respectable foreigners – with Fallmerayer the only exception – converge to a portrayal of the Greek minority of the city that is much more complimenting than that of the other ethnic groups. The Greek superiority is often contrasted to the “medieval,” fanatic, and oppressive attitude of the Turkish population, as the case of the “Slaughter of the Consuls” (see *Stuttgart*) highlights. In Enepekides’s concluding remarks on this unfortunate event, he concludes with the following “excerpt from Karl Braun, which could be used as a motto for a new, for every new history of Thessalonike during the Ottoman period”⁵:

The 17th century city as seen by a foreigner

Jac. Enderlin, "Archipelagus Turbatus,"
Augsburg 1686. *Thessalonike, view form the
sea.* 1686. Copperplate engraving. 18 X 13 cm.
K.M. Stamatis Collection. (Source:
*Thessalonike in the 15th - 19th century engrav-
ings*, plate 5)



You see, then, how peculiar a ground is this Thessalonike. When someone after a long time spent in this city, settles to write down his memories, the moment one thinks he is painting small canvases and depicts everyday scenes, there exactly appears the endless spirit of universal history and civilization that drifts one beyond these boundaries. And this happens because this city unites within it all the ancient nations of the Orient: the Greeks, the Illyrians, and the Jewish, with all the new nations: the Turks, the Serbs, and the Bulgarians, and forces the one who has seen and experienced these peoples at the same place, into thoughts and observations impossible to be produced in noisy Constantinople, which in, on the top, being governed by “Frankish” elements.⁶

Undoubtedly, this comment, written by a German traveler, resonates greatly with the social function and geopolitical role of Thessalonike throughout its history, and not merely the Ottoman period, as Enepekides suggests. At any case, the affair of the West with Thessalonike would not remain in the level of (insightful) observation. The 19th century brought successive waves of settlers from European countries, especially Austria, who lived in the city for many generations. It is characteristic that “all major modernization projects of the city – just as of the entire Ottoman Empire – were carried out by West European technological and financial intervention.”⁷ The foreigners living in Thessalonike enjoyed a privileged status, as we read in the *City Index*. Thus the ethnological portrait of the city, already mixed due to its Jewish, Muslim, and Greek constitution, became towards the end of the 19th century, even more confused. On the other hand, this peaceful, yet pervasive, “colonization” of Thessalonike further supported an imperialistic tendency of European powers towards the region of Macedonia, still under Ottoman rule. As Vacalopoulos writes, “Austria’s appetite for expansion southwards, towards the harbor of Thessalonike, was only natural, since Austria had been charged with the military occupation and the administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, the Austro-German treaty of 1879 proved the basis of the Eastern Project, the Drang nach Osten. It is noted that Count Andrassy, informing the Emperor Franz-Joseph of the completion of these negotiations, closed his telegram with the words: ‘Austria gains freedom and a firm hand in the east.’”⁸

In the city of Thessalonike itself, Austro-Hungary had, by the beginning of the 20th century, established a strong presence; Austrian houses represented more than 50% of trade companies in the city; Austrian engineers and architects were employed in most public works. In 1908, the Viennese “Stein” department store opened its branch in the city; it was housed in a multistory building designed by engineer Ernst Loewy. During the First World War and the occupation of the city by the Allies (see *London*), the “Stein” café was one of the most popular among the multinational soldiers, located as it was in the most prominent site of the commercial center, facing Freedom Square.⁹ In 1917, this physical manifestation of the city’s relation with Vienna managed to escape the great fire that destroyed the entire commercial center of the city (see *Spalato*); in photographs from the aftermath of the fire, it appears as the only survivor amidst devastated buildings. On the other hand, the edifice would reappear in later years in the city’s history. In 1943, during the Nazi occupation, German women observed the humiliations of the Jews from the buildings on the perimeter of Freedom Square (see *Auschwitz*). We can imagine them in the windows of this German-looking building overlooking the square and laughing at “the faintings and even deaths from the physical abuse,”¹⁰ suffered by the Jews.

1 Spyros Asdrachas, *Thessalonica of the 18th century; Before and After* (Athens: Themelio/Eikona, 1996), p. 19.

2 Polychrones Enepekides, *Thessalonike in the years 1875-1912: German politicians, diplomats, and writers narrate the life, institutions and historical topography of the city* (Thessalonike: Ekdotos Oikos Aphon Kyriakide, 1981), p. 88.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

4 Asdrachas, *Ibid.*, p. 22.

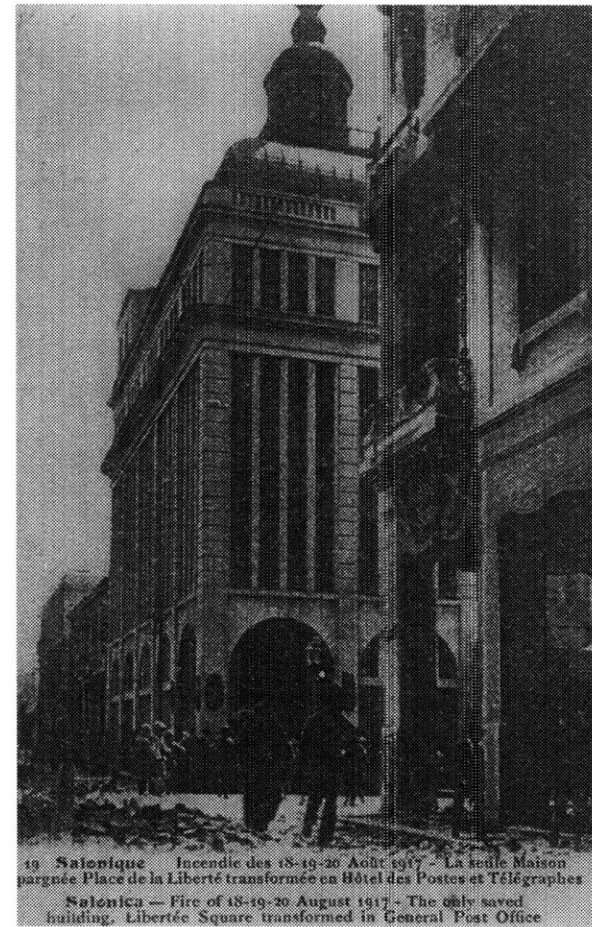
5 Enepekides, *Ibid.*, p. 150.

6 *Ibid.*, pp.149-150.

7 I. K. Chasiotes, “The first after the First,” in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization* / ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), p. 32.

8 Apostolos E. Vakalopoulos, *A history of Thessaloniki* / translation by T. F. Carney (Thessalonike: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), p. 125.

9 After the 1917, a French eyewitness narrates: “Of all the great cafés that made the city so attractive and reminded of Paris, the ‘Floca’s, the ‘Olympos,’ the ‘Krystal,’ none survives. Only the ‘Stein’ and the branch of ‘Orosdi Bank on Venizelou Street are still standing.” See



Photograph of the Stein Building, located on the northeast side of Freedom Square (see *Auschwitz*), after the 1917 fire. The building, with its characteristic globe on the top, is in a very good condition even today; it currently houses a restaurant on street level and a conference center on the upper floors.

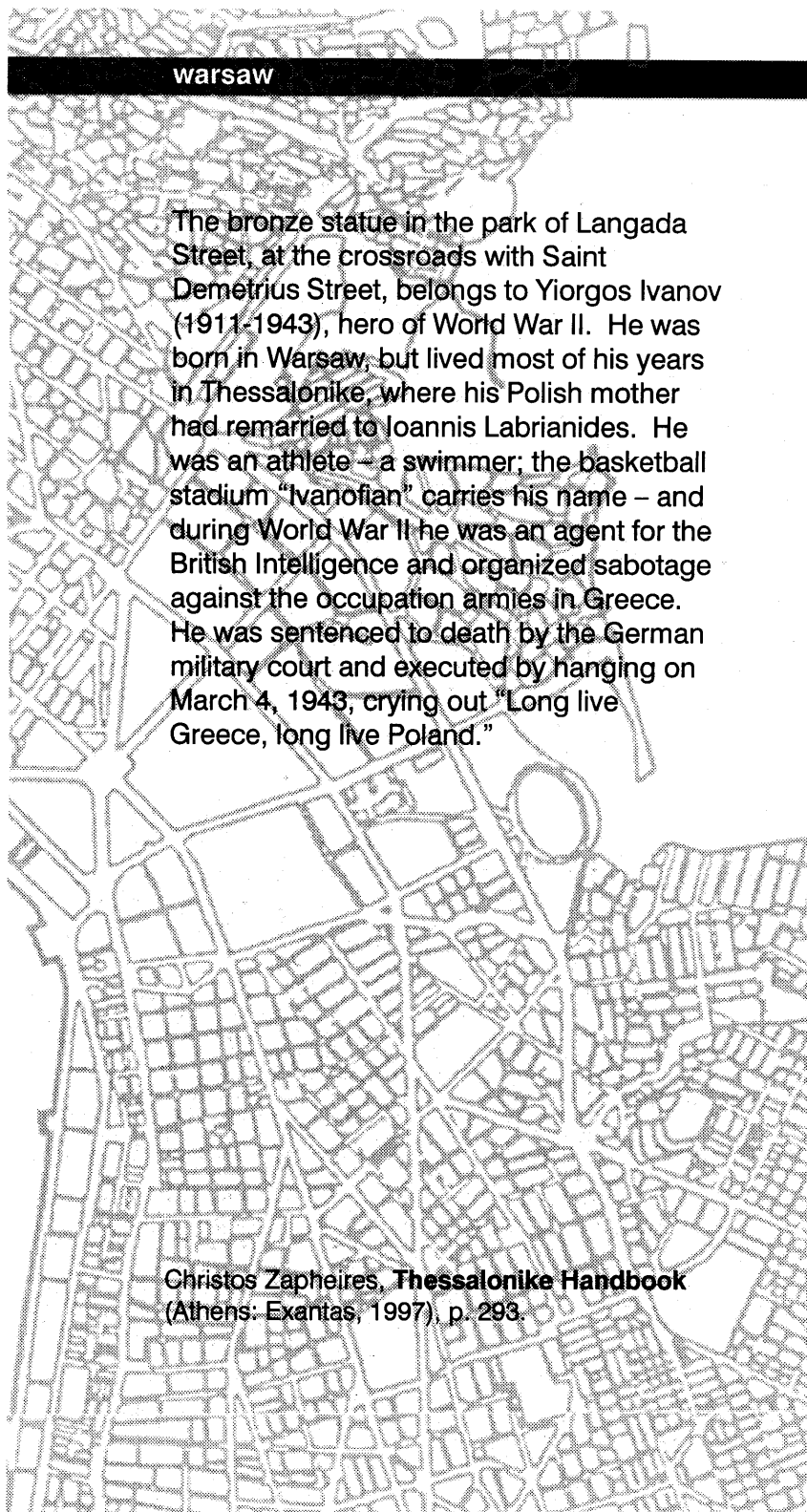
Vassilis Kolonas, "Thessalonike during World War I," in *Archaeologia kai Technes* 7/1983, p. 54.

10 Ya'acov (Jack) Handeli, *A Greek Jew from Salonica remembers* (New York: Herzl Press, 1993), p. 40. Original Hebrew edition (1992): *From the White Tower to the Gates of Auschwitz*.



ivanov's monument





The bronze statue in the park of Langada Street, at the crossroads with Saint Demetrius Street, belongs to Yiorgos Ivanov (1911-1943), hero of World War II. He was born in Warsaw, but lived most of his years in Thessalonike, where his Polish mother had remarried to Ioannis Labrianides. He was an athlete – a swimmer; the basketball stadium “Ivanofian” carries his name – and during World War II he was an agent for the British Intelligence and organized sabotage against the occupation armies in Greece. He was sentenced to death by the German military court and executed by hanging on March 4, 1943, crying out “Long live Greece, long live Poland.”

Christos Zappeires, *Thessalonike Handbook* (Athens: Exantas, 1997), p. 293.

The German occupation of Thessalonike, which started in April 1941 (see *Berlin*), is one of the darkest periods in the city’s history. Apart from “relentless prosecutions and degradation suffered by the population,”¹ the era saw the elimination of the Jewish community of Thessalonike (see *Auschwitz*). During the Occupation, the city was an important center of the underground revolutionary movement, and, as we read in the *City Index*, George Ivanov was one of the many victims in the struggle. On October 30, 1944, the exit of the German troops from Thessalonike marked the end of the Occupation period – the Germans, on their way out, blew up industrial and port facilities located at the harbor area – but peace was still far away.

Before the city had time to assess its damages, “new wounds, even deeper and less curable than those of the Occupation, started to open.”² Thessalonike, with its strategic location, became one of the epicenters of the Civil War (1945-1949), as “Greece found itself in the rupture of the fierce competition between the two Worlds.”³ The unstable situation was further aggravated with three political assassinations that took place in 1946-1947, of which the most known is that of American journalist George Polk. The “Polk case,” which shattered both Greek and American political worlds, has been the subject of seven books, written by Greeks and Americans, as well as of three films, the latest being “The Polk case on air” (1987).⁴

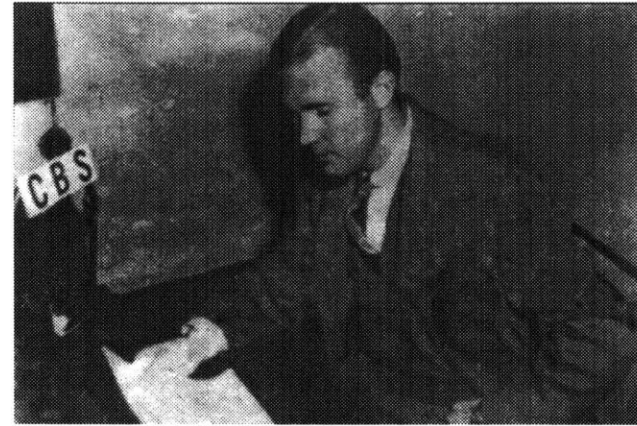
On May 16, 1948, a fisherman found the body of George Polk floating in the port. Polk was married to a Greek air-stewardess, Rea Kokkoni, and served as Head of the CBS correspondents’ network in the Middle East. He had come to Thessalonike on May 5, on an unknown mission. Since Greece was in the midst of the civil war at that time, “the American government attributed the crime to the Communist, left-wing side.”⁵ However, the unresolved murder was more than an internal Greek affair; in fact, “the Secret Services of several countries, including the US, England, Israel, and the (then) USSR, were most probably involved in this case.”⁶ Historical research has shown that the Greek civil war was part of a long chain that connects the Cold War policy with the Balkans and the Middle East. At the time of his murder, Polk was about to publish a book entitled *The Mosaic of the Middle East*, and presumably

“intended to disclose a lot about events and personalities related to the US and other countries’ policies in the Middle East.”⁷

Seeing the city during and after the Polk case, the local historian comments that “the plans of the organizers cover all parts of Greece, but the geopolitical situation of Thessalonike enables their implementation. No one can explain what attracts political violence to this area. A very sketchy interpretation would suggest that it is the same power that stands beside every political change (Young Turks [see *Ankara*], National Defense [see *Istanbul*], Pangalos’s dictatorship). If we glance at the events happening in the city, we will see that it becomes victim and victimizer during the incidents played out in its space. The events are being watched by the neighboring Balkan countries. Its weakness to surpass the mystery of the murders and the civil war inhibits the city from expanding its power. In an era when other cities claim a central role in the international scene, Thessalonike coils inside its shell, knowing that it is on the eye of the tornado for all political sins committed by Greeks and foreigners.”⁸

However, not all repercussions of the Civil War were negative for the city. Since the situation in the Balkans continued to be unstable until the end of the Cold War, the northern parts of Greece, with Thessalonike at the center, were deemed significant in relation to the Communist neighbors of the country to the north. Thus, “several of the infrastructure works that took place in the city and its region in the 1950s, such as the ‘military’ road network in Greek Macedonia, the construction of new port facilities and of the new Thessalonike airport, were financed by American sources.”⁹ In retrospective, however, Chasiotes writes, in 1997, that “regardless of the origins of the financing and the initial aims of these works, the fact is that, during the 1950 decade, Thessalonike managed to reconstitute its production relation with the Macedonian mainland and to reclaim its metropolitan role in Northern Greece.”¹⁰

In this light, the tragic assassination of George Polk, with all its negative results, in a way contributed in attracting attention to the city, and due to the circumstances of



George Polk, the American journalist and CBS correspondent in the Middle East, who was murdered in Thessalonike in 1948.

The sad port after the German occupation

The photograph was taken the day the Germans left the city, on October 30, 1944. The catastrophes that Thessalonike suffered during the German occupation were completed with the destruction of industrial sites and mainly of the port facilities, either by the Allies' bombings during the war or by the departing Germans. For many months after the liberation, according to the British consul, Thessalonike continued to present an image of a "parasitic – although by nature active and industrious – city." The urgent needs for food were covered thanks to external help, from the Allied "Military Liaison" and afterwards by the United Nations.



the Cold War in the Balkans, secured the financial support from the American government, which Greece, devastated as it was after the German occupation and the Civil War, needed greatly. Although Thessalonike conspicuously commemorates Ivanov's sacrifice, both with the statue and the name of the stadium, no monument has yet been erected to Polk, this apparently innocent journalist who found himself implicated in Cold War games. In response to this significant omission, the proposal is to make an installation at the crossroads of Tsimiski and Charles Diehl Street, in front of the building that used to be the hotel "Astoria." It was in this hotel that Polk stayed during his fatal visit to Thessalonike. The installation will be a black briefcase placed on a pedestal, with the sign "Polk case" attached to it.

1 I. K. Chasiotes, "The first after the First," in *Tois agathois vasileuousa: Thessalonike, history and civilization* / ed. I.K Chasiotes (Thessalonike: Parateretes, 1997), p. 51.

2 Ibid., p. 52.

3 Ibid., p. 53.

4 *Yankee G-man* (1957), *The Polk conspiracy* (1990), *Murder in the Thermaic Bay* (1991) are the book titles published in the US. For the entire list, see Demetrius A. Drogides, *Thessalonike 1897-1997* (Thessalonike: University Studio Press, 1996), p. 317, note 341.

5 Ibid., p. 316.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., p. 320.

8 Ibid., pp. 332-3.

9 Chasiotes, p. 53.

10 Ibid.

Index of cities

City	Chapter in City Index
Adrianople	<i>Istanbul</i>
Alexandria	<i>Kiev, London, Sofia, Stuttgart, Toledo</i>
Amsterdam	<i>Alexandria, Toledo</i>
Ancona	<i>Smyrna</i>
Ankara	<i>Berlin, Cannes, London, Paris, Sofia, Spalato, Stuttgart, Toledo, Vienna, Warsaw</i>
Athens	<i>Auschwitz, Berlin, Constantinople, Istanbul, Kosovo, Palermo, Paris, Vienna</i>
Auschwitz	<i>Berlin, Milan, Palermo, Paris, Smyrna, Toledo, Vienna, Warsaw</i>
Barcelona	<i>Alexandria, Palermo, Paris, Stuttgart</i>
Beirut	<i>Alexandria, Ankara</i>
Berlin	<i>Athens, Auschwitz, Kosovo, Paris, Pisa, Sofia, Toledo, Vienna, Warsaw</i>
Bucarest	<i>Palermo</i>
Cambridge, MA	<i>Cannes</i>
Candia (Herakleion)	<i>Florence, Toledo</i>
Cannes	<i>Jiddah, London</i>
Chicago	<i>Cannes</i>

(Cities corresponding to chapter titles are in bold)

Constantinople	<i>Alexandria, Durazzo, Florence, Jiddah, Kiev, London, Malta, Milan, Palermo, Paris, Rome, Smyrna, Sofia, Stuttgart, Toledo, Vienna</i>
Corinth	<i>Alexandria</i>
Delphi	<i>Paris</i>
Durazzo	<i>Alexandria, Jiddah, Kosovo, Milan, Pisa, Rome</i>
Florence	<i>Durazzo, Kiev</i>
Ephesos	<i>Constantinople</i>
Genoa	<i>Alexandria, Toledo</i>
Hamburg	<i>Auschwitz</i>
Istanbul	<i>Alexandria, Ankara, Cannes, Jiddah, London, Pisa, Stuttgart, Warsaw</i>
Jerusalem	<i>Auschwitz, Toledo</i>
Jiddah	<i>Alexandria, Cannes, Istanbul, Pisa</i>
Kiev	<i>Ankara, Constantinople, Kosovo, Sofia, Spalato</i>
Kosovo	<i>Istanbul, Kiev, London, Spalato</i>
LA	<i>Cannes</i>
Lausanne	<i>Ankara</i>

Lisbon	<i>Toledo</i>
Livorno	<i>Alexandria, Malta, Smyrna</i>
London	<i>Alexandria, Durazzo, Istanbul, Jiddah, Kosovo, Pisa, Spalato, Vienna</i>
Madrid	<i>Florence, Alexandria</i>
Malta	<i>Sofia, Vienna</i>
Marseilles	<i>Alexandria, London, Palermo, Stuttgart</i>
Mayorca	<i>Toledo</i>
Milan	<i>Durazzo, Rome, Stuttgart</i>
Monastir	<i>Berlin</i>
Naples	<i>Constantinople, Florence, Jiddah, London, Toledo</i>
New York	<i>Ankara, Paris, Rome</i>
Olympia	<i>Paris</i>
Palermo	<i>Athens, Cannes, Istanbul, Malta, Pisa, Smyrna</i>
Paris	<i>Constantinople, London, Palermo, Toledo</i>
Pella	<i>Durazzo</i>
Pisa	<i>Athens, Jiddah, London, Rome</i>

Ragusa (Dubrovnik)	<i>Toledo</i>
Rome	<i>Constantinople, Durazzo, Florence, Milan, Spalato</i>
Sardis	<i>Constantinople</i>
Siena	<i>Toledo</i>
Skopje	<i>Kosovo</i>
Smyrna	<i>Alexandria, Ankara, Jiddah, Palermo, Toledo</i>
Sofia	<i>Ankara, Constantinople, Istanbul, Kiev, Kosovo, Vienna</i>
Spalato	<i>Berlin, London, Milan, Rome, Toledo, Vienna</i>
Stuttgart	<i>Ankara, Cannes, Malta, Pisa, Rome, Vienna</i>
Toledo	<i>Ankara, Auschwitz, Berlin</i>
Trieste	<i>Smyrna, Alexandria, Palermo</i>
Tunis	<i>Alexandria, Vienna</i>
Venice	<i>Alexandria, Florence, Jiddah, Malta, Pisa, Smyrna, Stuttgart, Toledo</i>
Vienna	<i>Alexandria, Auschwitz, London, Palermo, Smyrna, Spalato</i>
Warsaw	<i>Milan</i>

The prime material must always be returned to; it must not be forgotten in favor of theory; on the contrary, it must be enriched and explained in an unprecedented manner in order to take the theoretical text somewhere new.

-Julia Kristeva²

Conclusion¹

In the study of urban history and in the practice of urban design there is often a set of theories taken for granted, used either to interpret city transformations or to provide a design proposal with a necessary ideological background. For the modernist doctrine, these theories have set the foundations for urban planning, that is, the formation of a discipline in which the city is regarded as a problem to be solved, based on the premise that the practitioner is the expert in deciphering the complexity of the urban environment. Thus, the designer is trained so as to represent and interpret the city using elements such as city plans, maps of uses, etc., and to provide proposals that respond to the “needs” of the city – for example, the need to expand or to restrict expansion, the need to impose or restrict certain uses, etc. On the other hand, the postmodern ideology, challenging the self-limiting premises of modernism, its failure to address the questions of history, memory, and symbolism embedded in the urban experience, claimed for a return to history and a focus on the specific characteristics of the site. The objectives of design in the postmodern ideology are of much smaller scale than in modern urban planning; the intention is often to represent imagery rather than to envision a future, as modernism in its polemic stage did.

The question of the relationship between design and history is at the heart of my investigation. Often in discussions about history, there is a tendency to refer to it as incontestably “present,” as a known fact, a written book, a finished product – in a way, as an unquestionable truth. History, however, is being rewritten the moment I am writing this. History is being fabricated, reassessed, reinterpreted constantly, according to present day political realignments, diplomatic aspirations, efforts for image making, and responses to waves of immigration. In this way, history can never be a finished project, for it does not delve with the past, but rather with the present

and the future. And the most exciting aspect of this dynamic definition of history is that the space of the city is precisely that physical locus where the present and the future are acted out. Instead of evoking the past, the imprints or the spoils of history in the urban space, what we call monuments, historic neighborhoods, significant architecture, are the documents of today's continuous design for the future. Under this light, I, as a designer, am called upon to design, to put it rather simplistically, *what is already there* – but the degree of ingenuity always lies on the perceptive and interrogative nature of my approach to the given “problem.” As Proust wrote, “truth shall arise only at the moment when the writer, taking two different objects, will point their relation [...] in a metaphor. The relation might be uninteresting, the object mediocre, the style awful, but so long as that has not taken place, there is nothing there.”³ There has been a constant, conscious effort in this thesis to relate history and design in an interesting manner and Thessalonike an undoubtedly fascinating object, so I can only hope that the style has not been disappointing.

In the introduction I write that this thesis is about Thessalonike. However, if I had to reassess what I have done, I would assert that this is a project addressing the problems of writing (about) and designing (for) *any* city, and that, through a rather convoluted process, three “products” have come out. Firstly, the book is offered to the reader as a piece of literature, with its 27 autonomous cases or “stories,” arranged alphabetically. Although there are many connecting threads between the stories, the protagonist in each one is a different city. Secondly, the thesis also has the attributes of an urban history of the city. As a type of urban history, however, the innovation and experimentation lies on the fact that instead of following a timeline of history or a topographical trail around the physical city, it makes continuous, conscious cross-sections in time. Spanning from 315 BC, when the city was founded to the present day, these cross-sections take place on the same site, exposing the various “layers,” but very often include spatial transpositions to another city-site. In this case I indicate, inside parenthesis, the related chapter, to which the reader should turn to (“see Spalato”, for example). Finally, this thesis is an urban design project dispersed in the entire city. My design proposals can be read autonomously, site per site, but

also as a set, a synthesis of ideas for the future of the city, in which the emphasis is on exposing the multiplicity of meanings of urban space and its intertwined histories, very often conflicting each other. But, perhaps most importantly, the conceptual proposals, sometimes on the margins of irony, also express my responses to a, for me, very significant outcome of all this detailed and painstaking analysis: the intrinsic overlapping of design intention and historical inevitability in the formation of urban space. And I think this conclusion, coming *not* from an abstract and generic theory, but based as it is, in its very detail, on physical and written evidence, is a valuable one.

1 The conclusion could have been the preface to this thesis. I chose not to disclose the theoretical framework, but let the content of the book incrementally present the theoretical issues at stake.

2 Julia Kristeva, "Institutional interdisciplinarity in theory and in practice; an interview," in *The anxiety of interdisciplinarity*, Alex Coles and Alexia Defert, eds. (London: BACKless Books in association with Black Dog, 1998), p. 9.

3 Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 3: 924-925.

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