

Harbours of Byzantium: The Archaeology of Coastal Infrastructures



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The Archaeology of Coastal Infrastructures

Edited by

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Cover: Southwestern harbour of Byzantine Kassandreia in Chalkidiki, Greece (A. Ginalis)

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In Memoriam Ruthy Gertwagen (1952-2022)



Contents

List of Figures	ii
Editor's Preface	vii
1. Byzantine Imperial Policy Towards Building and Maintaining of Ports in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 6th Century AD and the Technology Involved.....	1
<i>Ruthy Gertwagen</i>	
2. Was Roman Marine Concrete Used in Byzantine Harbour Construction? An Unanswered Question....	34
<i>Robert L. Hohlfelder</i>	
3. Ports, Harbours, and Landings of the Byzantine Terra d'Otranto	46
<i>Paul Arthur</i>	
4. The Late Antique and Byzantine Port of Thessalian Thebes – The Archaeology of its Coastal Infrastructures	65
<i>Alkiviadis Ginalis and Anna Gialouri</i>	
5. The Port Facilities of Thessaloniki up to the Byzantine Era	86
<i>Marina Leivadioti</i>	
6. Remarks on the Urban Transformations of the Harbours of the North Aegean Coastline during the Early Christian Era as well as on their Links with the Road Network	100
<i>Flora Karagianni</i>	
7. An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Study of the Ancient Harbour Site of 'Karon Limen' or 'Portus Caria/Carea', Bulgaria	113
<i>Preslav Peev, Alkiviadis Ginalis, Bogdan Prodanov, Grigori Simeonov</i>	
8. Bathonea (?): A Newly Discovered Ancient Port in the Hinterland of Byzantium/Constantinople	127
<i>Şengül G. Aydingün</i>	
9. A Late Antique and Byzantine Harbour in Constantinople: The Theodosian Harbour at Yenikapı. History, Archaeology, and Architecture	134
<i>Ayşe Ercan-Kydonakis</i>	
10. Between Yavneh-yam and Rhinocorura: The Byzantine Portals of the Southern Levant	149
<i>Gil Gambash</i>	
11. The Harbour Installations of Lake Mariout (Alexandria Region) in the Late Roman Empire (4th–7th Centuries AD)	158
<i>Valérie Pichot</i>	
Appendix 1. Conference Programme International Conference on 'Harbours of Byzantium' (January 11th–13th 2018).....	178
Appendix 2. Contributors in Alphabetical Order.....	179

List of Figures

1. Byzantine Imperial Policy Towards Building and Maintaining of Ports in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 6th Century AD and the Technology Involved¹

Figure 1.1:	Straits of Hieron and Eutropius = Rumeli Kavađi and Anadolu Kavađi.....	7
Figure 1.2a:	The headers that build the southern mole at the port of Acre.....	23
Figure 1.2b:	The southern mole at the port of Acre	23

2. Was Roman Marine Concrete Used in Byzantine Harbour Construction? An Unanswered Question

Figure 2.1:	The main harbour of Caesarea. North is to the left. Remains of the Crusader city are visible on land.....	35
Figure 2.2:	Pulvis Puteolanus from the Naples region	36
Figure 2.3:	Roman marine concrete going into the wooden <i>caisson</i> using trip baskets	37
Figure 2.4:	C.J. Brandon (left) and J.P. Oleson (right) coring a Roman <i>pila</i> at Caesarea	37
Figure 2.5:	A preliminary field analysis of a marine concrete core sample by J.P. Oleson. Large pieces of aggregate and lime are visible	38
Figure 2.6:	Portus Augusti coin issued at the Caesarea mint during the reign of Trajan Decius (AD 249-251)	41

3. Ports, Harbours, and Landings of the Byzantine Terra d'Otranto

Figure 3.1:	Italy c. the early 7th century AD. Approximate Byzantine territories are shaded	46
Figure 3.2:	The square fort and harbour at Egnazia (Fasano, BR)	47
Figure 3.3:	Ports, harbours, and landings of Byzantine southern Apulia	48
Figure 3.4:	Brindisi columns (the missing column is now in Lecce) in a 1778 sketch by Louis Ducros, and the inscription of Lupus Protospatharios.....	49
Figure 3.5:	The small port of Lecce at San Cataldo	51
Figure 3.6:	The medieval settlement and inlets at Roca Vecchia	51
Figure 3.7:	An old photograph of stacked ceramic vessels ready to be loaded onto a cargo ship at the Greek island of Skyros. Similar landings may have existed in the Italian Salento region.....	53
Figure 3.8:	San Cristoforo (Melendugno), looking out over the beach, from where a cave appears to have been used for offerings and supplications to deities and saints in the hope of a safe voyage.....	53
Figure 3.9:	San Cristoforo (Melendugno), looking towards the interior of the cave	54
Figure 3.10:	The two large and interconnected Alimini Lakes. Previous marshes or lagoonal areas with toponyms and abandoned Byzantine sites have been added.....	55
Figure 3.11:	Byzantine inscription recording a maritime watch tower in 1042	56
Figure 3.12:	The archaeological evidence around Porto Cesareo.....	56
Figure 3.13:	La Strea peninsula, with abundant later Medieval remains – perhaps 13th century AD	57
Figure 3.14:	Gold signet ring of the eparch Basilios	58
Figure 3.15:	The Byzantine wreck of Porto Cesareo	59

4. The Late Antique and Byzantine Port of Thessalian Thebes – The Archaeology of its Coastal Infrastructures

Figure 4.1:	Archaeological remains of Thessalian Thebes at Nea Anchialos, Greece.....	66
Figure 4.2:	Part of the paved colonnaded street	67
Figure 4.3:	Warehouses or workshops along the paved colonnaded street.....	67
Figure 4.4:	South-eastern breakwater	68
Figure 4.5a	Part of the sea wall along the south-eastern breakwater excavated in 1986	69
Figure 4.5b	Part of the sea wall today.....	69
Figure 4.6:	Superstructure on the south-western breakwater	70
Figure 4.7:	Estimated extent of the harbour basin	70
Figure 4.8:	Unearthed intersection of the sea walls.....	71
Figure 4.9:	Wall superstructure on the south-western breakwater.....	71
Figure 4.10:	Spoilation of Sarcophagi for mole construction	72
Figure 4.11a	Wooden post of a <i>caisson</i>	72
Figure 4.11b	In situ wooden posts of a <i>caisson</i>	72
Figure 4.12:	C14 dates of the wooden posts	73
Figure 4.13:	Frontal facade and walking level of the eastern quay-line, consisting of a single row of ashlar blocks and dressed stones.....	74

Figure 4.14:	Small rectangular notches on ashlar blocks	74
Figure 4.15:	A series of flattened blocks and slabs form the walking level of the quay area.....	75
Figure 4.16:	Projecting platform from the quay in the harbour basin.....	75
Figure 4.17:	Mooring stone.....	75
Figure 4.18:	The estimated development of the harbour basin. a) until 4th c. AD; b) 5th-7th c. AD; c) 7th-8th c. AD; d) modern.....	77
Figure 4.19:	Widely scattered ashlar blocks and irregularly shaped worked stones along the outer side of the SE breakwater	78
Figure 4.20:	The extent of the outer harbour.....	79
Figure 4.21:	Jetty of the outer harbour.....	80
Figure 4.22:	Stepped inclination and composition of the jetty	80
Figure 4.23:	Circular lime kiln next to the jetty	81
Figure 4.24:	Composition of the lower part of the firing chamber	81
Figure 4.25:	Part of the collapsed vault	81
Figure 4.26:	Basilica J north of the jetty	82

5. The Port Facilities of Thessaloniki up to the Byzantine Era

Figure 5.1:	The two ports of the ancient city of Thasos.....	87
Figure 5.2:	Facade of the stone construction at Aristoteles Square.....	87
Figure 5.3:	Plan of the city of Thessaloniki.....	88
Figure 5.4:	Floor plan of the ancient buildings at Gr. Palamas 16 Street	89
Figure 5.5:	Floor plan of the excavation area of the storage complex under the ‘Garden Theatre’ of Thessaloniki	90
Figure 5.6:	Excavation site of the warehouse complex north of the harbour	91
Figure 5.7:	Proposed layout of the port of Thessaloniki in the 10th century AD	91
Figure 5.8:	Dourgouti Cantilever’s facade from the West.....	92
Figure 5.9:	Dourgouti Cantilever’s facade from the South.....	92
Figure 5.10:	Dourgouti Cantilever’s facade from the East	92
Figure 5.11:	Drawing of the port of Thessaloniki by M. Vickers.....	93
Figure 5.12:	Topographic map of Thessaloniki by Velenis	94
Figure 5.13:	The port of Thessaloniki	95
Figure 5.14:	3D-Representation of the sea walls around the White Tower.....	95
Figure 5.15:	The harbour area of the Byzantine port with the Ecclesiastical Scala	96
Figure 5.16:	The cantilever of the sea wall at 34 Proxenou L. Koromila Street.....	97
Figure 5.17:	Plan of the maritime fortification of Thessaloniki by the architect-engineer P. Vitali (1871)	97
Figure 5.18:	Thessaloniki from the Sea. 1865 watercolour by the Italian painter Salacca.....	97
Figure 5.19:	Photograph of Thessaloniki’s maritime wall taken by the brothers Abdullah	98

6. Remarks on the Urban Transformations of the Harbours of the North Aegean Coastline during the Early Christian Era as well as on their Links with the Road Network

Figure 6.1:	The Via Egnatia in Roman times.....	101
Figure 6.2:	The route of the Via Egnatia.....	102
Figure 6.3:	Thessaloniki (from an old postcard)	102
Figure 6.4:	The Decumanus Maximus, Thessaloniki	103
Figure 6.5:	Plan of Thessaloniki’s harbour area	103
Figure 6.6:	A big complex serving the port facilities of Thessaloniki. Plan of the excavations at Fraggon 28 Str	104
Figure 6.7:	Map of Chalkidiki with indications of the position of Skalai	105
Figure 6.8:	Aerial photograph of Kavala.....	105
Figure 6.9:	Topographical sketch of the area of Kavala	107
Figure 6.10:	Thasos. Topographical sketch of Limenas.....	108
Figure 6.11:	View of the acropolis of Enez (Ainos)	109
Figure 6.12:	General view of the castle of Chrysoupolis	109
Figure 6.13:	General view of Avdera/Polystylon.....	109
Figure 6.14:	General view of the harbour of Maroneia	110
Figure 6.15:	General view of the nautical routes between Imbros Island (first level) and Samothrace (second level)	110

7. An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Study of the Ancient Harbour Site of ‘Karon Limen’ or ‘Portus Caria/Carea’, Bulgaria

Figure 7.1:	Location of Cape Shabla, Bulgaria	113
Figure 7.2:	Detailed map of archaeological sites.....	114
Figure 7.3:	Morphotectonic Map of Bulgaria.....	115
Figure 7.4:	The Byzantine fortress of Kreas and its harbour bay	115
Figure 7.5a	The harbour bay with the quarry area from the south.....	116
Figure 7.5b	Quarrying activities	116
Figure 7.5c	Quarrying traces.....	116
Figure 7.5d	Quarrying traces.....	116
Figure 7.6:	UAV imagery: red points flight altitude 50m and yellow points manual mode	118
Figure 7.7:	Side scan sonar mosaic of hydrographic survey	118
Figure 7.8a	Photomosaic of submerged reef	120
Figure 7.8b	Drawing of the reef and harbour basin.....	121
Figure 7.8c	Satellite image of the ancient coastline with the reef	122
Figure 7.9a	Quay remains east of the fortress.....	123
Figure 7.9b	Posthole on the quay east of the fortress.....	123
Figure 7.10a	Mooring stone.....	123
Figure 7.10b	Mooring stone.....	123
Figure 7.11:	Potential walking level	124
Figure 7.12:	Stone block	124

8. Bathonea (?): A Newly Discovered Ancient Port in the Hinterland of Byzantium/Constantinople

Figure 8.1:	Aerial photograph of the Firuzköy Peninsula	127
Figure 8.2:	Massive breakwater at the southern end of the Firuzköy peninsula.....	128
Figure 8.3a	Bank reinforcement	128
Figure 8.3b	Terrace or retaining walls.....	128
Figure 8.4:	The Martyrium with <i>opus sectile</i>	129
Figure 8.5:	Conglomerate of unguentaria	130
Figure 8.6a	Southern tip of the Firuzköy Peninsula.....	130
Figure 8.6b	Coastal walls running along the edges of the extension.....	130
Figure 8.7:	Central jetty in the small harbour area	131
Figure 8.8:	Plan of three-aisled basilica.....	132

9. A Late Antique and Byzantine Harbour in Constantinople: The Theodosian Harbour at Yenikapı. History, Archaeology, and Architecture

Figure 9.1:	Yenikapı excavation aerial view	135
Figure 9.2:	Yenikapı excavation site plan.....	135
Figure 9.3:	Stamped brick tiles on the seabed.....	137
Figure 9.4:	View of the harbour’s western end	138
Figure 9.5:	View of the so-called ‘Constantinian sea wall’	138
Figure 9.6:	View of the harbour’s fortification wall	139
Figure 9.7:	Fragments of the circuit wall	139
Figure 9.8:	View of different archaeological layers.....	140
Figure 9.9:	Location of the jetties in relation to the shipwrecks in the eastern harbour basin.....	141
Figure 9.10:	View of the Yenikapı jetty from the east.....	141
Figure 9.11:	The pentagonal-shaped southern end of the Yenikapı jetty.....	142
Figure 9.12:	Detail of the wooden formwork	142
Figure 9.13:	Detail of a Spolia frieze block	142
Figure 9.14:	A basket capital with monogram	142
Figure 9.15:	The Yenikapı church	144

11. The Harbour Installations of Lake Mariout (Alexandria Region) in the Late Roman Empire (4th–7th Centuries AD)

Figure 11.1:	Map of Egypt	159
Figure 11.2:	North-west edge of the Nile Delta	160
Figure 11.3:	Map of Lake Mariout showing Strabo’s measurements	160
Figure 11.4:	Shrinkage of the lake to the south of Alexandria	161

Figure 11.5: Evolution of Lake Mariout between 1801 and 2011	162
Figure 11.6: Map of Late Roman era occupation of the Mareotid region as understood in Nov. 2017	163
Figure 11.7: Map of identified or presumed harbour arrangements on the banks of the Mariout valley.....	164
Figure 11.8: The large, closed harbour of Taposiris Magna	165
Figure 11.9: The large open harbour of Philoxenite.....	166
Figure 11.10: Enclosed harbour located near the eastern side of Mariout Island, Site GMR0055.....	167
Figure 11.11: Enclosed harbour in the southern part of the eastern end of Mariout Island, Site GMR0122.....	169
Figure 11.12: The ancient quarry of Amreya 1 reused in the Late Roman period as a sheltered mooring	170
Figure 11.13: Open harbour in the western sector of Mariout Island, Site GMR0072	171
Figure 11.14: Open harbour located between Mariout Island and Philoxenite, Site GMR0056	172
Figure 11.15: Extract from the <i>Carte générale des côtes, rades, ports, ville et environs d’Alexandrie</i>	173
Figure 11.16: Portus Mareoticus	174
Figure 11.17: Plan of Alexandria and its neighbourhood in 1841 by E. Napier	175

Editor's Preface

Christianity, Roman tradition and ideology, as well as Greek cultural heritage, have been labelled as the pillars of the Byzantine Empire. In fact, the real crux and enabler of power in an empire that combined the Occident with the Orient was its control over the seas. As such, seafaring constituted the formula of success for dominance of the Mediterranean, playing a key role in communication, military activities, and, especially, economic exchange. But how does one get from land to water? The linking gates are coastal installations, i.e. ports, harbours, and other infrastructures. These function as economic hubs, cultural and social meeting points, as well as gateways for communication and connection.

Even though the study of harbour sites and port networks of the Byzantine Empire constitutes a relatively new research field, it has nevertheless received significant attention over the last few years, as we can see from the instigation of various projects and the staging of conferences. However, attention is rarely paid to analyses of physical harbour remains and their impact on the general development of Late Antique and Medieval architecture, economy, or trade networks.

As such, in 2018, an international conference on the *Harbours of Byzantium* was organised at the Institute for Advanced Study of the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg in Delmenhorst, Germany. This event was intended to focus particularly on the archaeology of Byzantine coastal sites, including both harbour infrastructures *per se*, as well as associated facilities and affected landscapes. Leading scholars in the field from twelve different countries presented new material and data with which to understand the development of harbour architecture and coastal activities from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. The papers set out to cover sites from all provinces of the Byzantine Empire, stretching from Italy in the West to the Levantine coast in the East, and the Black Sea in the North to Egypt in the South. This allowed a general overview for comparative analyses and discussions on various aspects of Byzantine harbour networks and maritime connectivity.

Accordingly, the current volume provides a series of scientific papers deriving from presentations given at the conference. Beyond general approaches to the study of Byzantine harbour archaeology, the contributions offer a representative picture of harbour activities across the historical and geographical boundaries of the Byzantine Empire. Although it is impossible to reflect a comprehensive picture of the entire sweep of coastal landscapes, this work hopefully provides a basis for future comparative research in Byzantine harbour studies – on a local, regional, and supra-regional level.

The conference programme is included in the Appendices. The differences between the conference programme and the final version of this volume are explained by the fact that some scholars who submitted abstracts were ultimately unable to attend, and some who did attend and gave their papers did not submit them for publication. Fortunately, other colleagues agreed to contribute to this volume and I am most grateful to them for so doing.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all participants in the Delmenhorst Conference for presenting papers that provided unique insights, not just into ongoing excavations and investigations related to harbour installations, but also into hitherto understudied aspects of coastal infrastructures. It has been a considerable challenge to assemble this volume, and I am therefore particularly indebted to all authors who contributed and enriched this publication. Bearing in mind the time-consuming work of editing and unifying the papers, etc., as well as the difficulties brought on by the COVID pandemic, I have done my best to ensure as prompt a publication as possible.

Thanks must go here to Dr Susanne Fuchs and her team from the Institute for Advanced Study of the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg for their support in organising the conference in Delmenhorst. I am also sincerely grateful to David Davison and Mike Schurer from Archaeopress for agreeing to publish this volume and for guiding this work through to publication, their technical help, and the quick production of the printed version.

Alkiviadis Ginalis

