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Reinventing the Capital: The Ideological Use of Monumental Architecture in Michael VIII Palaiologos' Constantinople (1261–1282)

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Abstract

After the recapture of Constantinople (1261), Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259–82) reshaped the city through extensive building activities. Though scholars have previously considered the involvement of Emperor Michael in the urban restoration of the capital, no attention has been devoted to the links between the different aspects of this programme of renewal. This paper advocates for the presence of an ambitious and systematic urban plan behind Michael VIII's commissions focussed on the restoration of the southern shore of Constantinople and related to the political, religious, ideological, and aesthetic policies of this emperor.

* The starting point for this article is the publication of Talbot, Alice-Mary, "The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII", *DOP*, XLVII (1993): pp. 243–61, which, from now on, will be cited only as Talbot, "Restoration", for the sake of conciseness. The same applies to the two major sources of the period, *Georges Pachymères, Relations Historiques*, edited by Albert Failler and Vitalien Laurent (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1984–2000 [Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae, 24]), and *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia Graece et Latine*, edited by Ludwig Schopen and Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1829–1955 [Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae 25–7]). From now on, these texts will be cited as *Pachymeres* and *Gregoras* respectively. This work is part of my PhD research on *Palaiologan Constantinople (1261–1453): Architecture, Ideology, and Patronage* (University of Birmingham, 2021) supervised by Prof Leslie Brubaker and Dr Ruth Macrides, and examined by Prof Niels Gaul and Prof Robert Ousterhout. A first draft of this paper was presented at the 3rd International CBMS – Byzantinist Society of Cyprus (Nicosia, 17th–19th January 2020), together with some other papers within this volume, which originates precisely from the panel I organised "Εἰς τὴν πόλιν: Strolling through the unbeaten paths of Constantinople". It is my intention to thank my supervisors, examiners, the committee of the Byzantinist Society of Cyprus, and the authors of this volume, included those who joined us in a second moment.

Keywords

Constantinople – architecture – topography – monuments – Michael VIII – Palaiologoi

On 15 August 1261, Michael VIII entered Constantinople, which became the capital of the Byzantine Empire again after 57 years of Latin rule. Michael entered the Golden Gate, walked towards the monastery of St. John of Stoudios preceded by the icon of the Hodegetria, and then went on horseback to Hagia Sophia and the Great Palace.¹ The Latins previously neglected the city and its monuments, as repeatedly underlined in subsequent Byzantine written sources.² Indeed, at the beginning of the 13th century, extensive fires damaged the monumental heritage of the city.³ However, the emphasis placed on the negative aspects of Latin control reflects the agenda of the Byzantine writers and their hostility towards their previous rulers. It is within this framework that we must contextualise the patronage of the first of the Palaiologoi, who, as a 'New Constantine', re-founded the city of Constantinople through intense building activities, which only partially survive.

A series of material and written sources attest the epithet 'New Constantine' for Michael VIII. In 1265/6, Patriarch Germanos III (1265–6) commissioned a *peplos* (a precious silk textile) representing the emperor as a 'New Constantine', which was hung in the western area of Hagia Sophia.⁴ Lost imperial portraits

- 1 *George Akropolites: the history*, edited by Ruth Macrides (Oxford: University Press, 2007): p. 383 (§80); *Pachymeres*: I, II.31, pp. 216–9; *Gregoras*: I, IV.2, p. 87.14–22. Puech, Vincent, "La refondation religieuse de Constantinople par Michel VIII Paléologue (1259–1282): un acte politique", in Boucheron, Patrick and Chiffolleau, Jacques (eds.), *Religion et société urbaine au Moyen Age: études offertes à Jean-Louis Biget par ses anciens élèves* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2000): pp. 357–62.
- 2 Majeska, George P., "Russian Pilgrims in Constantinople", *DOP*, LVI (2002): pp. 101–3.
- 3 Madden, Thomas F., "The fires of the fourth crusade in Constantinople 1203–1204: a damage assessment", *BZ*, LXXXIV–LXXXV/1–2 (1991–2): pp. 72–93.
- 4 *Pachymeres*: II, IV.21, pp. 390–1. Michael in turn commissioned a panel for this patriarch for Hagia Sophia; Germanos' *peplos* did not survive, however it is possible to envisage how Palaiologan textiles looked like through the Pallio of Genoa at the Museum of Sant'Agostino. Macrides, Ruth, "The New Constantine and the New Constantinople – 1261?", *BMGS*, VI (1980): pp. 22–5; Ead., "From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi: imperial models in decline and exile", in Magdalino, Paul (ed.), *New Constantines. The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994): pp. 271; Hilsdale, Cecily J., *Byzantine art and diplomacy in the age of decline* (Cambridge: University Press, 2014): pp. 31–87; Kalavrezou, Ioli, "The Byzantine Peplos in Genoa: 'The Object as Event'", in Payne, Alina (ed.), *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean: Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of Influence* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014): pp. 213–45; Paribeni, Andrea 'Focus sul pallio di San Lorenzo' in Gianandrea, Manuela, Gangemi, Francesco and Carlo Costantini, *Il potere dell'arte nel Medioevo: studi in onore di Mario D'Onofrio* (Rome: Campisano, 2014): pp. 299–311.



FIGURE 1 Windsor, Royal Library, RL 8938, portrait of Michael VIII, Theodora, and their son Constantine Porphyrogenetos once at the Peribleptos, Istanbul
AFTER OSBORNE AND CLARIDGE, *THE PAPER MUSEUM OF CASSIANO DAL POZZO*

(probably executed between 1277 and 1281) were in the refectory of the monastery of the Peribleptos, and they recorded the names of Michael VIII, Theodora, and their son Constantine Porphyrogenetos (Fig. 1).⁵ According to Leunclavius' report, and Du Cange's reproduction that cites it, an inscription accompanied them, and in its Latin version, it mentioned Michael as

5 For one of the several reproductions of this portrait, see Osborne, John and Claridge, Amanda, *The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo. A Catalogue Raisonné. Drawings and Prints in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, the British Museum, the Institut de France and Other collections*, 11.2: *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities. Other Mosaics, Paintings, Sarcophagi and Small Objects* (London: Harvey Miller, 1998): pp. 123–5, no. 202.

'Novus Constantinus'.⁶ Moreover, the seal of the tribunal of the *sekreton* held at the Numismatic Museum of Athens celebrates Michael, again, as 'New Constantine' and re-founder of this institution.⁷ Thus, the ideological association between the Constantinian foundation of Constantinople and Michael VIII's re-conquest was very well established through material culture.

As a 'New Constantine', Michael VIII could not neglect the Church of the Holy Apostles, the mausoleum of Constantine the Great and subsequent emperors.⁸ However, according to written sources, Michael's intervention did not specifically concern the structure of the church but was more symbolic. Close to the building, he ordered the erection of a column crowned at the top with a sculptural group representing him offering the model of the city to the Archangel Michael, his namesake saint.⁹ The erection of the column recalls the city's foundation columns of the Late Antique emperors and namely Constantine's famous column in Constantinople. In Michael's case, however, it is justifiable to imagine that the structure of the column was not a single marble piece as in Late Antiquity, but a 'column-like pedestal' made of masonry, as implied by Pachymeres, while the sculpture was possibly cast in bronze or made of repoussé sheets of copper which were later gilded.¹⁰

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- 6 Hanns Leweenklaw (1584/5) in Mango, Cyril A., "The Monastery of St. Mary Peribleptos (Sulu Manastir) at Constantinople revisited", *Revue de Études Arméeniennes*, xxiii (1992): pp. 477–83; Osborne, John "The evidence for a lost portrait of the family of Michael VIII Palaiologos", *Thesaurismata*, xxiii (1993): pp. 9–13; Stichel, Rudolf H.W., "'Vergessene Portraits" spätbyzantinischer Kaiser. Zwei frühpalaiologische kaiserliche Familienbildnisse im Peribleptos und Pammakaristoskloster zu Konstantinopel", *Mitteilungen zur spätantiken Archäologie und byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte*, 1 (1998): pp. 74–85.
- 7 Evans, Helen C., *Byzantium Faith and Power 1261–1557 – The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York-New Haven-London: The Metropolitan Museum of Art – Yale University Press, 2004): pp. 31–2, no. 2. The *sekreton* was probably associated with the Palace of the Blachernai since the seal does not represent the icon of the Hodegetria but the Virgin of the Blachernai. Goutzioukostas, Andreas, "Το μολυβδόβουλλο του Μιχαήλ Η' Παλαιολόγου "Τοῖς ἀθετοῦσι τὴν δίκην τοῦ σεκρέτου", *Βυζαντινὰ Σύμμεικτα*, xxii (2012): pp. 11–30; Hilsdale, *Byzantine art*: pp. 100–1.
- 8 On the monument, see the recent volume, Mullett, Margaret and Ousterhout, Robert G. (eds.), *The Holy Apostles: A Lost Monument, a Forgotten Project, and the Presentness of the Past* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2020), with previous bibliography, included Janin, *La Géographie*, pp. 46–55.
- 9 Pachymeres: III, IX.15, pp. 258–61; Gregoras: I, VI.8, p. 202.7–13. Talbot, "Restoration": pp. 258–60.
- 10 Durand, Jannic, "À propos du grand groupe en bronze de l'archange saint Michel et de l'empereur Michel VIII Paléologue à Constantinople", in Bresc-Bautier, Geneviève, Baron, Françoise and Pierre-Yves Le Pogam (eds.), *La sculpture en Occident. Etudes offertes à Jean-René Gaborit* (Dijon: Fatou, 2007): pp. 47–57.

Next, as expected, Michael restored and redecorated the damaged imperial palace, the Blachernai, which was the main dwelling of the Komnenoi and the Latin emperors; but before accomplishing this task, he resided circa ten years at the Great Palace, showing that the latter did not lose its role as an imperial residence in the Palaiologan era.¹¹

Similarly, the nearby church of Hagia Sophia was taken into consideration for Michael's restoration of Constantinople. Thanks to Pachymeres and Holobolos, we know that Michael VIII restored Hagia Sophia and entrusted the monk Rouchas with this task.¹² Michael's renewal involved the restoration of the ambo, the *solea*, and the *bema*, and the redecoration of the inner surfaces with sacred panels. According to Cormack, the monumental *deesis* of the southern gallery was also part of Michael VIII's refurbishment of Hagia Sophia, and specifically a celebration of the return of the cathedral to Orthodox hands after the Latin rule.¹³ However, the dating of this mosaic, together with other early Palaiologan portions of mosaic within the inner surfaces of the galleries,¹⁴ remains problematic and unfortunately too specific to be further explored in this article.

A chrysobull of Michael VIII, probably dated to around 1272, devoted specific attention to the status and possessions of the Great Church.¹⁵ Its purpose was to re-establish its former prosperity and patrimony, by donating territories and properties, some of which were located in the neighbouring area. In parallel, archaeological data confirms Palaiologan interventions involving specifically the area between Hagia Sophia and Hagia Eirene.¹⁶ Moreover, in this area was the famous hospital of Sampson, which in the Palaiologan era became a

11 *Pachymeres*: I, II.30, pp. 218–9; *Gregoras*: I, IV.2, p. 87.20–3. Talbot, “Restoration”: pp. 250–1.

12 *Pachymeres*: I, III.2, p. 232–3; *Manuelis Holoboli orationes*, edited by Maximilian Treu (Potsdam: Brandt, 1906–7): pp. 85.15–86.10. Talbot, “Restoration”: pp. 251–2.

13 Cormack, Robin, “Interpreting the mosaics of S. Sophia at Istanbul”, *Art History*, IV/2 (1981): pp. 145–6.

14 Teteriatnikov, Natalia B., *Justinianic Mosaics of Hagia Sophia and their Aftermath* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2017): pp. 180–3. See Polzer, Joseph, “Dating the Hagia Sophia *Deesis*”, *Arte Medievale*, 4th series/IX (2019): pp. 113–32, and Vapheaiades, Konstantinos M., “Reassessing a late Byzantine masterpiece: the *Deesis* mosaic in the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople”, *BMGS*, XLV/2 (2021): pp. 166–83 for recent attempts to date the *deesis* to the Komnenian period and to the era of Andronikos II respectively.

15 Geanakoplos, Deno J., “The Byzantine recovery of Constantinople from the Latins in 1261: a chrysobull of Michael VIII Palaeologus in favour of Hagia Sophia”, in Church, Frank F., *Continuity and discontinuity in church history: Essays presented to George Huntston Williams on the occasion of his 65th birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 1979): pp. 104–17.

16 Dirimtekin, Feridun “Les fouilles faites en 1946–1947 et en 1958–1960 entre Sainte-Sophie et Sainte-Irène, à Istanbul”, *Cahiers archéologiques*, XIII (1962): pp. 167, 172, 174–6, 178.

monastery, while the cult of its eponymous saint spread widely.¹⁷ Furthermore, the churches of St. Euphemia at the Hippodrome and the Chalkoprateia show early Palaiologan phases that have sometimes been generically dated to the late 1200s/early 1300s.¹⁸ Though written evidence is missing, their early Palaiologan refurbishment might have been part of Michael VIII's plan for the development of the area around Hagia Sophia specifically. Building activities of the era of Michael's successor, Andronikos II (1282–1328), did not extensively involve the quarters outside the area of the Blachernai, while Michael's chrysobull precisely mentions the buildings 'within and outside the courtyard of the Augustaion and in the area of the Milion'.¹⁹ The Chalkoprateia lay precisely in this area. Thus, it seems likely that at least some of the features listed above and dated to the early Palaiologan period may relate to the redevelopment of the area in question under Michael VIII, as highlighted in his chrysobull.

Remaining in the area of the ancient acropolis of Byzantium, but towards the north, Michael VIII re-established the Grammar School of the *Orphanotropheion* within the church of St. Paul.²⁰ Pachymeres described the re-establishment of the Grammar School by Michael VIII in the context of his 'educational' programme, which included new appointments for the Patriarchal School, and the nomination of competent clergy for the churches of the Holy Apostles and the church of the Blachernai.²¹ Several archaeological pieces of evidence have been documented in the area allegedly associated with the church of St. Paul, including a marble piece dating to the Palaiologan

17 Janin, *La Géographie*, pp. 466 and 574–5; Peschlow, Urs, *Die Irenenkirche in Istanbul: Untersuchungen zur Architektur* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1977): pp. 140–205; Miller, Timothy S., "The Sampson hospital of Constantinople", *Byzantinische Forschungen*, xv (1990): pp. 101–35; Starodubcev, Tatjana, "Physician and miracle worker. The cult of Saint Sampson the Xenodochos and his images in eastern Orthodox medieval painting", *Zograf*, xxxix (2015): p. 46.

18 Janin, *La Géographie*, pp. 126–30 and 246–51; Naumann, Rudolf and Belting, Hans, *Die Euphemia-Kirche am Hippodrom zu Istanbul und ihre Fresken* (Berlin: Mann, 1966): pp. 49–50, 83–5, 87–8, 102–6, 113–71, 189–93; Kleiss, Wolfram, "Grabungen im Bereich der Chalkopratenkirche in Istanbul 1965", *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, xvi (1966): pp. 219–22; Hennessy, Cecily, "The Chapel of Saint Jacob at the Church of the Theotokos Chalkoprateia in Istanbul", in Matthews, Roger and Curtis, John (eds.), *Proceedings of the 7th international Congress on the archaeology of the Ancient Near East* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012): pp. 351–66.

19 Geanakoplos, "The Byzantine recovery": pp. 110–1.

20 Janin, *La Géographie*, pp. 580–1; Talbot, "Restoration": p. 253; Miller, Timothy S., *The orphans of Byzantium: child welfare in the Christian Empire* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003): pp. 194–5, 200, 207, 225.

21 *Pachymeres*: II, IV.14, pp. 368–9.

period.²² The fragment suggests that renovations were undertaken in this area during the late period, but it cannot be attributed to any known monuments with certainty.

In the same quarter of the city, during the reign of Michael VIII, and specifically during the patriarchate of Germanos III, the latter refurbished the monks' cells of the monastery of Mangana, the ecclesiastical complex founded by Emperor Constantine Monomachos (1042–55), which was located at the eastern extremity of the peninsula.²³ According to Miller and Kidonopoulos, Michael VIII restored the hospital of this complex, but this assumption is based only on Gregory of Cyprus' general mention of Michael's refurbishment of the hospitals of the city.²⁴ However, Germanos was undoubtedly an ally of Michael VIII, and his building activities, as well as his activity in general, must be seen as in perfect agreement with that of the emperor. Thus, though evidence of the involvement of Michael VIII at the Mangana is not decisive, Germanos' interest in the monastery of St. George at Mangana was in any case a reflection of the policy of Michael VIII towards the monuments of the city.

Michael VIII's efforts were not only focussed on the restoration of the most symbolic monuments of Constantinople but were also intended to enhance the safety, economy, and repopulation of the city. In this context, the district of Blanga, today Langa Bostanı (located on the southern shore of the peninsula, where the former harbour of Theodosios lay) serves as a comprehensive case study.²⁵ In the Palaiologan period, a quarter of Jewish inhabitants, mainly employed as tanners, occupied the area of Blanga, and its foundation was the result of a recent migration of Jewish communities controlled by the authorities.²⁶ As Rapp has noted, adjacent to the Jewish quarter of Blanga were a Jewish-Venetian area and a Muslim quarter, as we know from Arab

22 Dark, Ken and Harris, Anthea L., "The Orphanage of Byzantine Constantinople: an archaeological identification", *Byzantinoslavica*, LXVI (2008): pp. 189–201; Melvani, Nicholas, *Late Byzantine sculpture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013): p. 20, no. 43, p. 239, fig. 22.

23 *Pachymeres*: II, IV.21, pp. 388–9. Janin, *La Géographie*, pp. 75–81.

24 *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, edited by Jacques Paul Migne (Paris: Garnier, 1857–1866): CXLII, col. 377c (Gregory of Cyprus); Miller, Timothy S., *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985): p. 195; Kidonopoulos, Vassilios, *Bauten in Konstantinopel 1204–1328: Verfall und Zerstörung, Restaurierung, Umbau und Neubau von Profan- und Sakralbauten* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994): pp. 39–41.

25 Berger, Albrecht, "Der Langa Bostanı in Istanbul", *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, XLIII (1993): pp. 467–77.

26 Jacoby, David, "The Jews of Constantinople and their demographic hinterland", in Mango, Cyril A. and Dagron, Gilbert (eds.), *Constantinople and its hinterland* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995): pp. 228–9.

accounts.²⁷ Talbot interpreted the institution of a mosque during the first years of the reign of Michael VIII as a sign of diplomatic good-will towards the Mamluks.²⁸ The location of this mosque remains unknown, but it may be argued that it was located in the Muslim quarter adjacent to Blanga. Thus, it seems that after the conquest of Constantinople, quarters like Blanga hosted heterogeneous groups of people and, consequently, new building activities took place in these districts in order to meet the exigencies of the population.

Some of the alterations recorded on the walls and towers in Langa Bostani have also been dated to the late Byzantine period. Until recently, two towers were still standing and were probably part of Michael VIII's restoration. They disappeared at the very end of the 19th century, but Mary Walker permanently immortalised their profiles in her drawings for *Broken Bits of Byzantium*.²⁹ These drawings perfectly show the architectural features of the towers, such as the alternation of bricks and stones that composed part of their masonry and the arches and the presence of walkable areas on their tops. The latter have suggested to Paribeni that the towers were originally intended as a belvedere.³⁰ If so, the towers had both residential and recreational purposes, due to the panoramic view enjoyable from this altitude. Similar residential towers with belvederes, dated to the Palaiologan period, were once also present at the Palace of the Blachernai.³¹ Moreover, the tower of the Mermerkule complex³² and the imperial tower that Cyriacus of Ancona mentioned close to the monastery of Stoudios³³ testify (for a later period) to the habit of residing in the proximity of the maritime walls; though the record of aristocratic

27 Rapp, Claudia, "A Medieval Cosmopolis: Constantinople and its foreigners", in Heilo, Olof and Nilsson, Ingela (eds.), *Constantinople as center and crossroad* (İstanbul: Svenska Forskningsinstitutet i Istanbul, 2019): p. 115.

28 Talbot, "Restoration": pp. 252–3.

29 Curtis, Charles G., *Broken Bits of Byzantium* (n.p.: 1869–91): nos. 36–29.

30 Paribeni, Andrea "Le torri di Vlanga Bostani: un tratto perduto delle mura marittime di Costantinopoli nei disegni di Mary Adelaide Walker", in Bordi, Giulia et alii (eds.), *L'officina dello sguardo. Scritti in onore di Maria Andaloro*, II (Rome: Gangemi, 2014): pp. 237–44.

31 Asutay-Effenberger, Neslihan, "The Blachernai Palace and its defence", in Redford, Scott and Ergin, Nina (eds.), *Cities and citadels in Turkey: From the Iron Age to the Seljuks* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013): pp. 272–3 (tower no. 13).

32 Peschlow, Urs, "Die Befestigte Residenz von Mermerkule. Beobachtungen an einem spätbyzantinischen Bau im Verteidigungssystem von Konstantinopel", *JÖB*, LI (2001): pp 385–403; Asutay-Effenberger, Neslihan, "Wer erbaute Mermer-Kule?", *Byzantion*, LXXII (2002): pp. 271–4.

33 *The Survey of Istanbul 1455*, edited by Halil İnalçık (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2012): p. 351.

residential complexes located on the southern shore, with areas arranged for a sea view, dates back to the early years of the imperial city.³⁴

According to Pachymeres, in Blanga, Michael VIII restored the harbour of the Kontoskalion, which became the main military harbour of Palaiologan Constantinople.³⁵ In fact, this harbour was the Late Antique harbour of Julian, later known as Sophianai, which gradually lost importance when the Golden Horn shore became the economic centre of Constantinople in the 11th century.³⁶ In the Palaiologan era, however, the area of the Kontoskalion was probably more extended to the west, perhaps also including parts of the harbour of Theodosios, in Blanga.³⁷ The development of the harbours on the southern shore was not accidental. According to the same passage of Pachymeres, Michael believed that the harbours of the Golden Horn were too exposed to attacks, and, in general, were also under the control of the Genoese. The Golden Horn, which was the main harbour area before the Latin period, continued to be used as a harbour in the Palaiologan era, hosting *skalai* and wharves; but it had mainly commercial purposes and, above all, inevitable connections with the Genoese of Galata.³⁸ The new status of the Kontoskalion stemmed directly from Michael VIII's reconfiguration of the harbour area of Constantinople, which perhaps mirrored his great efforts to reconstruct the Byzantine fleet.

A further focus for Michael VIII in his efforts to improve the security of Constantinople was his desire to strengthen the city's maritime walls, as testified by their symbolic representation on his *hyperpyra* (Fig. 2).³⁹ Pachymeres informs us that Michael intended to reinforce the walls on two different occasions.⁴⁰ Immediately after the re-conquest of the city, he ordered their profile to be heightened through the use of panels made of wood and leather.

34 Magdalino, Paul, "The Maritime Neighborhoods of Constantinople: Commercial and Residential Functions, Sixth to Twelfth Centuries", *DOP*, LIV (2000): pp. 214–7; Dalgıç, Örgü, "The triumph of Dionysos in Constantinople: A Late Fifth-Century Mosaic in Context", *DOP*, LXIX (2015): pp. 15–48.

35 *Pachymeres*: II, v.10, pp. 468–71. Talbot, "Restoration": p. 253.

36 Heker, Dominik, "Julianoshafen – Sophienhafen – Kontoskalion", in Daim, Falko (ed.), *Die Byzantinischen Häfen Konstantinopels* (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2016): pp. 51–66.

37 Mango, Cyril A., *Le développement urbain de Constantinople* (Paris: Boccard, 1990² [1st ed. 1985]): pp. 39–40, note 15.

38 Heker, "Julianoshafen": p. 59.

39 Grierson, Philip, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, v.1–2: *Michael VIII to Constantine XI* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1999): v.2: pl. 1–2.

40 *Pachymeres*: I, III.9, pp. 250–3; II, v.10, pp. 468–9.



FIGURE 2 *Hyperpyron* of Michael VIII, the Virgin within the walls of Constantinople and Michael VIII, with the Archangel Michael, kneeling in front of Christ
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A decade later, it seems that he planned the construction of the second circuit of walls that would have made the maritime walls similar to the dual construction of the land walls. The latter intervention either never happened or was made of perishable materials that later deteriorated: nothing of it has survived.⁴¹ The works on the maritime walls, together with the newly restored imposing towers, like those of Blanga, gave the southern shore a fortified aspect which now can only be imagined. The fortification and protection of the capital were indeed primary goals for Michael VIII, and through his building activities, he lent Constantinople a powerful appearance visible from afar for those arriving by sea.

Last but not least, Michael VIII promoted the restoration of monasteries within and outside the city. According to the *typika* of these foundations, the emperor was responsible for the reconstruction of the monasteries of St. Michael on Mount St. Auxentios (near Chalcedon) and St. Demetrios ‘of the Palaiologoi’ in Constantinople, which was paired with the Theotokos Acheiropietos at Kellibara monastery, on Mt. Latros, on the Asiatic shore and far distant from the capital.⁴² Saint Demetrios, originally within the city, has

41 Talbot, “Restoration”: p. 249.

42 “Kellibara I: *Typikon* of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of St. Demetrios of the Palaiologoi-Kellibara in Constantinople”, translated by George Dennis, and “Auxentios: *Typikon* of Michael VIII Palaiologos for the Monastery of the Archangel Michael on

completely disappeared, but its former location was certainly in close proximity to the sea, the Jewish Gate at Blanga, and the monastery of the Myrelaion.⁴³ There are also reasons to believe that the early Palaiologan alterations of the Myrelaion must be dated to the era of Michael instead of the generic ‘before 1300’.⁴⁴ The era of the first Palaiologan emperor is more compatible with the dating of the objects and the features founds during David Talbot Rice’s and Cecil L. Striker’s excavations and with the overall nature of the complex.⁴⁵ Previously, the Myrelaion was an imperial mausoleum, specifically of Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44) and his family, which was built close to the imperial complex called ‘Rotunda’. The latter was probably part of the *Domus Nobilissimae Arcadiae*, the house of the daughter of the Emperor Arkadios (395–408), Arkadia.⁴⁶

As suggested by the presence of the imperial portrait described above, it is possible that Michael VIII funded the restoration of the Peribleptos monastery, originally built by Romanos III Argyros (1028–34) on the southern shore,

Mount Auxentios near Chalcedon”, translated by George Dennis, in Thomas, John and Constantinides Hero, Angela (eds.), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: a Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ Typika and Testaments* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection 2000): pp. 1207–36 and 1237–53. Janin, Raymond, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantines: Bithynie, Hellespont, Latros, Galèsios, Trébizonde, Athènes, Thessalonique*, (Paris: Institut Français d’Études Byzantines: 1975): pp. 43–45, 229–32.

- 43 Stephen of Novgorod, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, edited by George P. Majeska (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984): pp. 36–9 and 267–8; *Gregoras*: II, xvii.6, p. 860.14–7; *The Survey*: p. 359 and 455. It is worth noting that Janin erroneously located St. Demetrios on the north-eastern part of the peninsula, Janin, *La Géographie*, pp. 92–4, for the Myrelaion, see pp. 364–6.
- 44 For a reconsideration of the date of the Myrelaion, see Varsallona, Jessica “The Palaiologan Restoration of the Myrelaion and the development of the southern shore of Constantinople: Materials from Cecil L. Striker and David Talbot Rice Archives”, in Gallaher, Dan, Meynell, Callan, and Katerina Vavaliou (eds.), *Contested Heritage: Adaptation, Restoration and Innovation in the Late Antique and Byzantine World – Proceedings of The Oxford University Byzantine Society’s XXI International Graduate Conference* (forthcoming).
- 45 Talbot Rice, David, “Excavations at Bodrum Camii 1930”, *Byzantion*, VIII (1933): pp. 151–76; Striker, Cecil L., *The Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii) in Istanbul* (Princeton: University Press, 1981).
- 46 Niewöhner, Philipp, “The Rotunda at the Myrelaion in Constantinople: Pilaster Capitals, Mosaic and Brick Stamps”, in Necipoğlu, Nevra, Ödekan, Ayla, and Engin Akyürek (eds.), *The Byzantine Court: Source of Power and Culture – Second International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, Proceedings, Istanbul, 21–23 June, 2010* (İstanbul: Koç University Press, 2013): pp. 41–52.

between the Constantinian and Theodosian walls, and then transformed into his mausoleum.⁴⁷ Palaiologan restoration works in this complex were probably both structural and decorative, as testified by a series of features. Portions of late Byzantine masonry have been found in the substructure.⁴⁸ Moreover, sculptural pieces, such as the capital with the Archangel Michael and the panels with an archangel and the Virgin Mary (now at the Metropolitan Museum of New York and the Bode Museum of Berlin respectively), date to the early Palaiologan period.⁴⁹ Lastly, accounts like that of Ruy González de Clavijo record pictorial elements (like the church fathers, the tree of Jesse, and the Virgin and 30 castles), which probably pertained to the Palaiologan re-decoration of the complex.⁵⁰

Both at the Myrelaion and Peribleptos, the emphasis seems particularly devoted to the substructures or crypts of the buildings – at least in the case of the Myrelaion – which was re-purposed in the Palaiologan era for funerary uses. The same attention to the funerary sphere was present in St. Demetrios, which later hosted the highly political body of John IV Laskaris, who was the young imperial heir blinded by Michael Palaiologos.⁵¹

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- 47 Janin, *La Géographie*, pp. 227–31; Dark, Ken, “The Byzantine Church and Monastery of St Mary Peribleptos in Istanbul”, *The Burlington Magazine*, CXLI (1999): pp. 656–64; Özgümüş, Ferudun, “Peribleptos (‘Sulu’) Monastery in Istanbul”, *BZ*, XCIII (2000): pp. 508–20; Dalgıç, Örgü and Mathews, Thomas F. “A new interpretation of the church of Peribleptos and its place in Middle Byzantine Architecture”, in Ödekan, Ayla, Akyürek, Engin, and Nevra Necipoğlu (eds.), *Change in the Byzantine world in the 12th and 13th centuries. First international Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium* (İstanbul: Ege Yayınları 2010): pp. 424–31.
- 48 Dark, “The Byzantine Church”: pp. 657; Özgümüş, “Peribleptos”: fig. 9.
- 49 Effenberger, Arne, “Die Relieffikonen der Theotokos und des Erzengels Michael im Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Berlin”, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, XLVIII (2006): pp. 9–45.
- 50 Ruy González de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, edited by Francisco López Estrada (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1999): p. 123; Mango, “The Monastery”; Guiglia Guidobaldi, Alessandra, “La perdita decorazione del monastero della Theotokos Peribleptos a Costantinopoli e un ritratto di Papa Clemente nel codice *Vat. Lat. 5407* della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana”, in Pasi, Silvia (ed.), *Studi in memoria di Patrizia Angiolini Martinelli* (Bologna: Ante quem, 2005): pp. 169–89; Angar, Mabi “Disturbed orders. Architectural representations in Saint Mary Peribleptos as seen by Ruy González de Clavijo”, in Heilo and Nilsson (eds.), *Constantinople as center*: pp. 116–41.
- 51 Matschke, Klaus P., *Das spätbyzantinische Konstantinopel. Alte und neue Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte zwischen 1261 und 1453* (Hamburg: Kováč, 2008): pp. 81–3; Shawcross, Theresa, “In the Name of the True Emperor: Politics of Resistance after the Palaiologan Usurpation”, *Byzantinoslavica*, LXVI/1–2 (2008): p. 220; Melvani, Nicholas, “The tombs of the Palaiologan emperors”, *BMGS*, XLII (2018): pp. 238–9.

In the context of Michael VIII's building activities, it is particularly important to consider the patronage of his two sons, Andronikos and Constantine Porphyrogennetos, of two monasteries in the city. According to Kidonopoulos, Andronikos, during the years of his co-reign with his father (1272–83), probably built a monastery around the Nea Ekklesia of Basil I (867–86), the Nea Moni, located below the Great Palace.⁵² He later put this monastery under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Herakleia (Pontos), who was the uncle of Nikephoros Gregoras.⁵³ According to the latter, around 1293, Constantine gave a large contribution towards the restoration of the complex of Saint John of Stoudios, before being imprisoned by his brother Andronikos.⁵⁴ This restoration involved the roof of the church and the walls surrounding the monastery. Palaiologan interventions may be still spotted on the masonry of the church building and fragments of an elaborate sarcophagus found in the area suggested to Peschlow that Constantine initially designated this monastery as his burial place.⁵⁵ The fragments are pieces of red breccia from Bilecik, and they were part of a representation of a *threnos*, the lamentation over Christ's dead body. Stylistically, they date to ca. 1300. The sarcophagus was perhaps placed inside the church, but Constantine, in the end, did not use it, since he was buried in the ambulatory of the Theotokos of Lips monastery.⁵⁶ Though there is no evidence to demonstrate that the burial belonged to an initial project of Constantine Porphyrogennetos, the presence of such an elaborate sarcophagus dating to the early Palaiologan era indicates that in this period the recently refurbished site had a funerary and aristocratic association. These elements, along with the presence of a crypt, align the Stoudios basilica with the churches of the Myrelaion, Saint Demetrios, and perhaps Peribleptos.

This article does not have space to examine the extent and characteristics of the Palaiologan restoration of single monuments, but it does examine the significance of Michael VIII's activity as a whole. It may be noted that, except for

52 Laurent, Vitalien, "La vie de Jean, metropolitte d'Heraclée du Pont par Nicéphore Grégoras", *Ἀρχαῖον Πόντου*, VI (1934): p. 51; Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel*: pp. 56–9. Janin, *La Géographie*, pp. 378–9.

53 Laurent, "La vie", p. 39, he was a labourer employed during Michael VIII's reconstruction of the walls. Talbot, "Restoration", p. 250, footnote 45.

54 Gregoras: I, VI.6, p. 190.10–5. Janin, *La Géographie*, pp. 444–5.

55 Kudde, Esra, *Stoudios Manastır Kompleksi – İoannes Prodromos Kilisesi (İmrahor İlyas Bey Camii – İmrahor Anıtı) Koruma Projesi ve Önerileri* (unpublished PhD thesis, İstanbul: Teknik Üniversitesi, 2015); Peschlow, Urs, "Ein paläologisches Relieffdenkmal in Konstantinopel", *Gesta*, XXXIII/2 (1994): pp. 93–103. See also, Melvani, Nicholas, "The Monastery of Stoudios in the 15th Century", *JÖB*, LXVII (2017): pp. 129–42.

56 Pachymeres: IV, XI.22, pp. 466–7; Marinis, Vasileios, "Tombs and Burials in the Monastery tou Libos in Constantinople", *DOP*, LXIII (2009): p. 162.

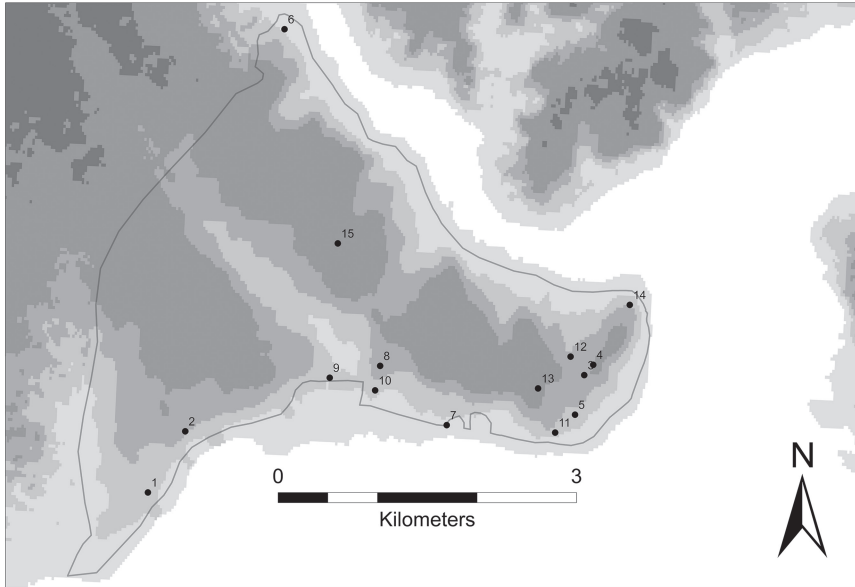


FIGURE 3 Palaiologan Constantinople: building activities during the reign of Michael VIII – 1261–82

- 1) Monastery of St. John of Stoudios
- 2) Monastery of Peribleptos
- 3) Hagia Sophia
- 4) Hagia Eirene
- 5) Great Palace
- 6) Palace of the Blachernai
- 7) Harbour of Kontoskalion
- 8) Monastery of Myrelaion
- 9) Blanga
- 10) Monastery of St. Demetrios of the Palaiologoi (hypothetical location)
- 11) Nea Moni
- 12) Church of Chalkoprateria
- 13) St. Euphemia at the Hippodrome
- 14) Orphanage
- 15) Michael VIII's column

MAP: JESSICA VARSELLONA AND MARCO CAPARDONI

the quarter of Hagia Sophia and the acropolis, most of the building works considered above – the harbour, the maritime walls, the structures of the quarter of Blanga, and the monasteries of Studios, Peribleptos, Myrelaion, St. Demetrios, and Nea Moni – are located on the southern shore of Constantinople, facing the Marmara Sea (Fig. 3). Michael VIII's focus on this area is too systematic and thus, it must be considered an intentional strategy. It seems clear that exploiting and re-monumentalising the southern shore of the peninsula was a specific intention of the emperor, which his sons Constantine and, perhaps, Andronikos initially tried to continue. The reasons behind this monumental programme are numerous and relate to the political, religious, ideological, and aesthetic spheres, which will be now briefly explored.

As noted in the earlier discussion of the building programmes at Blanga and around the harbour, Michael VIII considered the Golden Horn shore too exposed to the Genoese and their interests. Thus, in order to enhance the fleet and place it in a less vulnerable spot, he rehabilitated the harbour of

the Kontoskalion on the southern shore. The latter, across the centuries, had lost its importance in favour of the harbours of the Golden Horn. Indeed, in the Komnenian period, the area around the Blachernai and the Golden Horn shore in general were the most developed sectors of Constantinople, though not exclusively so. By the time of Michael VIII, the settlement of the Genoese at Pera was growing on the other side of the Golden Horn, thanks to the concessions that Michael had to make to them.⁵⁷ Thus, the focus on that quadrant of the city cannot have continued to be a reasonable strategy. It seems likely that, as a consequence, Michael VIII invested imperial money and energies in the restoration of the opposite side of the peninsula, away from Pera but highly visible to anyone approaching Constantinople by sea and from the West, which was the most considered political horizon of Michael VIII. Moreover, as Madden demonstrated, the second fire of 1203 damaged a large portion of the southern shore.⁵⁸ This may have meant that most of the buildings still present there in 1261 might have been in need of restoration.

Moreover, from the moment of his entrance into Constantinople in 1261, Michael VIII established a sacred topography through his procession from the Golden Gate to the Great Palace and Hagia Sophia. This sacred topography focussed on the southern shore of Constantinople. Puech argued that Michael's entrance was more religious than imperial, due to the emphasis on the role of the Virgin Mary, the patron of the city, personified by the icon of the Hodegetria.⁵⁹ However, as noted by Macrides, the entrance through the Golden Gate recalls the triumphal *adventus* ceremony of the Late Antique emperors, and though Hagia Sophia as a final stage continued past processional custom, Michael's first procession interrupted the Komnenian ceremonial custom that initiated imperial procession on the acropolis.⁶⁰ In short, Michael VIII intentionally switched the sacral and imperial focus from the north-eastern area of the city to the southern one, and was surely fully aware

57 *Trattati e Negoziazioni Politiche della Repubblica di Genova (958–1797)*, edited by Pasquale Lisciandrelli (Genoa: Società ligure di storia patria, 1960): p. 75.

58 Madden, "The fires".

59 Puech, "La Refondation".

60 Macrides, "From the Komnenoi": p. 274; Konstantinidi, Chara, 'Η μορφή της Αχειροποιήτου-Φανερωμένης στην περίοδο των Παλαιολόγων', in Evangelatou-Notara, Florentia and Maniati-Kokkini, Triantafyllitsa (eds.), *Κλητόριον in memory of Nikos Oikonomides* (Athens-Thessaloniki: Vaniias, 2005): p. 223, stressed that Michael's triumphal entry from the Golden Gate explicitly evoked that of Nikephoros II Phokas in 963. In general, on imperial triumphal ceremonies, see McCormick, Michael, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: University Press, 1986), in particular pp. 35–230.

of all the ideological implications of this decision, as expected of a 'New Constantine'.

The association with the past and the triumphs of the previous emperors evoked by Michael's entry into the city through the Golden Gate was developed even further by his renovation of the imperial *mausolea* of Constantinople. Indeed, Michael's building activities involved all the *mausolea* of the city. Apart from the column at the Holy Apostles and the works that his ally, the patriarch Germanos III, sponsored at the monastery of St. George at Mangana – the mausoleum of Constantine IX Monomachos – Michael refurbished the monastery of the Peribleptos and perhaps the Myrelaion – the *mausolea* of Romanos III Argyros (and Nikephoros III Botaneiates – 1078–81), and Romanos Lekapenos. This does not necessarily mean that Michael wanted to establish a symbolic connection specifically with these emperors. In fact, according to the travellers' account mentioning their foundations, their name and relation to the buildings were only generically remembered in the Palaiologan period.⁶¹ As a result, their *mausolea* were still perceived as imperial, but without a specific association to an emperor in particular. Furthermore, some elements allow me to reconsider the hypothesis that Michael wanted to be buried at St. Demetrios, and therefore at the southern shore, though this cannot be explored here in depth. In the end, Michael was not buried in Constantinople because of the ban imposed on his funeral within the city in response to his religious policies: however, if the circumstances had been different, I would argue that indeed the mausoleum of Michael VIII would have made a visual connection with the other two *mausolea* of the southern shore, the Myrelaion and the Peribleptos. Moreover, as demonstrated by the Palaiologan reconfiguration of the substructures of the Myrelaion, and perhaps Peribleptos, these *mausolea* of the Makedonian period were converted into Palaiologan burial sites, reinforcing the funerary significance of the southern shore to the Palaiologoi.

This stress on the Makedonian monuments and the reconfiguration of the whole southern area suggest something about Michael VIII's ideological goal. The first Palaiologos and 'New Constantine' was not interested only in the connection of his name with his immediate (and legitimate) predecessors, the Komnenoi, but aimed at establishing a link with a more ancient past of the city, since a deeper connection with its history would have facilitated the controversial process of the legitimisation of his lineage.

61 As in the cases of Clavijo's passage on the Peribleptos, where he recorded the burial of a generic emperor Romanos, or Mangana, where the author mentioned a lavish burial and connected it to a generic 'empress' (but more probably Monomachos' mistress, Maria Skleraina). Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*: pp. 121–2, 133.

Lastly, as the towers of Langa Bostan indicate, aesthetic elements cannot be dismissed when analysing Michael VIII's transformation of the southern shore of the 'New Constantinople'. As demonstrated by Magdalino, the southern shore of Constantinople offers stunning views and the aristocratic members who built their palaces there during the Late Antique and Middle Byzantine periods undoubtedly took this into account.⁶² The view was unquestionably considered as an essential element in Palaiologan architecture as well, and Michael VIII was surely aware of it, having resided for ten years at the Great Palace.

In conclusion, Michael VIII's focus on the southern shore of Constantinople indicates – as Magdalino and Macrides have argued for the Komnenian period⁶³ – that interest in the areas around the Great Palace did not end in the Palaiologan period, involving all the southern shore in an urban reconfiguration so systematic that has no parallels in the entire history of Byzantine Constantinople. Although the area around the Blachernai and the Golden Horn shore in general became the central focus of building activities in the city during the reign of Andronikos II, this was exclusively related to the specific political situation inherited by Andronikos, and the reaction of his aristocratic entourage. However, Michael VIII's efforts along the southern shore were not in vain and his legacy endured for the remainder of the Palaiologan period. As in the eighth and tenth centuries, when the urban focus shifted from the harbours of the Golden Horn shore to the southern shore,⁶⁴ Michael VIII transformed this section of the city into the most representative quarter of the capital. However, he emphasised not only economic or military needs, but also promoted religious and ideological goals. The Palaiologan restoration of the harbours, the maritime walls, the structures of the quarter of Blanga, and the monasteries of Studios, Peribleptos, Myrelaion, St. Demetrios, and Nea Moni, were thus parts of a systematic urban plan which aimed at the renovation of the profile and fame of the Late Antique and Middle Byzantine imperial city of Constantinople, which again became splendid, visibly resilient, and able to display its magnificence to anyone reaching it, by sea, from the bordering lands.

62 Magdalino, "The Maritime Neighborhoods": pp. 215–7.

63 Id., "The Great Palace and Manuel I", *BMGS*, IV (1978): pp. 101–14. See also Macrides, Ruth, "Ceremonies and the City: The Court in Fourteenth-Century Constantinople", in Duindam, Jeroen, Artan, Tülay, and Metin I. Kunt (eds.), *Royal courts in dynastic states and empires. A global perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2011): pp. 217–38.

64 Magdalino, "The Maritime Neighborhoods": p. 212.

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