

Two Tales of a City Adrianople/Edirne

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Abstract The paper is a diachronic analysis of place-making stories involving the foundation narratives of the same physical space: imperial Roman and Byzantine Adrianople and Ottoman Edirne. It draws attention on the varying ways different cultural groups from the same city construe the meaning of a place in contesting it and on the social and political processes whereby a relationship to a place is established, reproduced and transformed. It attempts to explore the production of difference within common, shared, and connected spaces. Numerous studies have considered the urban transformation of Byzantine Adrianople into Ottoman Edirne, but the examination here is the first to analyse perceptions of the city as told through the founding stories by cultural groups that have shared the space.

Keywords Imperial Roman period. Byzantium. Ottomans. Cities. Foundation stories. Adrianople. Edirne. Space. Placemaking. Healthscape.

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1 Introduction

Through the act of “place making”, a given space can come to hold different meanings for varied social and cultural groups, each appropriating the same space (Cassidy-Welch 2010, 3-5). Indeed, it is possible for individuals or groups of people to share the same space and perceive, experience, define, and describe it in ways so varied that the singular space might appear to be different places due to its significance to each of them. Thus space is not only a territorial reality or bounded place, but a cultural artefact imagined through words and images and text and practices. Place making and the meaning of a space can be defended and challenged through the use of language in the telling and writing of stories about the physical space. Since antiquity, stories constituting rhetorical contests of place making have stood as reflections of politicised struggles to control territory, to obtain autonomy and to manipulate the authority associated with it by shaping meanings and memories (Shepardson 2014, 241). Such stories were influential in creating perceptions of space and understandings of the past and consequently expectations of the future.

This paper is a diachronic analysis of place-making stories involving the foundation narratives of the same physical space - that of imperial Roman and Byzantine Adrianople and that of Ottoman Edirne. The imperial Roman foundation story of Adrianople originated no later than the third century AD. Adrianople, variously Hadrianopolis, had been founded in 124 AD by the Roman emperor Hadrian (r. 117-38) (Nollé 2009, 146).¹ The story of it is recorded, in Latin, in the *vita* of Elagabalus (r. 218-22) in *Historia Augusta* (or *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*), a late Roman collection of biographies of the Roman emperors, designated heirs and usurpers from 117 to 284 AD (*Historia Augusta*, Antoninus Elagabalus 7 [ed. Magie 2000]; Nollé 2009, 108). The story was later retold in three tenth-century Byzantine chronicles: *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Chronicle of Symeon Magistros-Pseudo* (ed. Bekker 1838, 387, 686-7), and the *History of Leo the Deacon* (ed. Hase 1828, 130,5-14; Talbot, Sullivan 2005, 177). There is also a brief mention in a fourteenth-century Byzantine martyrdom narrative on Theodore the Younger (d. c. 1347-61/69), who was originally from Adrianople and was martyred in Ottoman Melagina (Theodore the Younger [BHG 2431] [ed. Oikonomides 1955; Kitapçı Bayrı 2020, 115-23]).

The Ottoman foundation story on Edirne is recorded in three major texts: the *Saltukname*, a Turkish Muslim epic romance composed

¹ Nollé (2009) has thoroughly investigated the imperial Roman foundation story of Adrianople, and I mainly follow his assertions about it. I would like to thank Mustafa Sayar for bringing this lengthy article to my attention and for kindly providing a copy of it at a time when library access was severely restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I would also like to thank Tamer İlbuga, who translated it into Turkish.

between 1473 and 1480 at the request of the Ottoman prince Cem (d. 1495) that recounts the life and deeds of the legendary *ghazi* (frontier warrior) and dervish Sarı Saltuk, who is believed to have followed the Seljuk sultan Izzeddin Keykavus II (r. 1245-62) into exile and to have become the leader of the first Turkish Muslim settlers in the Balkans (ed. İz, Alpay Tekin 1974-84; ed. Akalın 1987-90); the *Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi and the Story of the Old Mosque of Edirne, the New Palace and the Citadelle of Edirne*, a sixteenth-century text compiled from orally transmitted stories and legends and attributed to an unidentified author, Beşir Çelebi, who in the account is said to be a physician from Konya (ed. Erdoğan 2006);² and the *Seyahatname (Book of Travels)*, by the Ottoman scholar and traveller Evliya Çelebi (1611-84) (ed. Dağlı, Kahraman 2006, 3.2: 549-52).³

The founding stories of Adrianople/Edirne draw attention to the varying ways different cultural groups from the same city construe the meaning of a place in contesting it and to the social and political processes whereby a relationship to a place is established, reproduced and transformed. The examination attempts to move beyond “naturalized conceptions of spatialized ‘cultures’ and to explore instead the production of difference within common, shared, and connected spaces” (Gupta, Ferguson 1992, 16). Numerous studies have considered the urban transformation of Byzantine Adrianople into Ottoman Edirne (Kuran 1996; Boykov 2011; Kontolaimos 2016), but the examination here is the first to analyse perceptions of the city as told through the founding stories by cultural groups that have shared the space.

2 Adrianople/Edirne

Adrianople/Edirne lies 230 kilometres northwest of Constantinople/Istanbul. It is fed by three rivers – the Tundzha (Arzos/Tonzos/Tunca), the Maritsa (Hebros/Meriç/Evros), and the Arda (Artakes). The city stretches across a fertile plain surrounded by a vast area of hills. In addition to Hadrianopolis/Adrianople, the Byzantine sources also refer to the city by its ancient names, Orestias and Odrysoi. According to ancient sources, in the Thracian language the city was called *Uscuduma*. Located at the intersection of important strategic routes – in

² Many Turkish historians of medicine believe Beşir Çelebi to be a fifteenth-century physician, but it remains difficult to establish him as a historical figure. No contemporary chronicle mentions him. For instance, Gökbilgin (1965, 79) dates the *Account of Physician Beşir Çelebi* to the late sixteenth century, arguing that the *Üç Şerefeli Camii*, mentioned in the text, was only called that after the erection of the *Selimiye* mosque in Edirne, which was completed in 1575.

³ For Evliya Çelebi, see Kreiser 2007.

particular, Belgrade-Sofia-Constantinople - Adrianople was often at the centre of military activity and played a key role as a stronghold protecting Constantinople from invasion from the north (Asdracha 1976, 137-48; Soustal 1991; Külzer 2008).

Philip II of Macedon (r. 359-336 BC) conquered Odrys in Thrace during 342-340 BC. He built a castle and a small town in the area, populated by Thracian and Macedonian people called Orestai. When the Roman Macedonian proconsul Marcus Terentius Varro Lucullus (d. 56 BC) conquered the town in 73 BC, it was controlled by a Thracian tribe, called Uscudama (Nollé 2009, 107, 122). By the mid-fifth century AD, Thrace had fallen into the hands of Germanic tribal rulers. In the seventh century, the northern half of the region was incorporated into the First Bulgarian Empire (681-1018), and the Byzantine Empire regained control over the southern parts and reorganised it as the Thracian theme.

In the ninth and tenth centuries, Adrianople emerged as a strategic location in the Byzantine wars against the Bulgarian Empire. In the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 and the establishment of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, Adrianople and the neighbouring city of Didymoteichon became a relatively short-lived feudal principality within the crusader state from 1204-06 to circa 1227-28, with the local Byzantine elite granted some autonomy (Van Tricht 2014). During the first Byzantine civil war, from 1321 to 1328 between the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282-1328) and his grandson Andronikos III (r. 1328-41) for control of the empire, Andronikos III Palaiologos stayed in Adrianople. During the second Byzantine civil war, from 1341 to 1347, John VI Kantakouzenos (r. 1347-54) designated Didymoteichon, 50 kilometres from Adrianople, his capital, leaving Adrianople to serve as the residence of some members of the imperial family.

In 1361 or 1369, the Ottomans conquered Adrianople, after which they moved their capital from Bursa to Adrianople, or Edirne as they called it (İnalçık 1965; Beldiceanu-Steinherr 1965; Zachariadou 1970). Following the Battle of Ankara in 1402 between the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I (r. 1389-1402) and Timur (r. 1370-1405), leader of the Timurid Empire, Edirne acquired a special place for the Rumeli begs (or *ghazis*), who became more autonomous, and for the sons of Bayezid I. The son who succeeded him and ascended the throne in Edirne was considered the Ottoman sultan (Kastritis 2007). Edirne served as the Ottoman capital until 1453, and thereafter remained an imperial residence, a site for the gathering of the Ottoman armies before military campaign seasons and a place of symbolic importance for *ghazi* groups in the society. Although Sultan Ahmed I (1603-17) designated Edirne his place of residence, the Ottoman court began to neglect the city from the seventeenth century onwards.⁴

⁴ For the note on the Ottoman court's neglect of Edirne in the seventeenth century, see Kreiser 2007.

3 The Imperial Roman and Byzantine Foundation Stories of Adrianople

A fourteenth-century Byzantine martyrdom narrative of Theodore the Younger (Theodore the Younger [BHG 2431] [ed. Oikonomides 1955]) is helpful in presenting the overarching narrative of the origin story of Adrianople. In that telling, Theodore was born and raised by pious parents in Adrianople until being captured as a child during raids. The text briefly mentions the origins of his hometown, stating that Theodore hailed from the city of Adrianos, formerly called Orestias, after Orestes, who had constructed and populated the city. Generations later, Adrianos came upon the abandoned Orestias, rebuilt it and resided there.⁵ Of particular interest here, the Roman emperor Hadrian's founding of the city is a historical fact, but Orestes is a Greek mythological character. How then did Orestes become associated with Adrianople?

3.1 Orestes and Adrianople. The Greek Backdrop

As the son of Klytaimnestra and Agamemnon, king of Argos, Orestes is also the brother of Menelaos, whose wife Helen was taken to Troy by Paris. Agamemnon commanded the united Greek forces in the ensuing Trojan War, and after returning home, Aigisthos, Klytaimnestra's lover, kills him. In the *Odyssey*, Orestes avenges his father's murder by slaying Aigisthos (Hom. *Od.* 3.300-10 [ed. and transl. Murray 1998]). In Aischylos' *Libation Bearers*, Orestes also murders Klytaimnestra, and while being pursued by the Erinyes (the Furies) – the winged goddesses who track down and punish those who violate the ties of family piety – he goes mad (Aesch. *Cho.* [ed. Sommerstein 2008, 838-934]).

In Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Orestes, with his cousin Pylades, bring his sister Iphigenia from Tauris to the Greek land, and upon an order from Apollo seizes the holy cult figure of Artemis Tauropolos from the barbarians and carries it from place to place, establishing Artemis Tauropolos cults around the Greek world and thereby seeding Greek *poleis* (Eur. *IT* [ed. Kovacs 1999, 393-4, 422-6, 435-8]).⁶ Through his travels, Orestes would be cleansed of the

⁵ “Οὗτος ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ νέος μάρτυς, Θεόδωρος, ἐκ τῆς πόλεως τὸ γένος εἶλκεν Ἀδριανοῦ, ἦτις τὸ παλαιὸν Ὀρεστίας ἐλέγετο, Ὀρέστου ταύτην ἐκ βάρθρων ἀνεγειραντὸς τε καὶ οἰκήσαντος. υἱὸς δὲ οὗτος τοῦ τῶν κατὰ τῆς Τροίας στρατηγησάντων Ἑλλήνων βασιλέως. Μετὰ πολλὰς δὲ γενεὰς Ἀδριανὸς νενοσηκυῖαν εὐρῶν καὶ ἐκλειοπιτυῖαν ὡς περ ἀνακαινίσας αὐτὸς ᾤκησεν” (Oikonomides 1955, 216).

⁶ Artemis is a female deity of pre-Hellenic origin whose cult survived into the late Roman Empire, until the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Tauropolos is an epithet for the goddess.

crime of matricide and punishment by the Furies. The myths locate him cleansing himself in different places, including Delphi, Peloponnesos, Rhodes and the Amanos Mountains (Bilde 2003).

3.2 The Imperial Roman Foundation Story

An early Roman Orestes-Hadrian connection in the foundation of Adrianople is found in the *vita* of Antoninus Elagabalus in *Historia Augusta*. In citing cities related to Orestes, the author mentions Adrianople in Thrace. In following the order of a prophecy, Orestes cleanses himself of the crime of matricide at a place near the Maritsa River and founds a city there called Oresta. The *vita's* author then notes that centuries later, the Roman emperor Hadrian would change the city's name to Adrianople because a soothsayer/oracle ordered him to seize a place of a mad man in order to rid himself of his own madness (*Historia Augusta*, Antoninus Elagabalus 7).⁷ As the act of cleansing is dependent upon the existence of an abundance of water in an area, Nollé (2009, 124) argues that Orestes/Adrianople, with its three rivers, fits the criteria for the site of Orestes's ritual cleansing, leading to his physical and mental healing.

One can see Greco-Roman traditions in the evolution of the foundation story of Adrianople. During the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods, cities developed a discourse on their origin to help build civic identity or 'pride'. Origin stories always contained mythical stories. During the Roman imperial period, the philhellene Roman emperors showed particular interest in Classical Greece, including in its language, its literary models and in the antiquity (*archaiotes*) and noble origins (*eugeneia*) of the cities, which often involved claims of affiliation with Ancient Greece. Such claims received Roman imperial acknowledgment through the creation of the Panhellenion, an institutional league of Greek city-states formed by Hadrian during his trip to Greece in 131-32 AD. A city could gain admission upon proving its Hellenic descent. Proclaiming a god or a hero from Greek mythology as the founder of a city was one way to assert a claim of ancient, noble or Hellenic origins (Heller 2006). In addition to such claims during the Roman imperial period, the emperors themselves – especially from Augustus (r. 27-14 BC) until the Severan dynasty (193-235 AD) – were declared the founder (*ktistes*) of cities, thus bestowing cities honour and

⁷ The madness of Hadrian may be related to him being accused of killing four senators at the start of his reign in 117 AD. In fact, Publius Acilius Attianus, as prefect of the Praetorian Guard, directed affairs in Rome in 117 AD when Hadrian was on his way to Rome from Syria, and ordered the executions of four senators of consular rank all seemingly threats to the security of Hadrian. Hadrian affirmed it was contrary to his will and laid the blame on Attianus.

certain privileges. More generally in the East, the policies of Augustus and Hadrian aimed at instituting local rights and privileges accounted for their frequently being designated city founders (Pont 2007).

The myth behind an imperial foundation story such as Adriano-ple's helped the Romans dominate local cultural and religious traditions. In short, a city claimed an ancient and noble origin through a Greek mythological connection and obtained privilege in the Roman system through its association with the Roman emperor. The introduction of Hadrian, as the founder of Adrianople, into foundation stories mythologised both the city and the emperor.

3.3 The Byzantine Foundation Story

The tenth-century *Chronicle of Symeon Magistros-Pseudo, History of Leo the Deacon* and *Theophanes Continuatus* relay the imperial Roman foundation story of Adrianople in their narratives.⁸ *Symeon Magistros-Pseudo* and *Leo the Deacon* state that the city was built by Orestes, son of Agamemnon, while he was reduced to wandering the Earth after he killed his own mother, Klytaimnestra. The city was originally called Orestias. Later, the emperor Hadrian, recognising the strategic location of the city, fortified it with walls and called it the City of Hadrian (*Chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon Magistros*, 686-7; *History of Leo the Deacon*, 5-14).

Theophanes Continuatus includes in his account the healing of Orestes, stating that in the month of September, the third indiction, the Armenian Pankratoukas had handed the city of Hadrianopolis to Symeon, meaning Symeon I of Bulgaria (r. 893-927). This place was called Orestias, after the son of Agamemnon, Orestes, who rightfully killed Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos and then went mad. He would then bath where the Tundzha, Maritsa and Arda intersected and be cured of his madness. He later founded a city there and gave it his name. Emperor Hadrian then added fine buildings and changed its name to the City of Hadrian.⁹

Why was Adrianople mentioned in these chronicles, and why was the late Roman imperial foundation story of it integrated into the nar-

⁸ On the tenth-century Byzantine chronicles, see Markopoulos 2003; Treadgold 2013, 39-88, 217-70; Manafis 2020, 43-109.

⁹ "Σεπτεμβρίῳ δὲ μηνί, ἰνδικτιῶνος τρίτης, Παγκρατούκας ὁ Ἀρμένης τὴν Ἀδριανουπόλιν τῷ Συμεῶν προδέδωκεν, ἥτις τὸ πρὶν μὲν Ὀρεστίας ἑκαλεῖτο, ἔξ Ὀρέστου υἱοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος, ὃς ζήλῳ δικαίῳ διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Κλυταιμνήστρας δολοφονίαν ταύτην σὺν Αἰγίσθῳ ἀποκτείνας λίαν ἐκμέμνηεν καὶ ἐν τῇ συνελέουσι Ἐβρου Ἀρξου τε καὶ Ἀρτάκου τῶν τριῶν ποταμῶν γε λουσάμενος τῆς νόσου ἀπήλλακτο. ἔνθα ταύτην οἰκοδομήσας ἐπὶ τῷ ἰδίῳ ὀνόματι κέκληκεν. Ἀδριανὸς δὲ Καῖσαρ εὐκτίστοις οἰκίμασιν αὐτὴν μεγαλύνας πόλιν Ἀδριανουῦ μετακέκληκεν" (Bekker 1838, 387).

ratives? Adrianople was frequently mentioned in the tenth-century histories most probably because Bulgaria was the Byzantines' primary concern on the northern frontier in the Balkans. Symeon I had launched an expedition against Constantinople in 913, and Byzantium and Bulgaria had for more than a decade been engaged in war, until 927 (Fine 1991, 143-4). Adrianople, a frontier city between Bulgarian and Byzantine territories, was under Byzantine rule during this period, but Symeon twice captured it, in 914 and 922. The reference in *Theophanes Continuatus* relates to 914, when Adrianople had been betrayed by its commander, Pankratoukas.

In 927 during the reign of Symeon's son Peter I (r. 927-69), the Byzantines signed a peace treaty that obligated them to pay tribute. The Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-69) refused to pay tribute and went on the offensive in 965. He used diplomacy to persuade the Rus to invade Bulgaria, and they ultimately did, during 968-71. This led to the temporary collapse of the Bulgarian state and to a fifty-year war between Byzantium and Bulgaria, until 1018. The reference in the *History of Leo the Deacon* relates to the beginning of the campaign against the Rus by the Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes (r. 969-76), who left Constantinople and arrived in Adrianople in 971. The wars against Bulgaria and the Rus and the strategic position of Adrianople as a frontier city at the intersection of military routes thus account for its mention in the tenth-century chronicles.

The inclusion of the imperial Roman foundation story of the city also relates to a cultural revival of the time – the First Humanism (Lemerle 1971; Flusin, Cheynet 2017) or the Macedonian Renaissance (Treadgold 1984a), an intense period of activity driven by a confluence of Christian and classical elements that increased interest in antiquity and archaic ethnography and learned etymologies of people and places (Treadgold 2013, 137, 191 fn. 136, 216). The above-mentioned histories, products of imperial circles during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetos (r. 944-59), all exhibit affinities in methodology, content and sources in terms of references to the past, mythological figures and geographical allusions, suggesting the existence of a common repository of historical-geographical material (Markopoulos 2009, 137-50; Manafis 2020, 70-5, 82; Diller 1938; 1950). The brief repetition of the imperial Roman foundation story of Adrianople in a fourteenth-century Byzantine hagiographical text by an anonymous author dates to the Palaiologan Renaissance (1261-c. 1360), another period of cultural revival, centred on philology and antiquarianism (Ševčenko 1984; Fryde 2000). During this period, scholars eagerly pursued ancient texts still accessible and produced editions of ancient Greek writers (Fryde 2000, 226-67, 268-92).

4 Edirne. The Ottoman Foundation Stories

In the Ottoman foundation stories of Edirne, Orestes and *Oresteia* are absent, but Hadrian, the importance of the city's three rivers and waters and the theme of healing are very much present. The accounts mention Hadrian and the derivatives of his name - Adrin, Edrin, Adranos, and İdrivne - and they acknowledge him as one of the founders of the city, but most often not as a Roman emperor.

4.1 The Foundation Story of Edirne in the *Saltukname*

The first foundation story of Edirne appeared in the *Saltukname*, whose hero Sarı Saltuk is depicted as a nomad warrior-derwish, filled with religious fervour, on a mission to bring the land of Rome, and the entire world, into the Abode of Islam. Saltuk's military and spiritual activities extend from northwestern Asia Minor and the Balkans to the Crimean coast. It takes him to every region around the Mediterranean basin, to the Horn of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and South and Central Asia. He passes into Spain to help Andalusian Muslims oppressed by the infidels (*Saltukname* [ed. Akalın 1987-90, 3: 81]). He goes to Portugal, Milan and Venice, and in Genoa he converts the Genoese but allows them to remain crypto-Muslims (*Saltukname*, 3: 73).

Sarı Saltuk also travels to mystical subterranean and extraterrestrial places, such as Mount Qaf, where he comes across images of Alexander the Great (İskender-i Rumi) and of his viziers engraved in stone (*Saltukname*, 1: 119-20). The episodes involving northwestern Asia Minor, the Balkans and the Crimean coastal regions of the Black Sea include historical references, but when Sarı Saltuk travels to faraway lands, the stories take on more of a fairy-tale character, for instance involving encounters with genies, giants, witches, dragons, fairies, winged monsters and a phoenix, which are all identified as Muslims or infidels (*Saltukname*, 1: 101-38, 299-303, 360; Kitapçı Bayrı 2020, 170). In describing these locations, the author borrows from Muslim *mirabilia* - *Ajaib* (Wonders of Creation) and *Gharaib* (Oddities of Existence) - medieval Islamic cosmographical works translated and revived in the early Ottoman period, to depict a world based on an Aristotelian-Ptoleamic model (Coşkun 2011; 2019; Aydoğan 2020). Edirne stands at the centre of this borderless world in the story.

In the *Saltukname*, comparisons are made between Edirne and Bursa, the previous Ottoman capital, and especially with Istanbul, the later capital, in terms of their qualities of well-being. The most obvious comparison for establishing Edirne's superiority involves Istanbul. In fact in the *Saltukname*, the glorification of Edirne's past and its air and water is the antithesis of the way Istanbul is de-

scribed. The author also warns the audience about the fate awaiting Kostantiniyye/Istanbul after its conquest by the Ottomans. According to Şemun, a priest descendant of Jesus, not only is the air of Istanbul heavy, but as mischief, adultery, sodomy, oppression and violence reign throughout the city, it will be destroyed by earthquakes and struck by plagues. Only the church of Hagia Sophia will survive (*Saltukname*, 2: 243-4; 3: 364-5). The same priest, when asked about the fate of Edirne, says that nothing bad will happen to the city as it is watched over and protected by God. The author informs readers and listeners that he has compiled the stories of Sarı Saltuk at the request of Prince Cem, whose wish, should he become sultan one day, is to make Edirne his residence (*Saltukname*, 3: 366).

These maledictions and warnings resemble those voiced in the anti-imperial and anti-Istanbul sentiments of other late fifteenth-century Ottoman sources, such as the anonymous *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman* (ed. Ertaylan 1946) and the legendary foundation stories of Istanbul (Yerasimos 1990), which borrow from the Byzantine *Patria of Constantinople* (ed. Berger 2013).¹⁰ Stephanos Yerasimos (1990) argued that Edirne and intellectuals from the city were involved in the emergence of the fifteenth-century anti-imperial Ottoman foundation stories of Istanbul, dissident texts giving voice to alienated opposition groups – such as the frontier lords/*ghazis*, religious scholars and the urban classes – who had lost influence to the rise in power of the central administrative and military structures of Mehmed II (r. 1444-46, 1451-81), who moved the Ottoman capital from Edirne to Istanbul (Yerasimos 1990, 2-3, 64-142, 206-10). The *Saltukname's* emphasis on Edirne as the house of *ghazis* also reflects the fierce succession struggle between Mehmed II's sons Cem, the patron of the *Saltukname*, and Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512), during which the former depended on the frontier lords/*ghazis* and the latter on the devshirme system of administrators (Isom-Verhaaren 2014, 111-28).

4.2 Hadrian in the Ottoman Foundation Stories

In the *Saltukname*, the *Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi* and the *Seyahatname*, Hadrian is identified as one of the founders of the city of Edirne. According to the *Saltukname*,

There was an ancient castle four days from Istanbul. It was built by Adrin, the son of Islam, who was the son of Adam. His son Andriyye

¹⁰ The *Patria* contain information compiled on nations, regions and cities, natural and celestial phenomena, dreams, portents and statues inhabited by miraculous powers. As a genre, *Ajaib* and *Gharaib* resemble the tenth-century *Parastaseis Anonymoi Chronikai*, which is part of the *Patria*. For *Parastaseis Anonymoi Chronikai* and *Patria*, see Manafis 2020, 53-4).

built moats around the castle, and it was surrounded by a swamp. On one side of it, there was a flowing river; it was steep, and there were pull bridges over it. In the castle, there was a great church made out of glass that was built by Cevher Şah-ı Rumi. Jesus stayed in this church while performing *arba'ain* [a religious observance that lasts forty days]. All the non-believers, who came to this church, performed *arba'ain*, circumambulated the church and gave alms. This city was called Andriyye. (*Saltukname*, 1: 30; Author's transl.)

In a section recounting Sarı Saltuk's conquest of the city, Saltuk calls on a priest to learn the history of the city. The priest, reading the history from a book written in Assyrian, says that during the time of the prophet Idris [Enoch], Edrin, the son of Ercem, who is the son of Adam, came to this place. He liked the air and the waters and asked his vizier, Erkiyanos, to build a castle (*Saltukname*, 2: 54).

In the *Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi*, the castle of Edirne was built by Adranos, who had a vizier named Arfas, who was also a physician and very advanced in the use of the astrolabe. Arfas advises Adranos to build a castle over the Tundzha because the river's water is potable. He adds that the place might agitate the humours, but the humours help people move, and humoral imbalance can be cured with a syrup to stop diarrhoea (*şerbet-i müşil*). Arfas with his astrolabe predicted that any ruler building a city or castle on that spot would have a long life and conquer many places. He also prophesied that in the future, people embracing Islam as their religion would conquer the city, fighting the non-believers, and remain there until the end of time. The castle was built according to the measurements of the vizier Arfas, who also calculated the number of towers to be built on each side of the castle and round observation posts at the top of the tower so that the rise of the sun and the spring equinox (*nevruz*) could be easily observed and the southern towers of the castle faced the sun for six months. Based on Arfas's calculations, they also built eight gates to the fortification that opened onto the city. As this city is the Paradise of Rum, four churches were erected there (*The Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi* [ed. Erdoğan 2006, 195-6]).

Evliya Çelebi only briefly mentions Hadrian (*The Travels of Evliya Çelebi* [ed. Dağlı, Kahraman 2006, 3.2: 550]):

And during the time of Jesus, the Roman king İdrivne built a big castle, which became a beautiful castle named after this king. The name Edirne was a corrupted form of the name İdrivne.¹¹

11 "Ondan Hazreti İsa zamanında Rum krallarından İdrivne adında bir kral büyük bir kale yaptı. Bu, onun ismiyle isimlenen güzel bir kale oldu. İdirven'den bozma Edirne adıyla meşhur olup".

This is the only reference to Hadrian in Ottoman foundation stories on Edirne that identifies him as a Roman emperor, rather than an eponymous fictive figure who supposedly gave the city his name. The departure point for mentioning Hadrian in the Ottoman foundation stories is the city's name during the time of the Ottoman creation of the story. Creating foundation stories based on an eponymous fictive figure whose name is retrospectively derived from the city's name follows the pattern of city foundation stories in medieval Muslim tradition, such as that in *Mujam al-Buldan* (Dictionary of Lands), the geographical encyclopedia compiled by Yaqut al-Hamawi (d. 1229) (Zychowicz-Coghill 2022).¹²

4.3 Noah and His Descendants in the Ottoman Foundation Stories

Similar to the city foundation stories in the *Mujam al-Buldan*, the Ottoman foundation stories of Edirne do not recount the founders' epic deeds, their relation to other cities or their origins as in the Greco-Roman tradition (Zychowicz-Coghill 2022). The authors and narrators are instead more interested in genealogies that link Edirne to the descendants of Noah after the Flood. In the *Saltukname*, it is told that during the time of Noah, the city was buried under sand, where it remained until the time of Solomon, who asked the giants to excavate it. According to another tradition mentioned in the *Saltukname*, Noah's son Yafes (Yafith/Japheth) rebuilt Edirne.¹³

In *Seyahatname*, Evliya Çelebi's story also links the foundation of Edirne to Noah. After the Flood, Noah sends the physician Kalimon to Egypt, and when Kalimon dies, his sons visit Noah, at that time living in Mosul. Noah sends Sırfayıl, one of Kalimon's seventy children, to Rum. Sırfayıl founds Edirne, and Sırfayıl's son Firav founds Sofia. Thus, until the time of Solomon, Sırfayıl's descendants ruled this part of Rum. Then Makedone, daughter of Alina, the founder of Istanbul, rebuilt Edirne (*The Travels of Evliya Çelebi* 3.2: 549-50).

¹² Yaqut al-Hamawi was born around 1179 in Byzantine territory but as a child was captured in a raid and raised as a well-educated slave in Baghdad.

¹³ Japheth is not mentioned by name in the Quran. Muslim exegesis of the Quran, which mostly agrees with the biblical tradition in the identification of Japheth's descendants, names all of Noah's sons, including Japheth. In the Muslim tradition, he is usually regarded as the ancestor of the Gog and Magog tribes and at times with the Turks, Khazars and Slavs (Heller, Rippin 2012).

4.4 Edirne Heals. Air, Water, Humours, and Astrology. The Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi

While Edirne the Ottoman city is the product of imagination, mythologised through historical discourse and through legendary human heritage and lineage in the foundation stories, the physical qualities of the city - its air and especially its waters - are imbued with contemporary ideas on health and elements of 'scientific' knowledge (Dyck, Fletcher 2011, 3). Similar to the imperial Roman and Byzantine foundation stories of Adrianople, the healing aspect of the city's water is an essential part of the Ottoman narratives. In the *Saltukname*, an underground water source heals the daughter of Edirne's ruler after she becomes afflicted with leprosy. Her father, disgusted by his daughter's appearance, casts her into the wilderness outside the city so he doesn't have to look at her face. The daughter falls into a well, which, it turns out, is filled with water endowed with healing powers. She also drinks the water. The daughter gets well and returns to his father, who builds a church over the well (*Saltukname*, 2: 54).

The *Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi* espouses the superiority of Edirne by incorporating medical, geographical, astronomical, and astrological 'scientific elements' into the legendary foundation account. The main figures in the text are primarily physicians. Thus, the physician Beşir Çelebi meets Mehmed II, and when the sultan asks him about the air of Edirne, he responds that the city's winters and summers are pleasant: the city is not built at high altitude so it is not too windy, and it is not built at low altitude, so it is not too hot. The nearby waters do not negatively affect the air because they are 'sweet' waters. He adds that seawater is not good, as it quickly ages people. Because the northern and southern parts of the city are not bordered by mountains, winds blow freely through the city. Beşir Çelebi sums up by saying that there is no better place than Edirne in the *Diyar-ı Rum* (Land of Rome) (*The Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi*, 181-2, 191).

The account mentions other physicians as authoritative figures in praising the city's climate, geography and location in relation to health. All the well-known physicians point to Edirne, as a city in the *Diyar-ı Rum* with three sources of running water; a ruler (*padişah*) who is always just, calm and a *ghazi*; good employment and high earnings; and people kind to each other and full of love. After mentioning the Tundzha, whose water is plentiful and tasty, and the Maritsa and Arda, the physicians connect the city's weather and humoral illnesses to forecasts of military and political conditions. If the waters of Tundzha become too high, there will be too much wind and rain, leading to phlegmatic (*emrâz-ı balgamiye*) illnesses among the people and the death of non-believers. If the weather were to become extremely dry, then the fruits would be tastier, and there would be

plenty of corn, but the people would develop choleric illnesses (*safravî maraz*), and the ruler would be victorious against the Persians, Arabs, and Greeks. If the waters of Arda become high, then there could be many wars and enmity, there would not be enough fruit, and the people would suffer sanguine illnesses (*emrâz demevîye*) (*The Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi*, 193-4).

In another instance in Beşir Çelebi's account, the Kenise Camii, originally the biggest church built in the city of Adranos, is said to have an underground water source (*pınar*) with healing powers revealed by a certain prophet while digging. Cevher Şah, a descendant of the ruler Adranos, was cured of leprosy by drinking the water and ritually washing his body (*ghusl*) with it. After being healed, Cevher Şah accepted the religion of the prophet. The healing powers of the water was so renowned that the people of the city put it in bottles and sent them to the lands of the Franks (*Frengistan*) as gifts. This story is similar to the one recounted in the *Saltukname* above, in which the daughter of a ruler has leprosy and is healed by underground water in a well (*The Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi*, 190, 195).

Nükhet Varlık (unpublished) asserts that the *Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi* is in line with the general paradigm of the Galenic-Avicennan model of environmental disease etiology, trying to establish a relationship between the elements of the *macrocosmos* and of those of the *microcosmos*:

The physician attributes humoral properties to the rivers and winds of Edirne and suggests that because of its location, altitude, and humidity, the city is safe from corrupt/fetid air, which was believed to cause epidemic diseases.¹⁴

I add to her observations that there is also an astronomist-cum-astrologist physician element in Beşir Çelebi's account, reflected by the physician Afras, the vizier of Adranos (Hadrian) who was also an expert in the use of the astrolabe and advised Adranos to build a castle over Tundzha river. In addition to calculating the design of the castle, Afras also builds a church outside the northern gate of the castle and digs the Sığırçık Pınarı, an underground water source with healing powers similar to the water of the Zamzam (*Zemzem*), the sacred well near the Kabaa, in Mecca (*The Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi*, 195).

The *Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi* offers a glimpse into Ottoman astrological medicine. Although a study on the relation of as-

¹⁴ My sincere thanks to Nükhet Varlık for kindly sharing "Imagined Healthscapes. Places of Health and Disease in Early Modern Ottoman Cities", a talk in which she discusses Beşir Çelebi's text in relation to health and space in the Ottoman tradition.

tronomy, astrology, and medicine in the Ottoman Empire is unknown to me, the astrology and astronomy influenced by the legendary sage Hermes Trismegistos, Dorotheos of Sidon (c. first century AD), and Ptolemy (c. second century AD) and Batlamyus in Muslim literature became part and parcel of Islamic medicine. The most auspicious time for alchemy or medical treatments were decided according to calculations by astrologists because certain humours were believed to be in a state of agitation when moonlight was increasing. Each organ of the body was thought to be connected to a sign of the zodiac (Saparmin 2019, 282-96).

In terms of Ottoman astrological medical practices, the inventory of Bayezid II's library is revealing. At the end of the medical section, one finds a small number of works on geomancy, logic, mathematics, engineering, astronomy, astrology, alchemy, botany and mineralogy (Varlık 2019, 529). Considering Bayezid's personal interest in astrology/astronomy, and courtly patronage of the science of the stars reaching unprecedented levels at that time, the writings by Ottoman intellectuals, such as the *Account of the Physician Bekir Çelebi*, were probably influenced by the popularity of the subject during and after his reign (Şen 2017).

The *Account of the Physician Beşir Çelebi* is an Ottoman product of the sixteenth century, when Istanbul was firmly established as the centre of the empire. The strident opposition to Istanbul evident in the fifteenth century had by then waned. With a burst of urban development in the Ottoman Empire, literature in praise of cities emerged, such as *şehrengiz* (shahrangiz), a genre of short love poems about the young craftsmen in the local bazaar of a city, often additionally focusing on the beauty of the city's inhabitants, its natural and historical areas and its monuments. Most of *şehrengiz* works focused on the three Ottoman capitals - Bursa, Edirne, and Istanbul (Levend 1958; Stewart-Robinson 1990; Kappler 2005; de Bruijn, Halman, Rahman 2012). Beşir Çelebi's praise for the city of Edirne, however, is different. The text aims to prove the superiority of that city through scientific knowledge - that is, by connecting the geography of Edirne to medicine, astronomy and astrology.

5 Conclusion

The imperial Roman foundation story of Adrianople was crafted from Greek mythology, in remembrance of the Roman emperor Hadrian, and reference to one of the city's physical attributes, its waters. Together these elements created a space that would become an 'ancient, noble, and honourable' Romanised place offering a healing physical environment. During the tenth-century wars between Byzantium and Bulgaria, and in the cultural context of a confluence of Christian and

classical elements, the imperial Roman foundation story of Adrianople became integrated into Byzantine narratives of that time. In the fourteenth century, during a cultural revival characterised by philology and antiquarianism, the foundation story was integrated into one of the late Byzantine hagiographical texts.

The Ottoman foundation stories on Adrianople as the Islamised and Ottomanised Edirne linked the space to Noah and his descendants, celebrated prophets, mystics, and figures in the Muslim and Ottoman traditions, and the Islamic holy cities, creating a spiritual landscape for the city. Following earlier Islamic tradition, Hadrian is referenced as one of the city's founders, not as a historical figure, a Roman emperor, but as the eponymous fictive founder of Adrianople in a mythical past.

The fifteenth-century Ottoman foundation story was dragged into a competition with Istanbul, in voicing the concerns of alienated opposition groups. A century later, a different foundation narrative of Edirne appeared, with Istanbul's position as the centre of the Ottoman Empire well established, anti-Istanbuliot sentiments greatly reduced, urbanisation in progress, and literary genres in praise of cities emerging. It emphasised the physical aspects of the city, its air and especially its waters, incorporating 'scientific' knowledge of medicine, astronomy, and astrology. Adrianople's three rivers, in which Orestes cleansed himself and found mental and physical healing in the imperial Roman and Byzantine foundation stories, were presented as the central physical attributes of Ottoman Edirne, providing the city well-being and health. To these rivers, the Ottoman stories also added holy underground waters with the power to heal.

Both the fifteenth- and the sixteenth-century Ottoman foundation stories integrated the city's Greco-Roman past through historical characters, such as Alexander the Great, as well as fictive figures, such as Cevher Şah-i Rum. The Greco-Roman past indirectly infiltrated the Ottoman foundation narratives through the Byzantine *Patria* and through Muslim geographical, medical, astronomical, and astrological traditions, which in turn had been influenced by Greco-Roman heritage. The city's Christian past is acknowledged by attributing great authority to the information Assyrian and Byzantine priests provided on the history of the city. The churches, the underground water sources found within these houses of worship and the stories related to Christian figures, such as Jesus, performing rituals in churches created allegorical links with the Christian past. While acknowledging the city's Christian past, however, mentions of it were rendered in such a way that they announced the coming of Islam and the Islamisation and Ottomanisation of the place.

The imperial Roman/Byzantine and Ottoman foundation stories of Adrianople/Edirne are revealing in demonstrating how stories as cultural artefacts of different groups across time can manipulate

the meaning of the same space during social, political and identity-formation processes. In these stories, the physical environment, the waters of Adrianople/Edirne, remain a constant around which the place is defined and redefined. The process of defining and redefining a space through stories so that it becomes a place imbued with different meanings should be understood within the larger shared and connected space of the Eastern Mediterranean, for which cultural and social change should be reconsidered as difference through connection.

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