

Mehmed the Conqueror and the Equestrian Statue of the Augustaion*

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One of the landmarks of Constantinople was the colossal equestrian statue which stood on top of a hundred-foot-high column outside Hagia Sophia. Known as the Augustaion from the square in which it stood, the bronze statue was erected by Justinian, although in all probability it was not his own but a re-used work of Theodosius I or II. The statue's size alone—some 27 feet in height—would have ensured its fame, but it was particularly esteemed as a symbol of Byzantine dominion and a talisman of the City. Christianity's triumph over the world was signified by the *globus cruciger* which the rider held in his left hand, while with his extended right he was believed to gesture apotropaically towards the Orient, commanding the Eastern enemy, successively Sasanians, Arabs and Turks, to stay back behind the Byzantine border. The statue was so prominent, its symbolic and magical character for the Christians of Constantinople so commonly acknowledged, that it is hardly surprising it failed to survive under the Turks.¹

* I would like to express my sincere thanks to Professor C. Mango and Professor V. Ménége for their criticism and help.

¹ For a review of the sources: F. W. Unger, *Quellen der byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte*, I (Vienna 1878), pp. 137–46; *idem*, "Über die vier kolossalen Säulen in Constantinopel," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 2 (1879), 109–37. P. W. Lehmann, "Theodosius or Justinian? A Renaissance Drawing of a Byzantine Rider," *Art Bulletin* 41 (1959), 40, note 5, gives a bibliography to supplement Unger's. See further C. Mango, *The Brazen House. A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen 1959), pp. 174–80; G. Bovini, "Giustiniano sul cavallo di Teodosio," *Felix Ravenna* 3 (1963), 132–37; J. P. A. van der Vin, *Travellers to Greece and Constantinople. Ancient Monuments and Old Traditions in Medieval Travellers' Tales*, vol. II (Istanbul 1980), *passim*. The Turkish legend of the "Red Apple" was no doubt prompted by the gilded orb held by the equestrian statue of Justinian. As most travellers to Constantinople attested, the orb symbolized world dominion; dominion could thus be achieved by capturing Constantinople and the orb. After the Ottomans captured Constantinople, the legend was transferred to other cities such as Budapest and, most importantly, Rome: F. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (Oxford 1929), II, pp.

Some time between 1544 and 1550 Peter Gyllius saw fragments of the statue, which he claimed had long been kept in a courtyard of the Sultan's palace, being transported to a cannon-foundry, which was presumably the one at Tophane;² and he furtively measured a few of these *dissecta membra*, the rider's nose and the horse's hooves being nine inches long, the rider's leg taller than Gyllius himself. It has never been satisfactorily explained how the statue came to be removed to the imperial Saray. The answer, however, is to be found not in European or Greek, but in Ottoman, sources.

Until recently the statue was believed to have been taken down from its column by Mehmed the Conqueror soon after the Fall of the City. This belief was based on a drawing in a fifteenth-century humanist miscellany now in Budapest, which depicts a Byzantine rider holding a *globus cruciger* in his left hand and gesturing with his right (Fig. 1). An inscription on the preceding folio identifies it as the work of Giovanni Dario and Cyriacus of Ancona, and allegedly dates it post-Conquest; Cyriacus, regarded as one of Sultan Mehmed's tutors before the Fall, is argued to have accompanied Mehmed into the City and there helped Dario to record the statue. Both the angle and detail of the drawing were held to prove that the monument was

736-40; E. Rossi, "La leggenda turco-bizantina del Pomo Rosso," *Studi bizantini e neoellenici* 5 (1937), 542-53; M. (?) Dukas (*Ducaes, Michaelis Ducae Nepotis, Historia Byzantina*, ed. E. Becker, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* [Bonn 1834], p. 300) claims that the Turks nailed a severed head, believed to be that of Emperor Constantine, on the column, thereby, perhaps, expressing their contempt for this Christian talisman.

²P. Gyllius, *De topographia Constantinopoleos et de illius antiquitatibus libri quattuor* (Leyden 1561), p. 104, Bk. II, ch. xvii: "Barbari enim omni aereo vestitu, & equo, & statua columnam Iustiniani spoliarunt, aliquotque annos nuda remansit. Tandem (105) ante triginta annos eversa est tota usque ad stylobatem, quem anno superiore funditus vidi excindi, ex cuius crepidinibus aqua saliebat fistulis in magnū labrum, nunc stylobatae loco, castellū aquae latiū constructum est, & fistulae auctae, equestrem Iustiniani statuam, quam modō dixi supra hanc columnam fuisse collocatam, servatam diu in Claustro regij Palatij deportari nuper vidi in caminos, quibus metalla funduntur in machinas bellicas, inter quae erat Iustiniani crus proceritate meam staturam superans, & nasus dodrāte longior. Crura equi ad terram proiecta metiri non potui, pedis ungulam mensus sum occulte, & deprehendi dodrantalis esse altitudinis" (my italics). John Ball, trans., *The Antiquities of Constantinople*, in 4 Books (London 1729), ch. xvii: "[This ill treatment of Theodosius by Justinian, was revenged upon him by the Barbarians]; for they used his Pillar in the same Manner, and stripped it of the Statue, the Horse, and the Brass wherewith it was covered, so that it was only a bare Column for some Years. About thirty Years ago the whole Shaft was taken down to the Pedestal, and that, about a year since, was demolished down to the Basis, from whence I observed a Spring to spout up with Pipes, into a large Cistern. At present there stands in the same Place a Water-House, and the Pipes are enlarged. I lately saw the Equestrian Statue of Justinian, erected upon the Pillar which stood here, and (130) which had been preserved a long Time in the Imperial Precinct, carried into the melting Houses, where they cast their ordnance. Among the fragments were the Leg of Justinian, which exceeded my Height, and his Nose, which was above nine Inches long. I dared not publicly measure the Horse's Legs, as they lay upon the Ground, but privately measured one of the Hoofs, and found it to be nine Inches in Height."

sketched from close, so that it must have been removed from its elevated pedestal, and by inference also destroyed, on Mehmed's orders.³

This reconstruction is no longer tenable, however, since the discovery that Cyriacus was never Mehmed's tutor and that the entire theory of their relationship derives from a banal misreading of a scribal abbreviation in the manuscript of Zorzi Dolfin's Chronicle. In all probability Cyriacus died in Cremona in 1452, which dates the Budapest drawing to before the Conquest.⁴ Moreover, the statue need not have been taken down to be sketched, because repairs took place some time between 1427 and 1437/8 when Cyriacus and Dario could well have climbed the scaffolding and recorded the statue *in situ*.⁵

Although the Budapest drawing is of no relevance in proving that Mehmed II removed the statue, a second piece of evidence seems to implicate the Sultan in its destruction. In his *Diario di viaggio*, Gian-Maria Angiolello, who was captured by the Turks at Negroponte in 1470 and served in the imperial households first of Prince Mustafa and then of the Sultan himself, relates how Mehmed, heeding the advice of his astrologers and divines, destroyed a statue of "San Agostino" which stood outside Santa Sophia. The statue, he was advised, was a danger to the Ottomans, for as a talisman of Byzantium it would ensure the triumph of Christianity. It is impossible, of course, that a likeness of Saint Augustine should have survived into Palaeologan times, let alone that orthodox Byzantines, from whom Mehmed's advisers presumably derived their claim, should have regarded it as a Palladium of their city. *San Agostino* must be Angiolello's or his informer's gloss on *Augustaion*, a monument he had evidently not seen:

Ancora per mezzo la porta di Santa Sofia vi è una colona lavorata di pezzi assai alta, sopra la quale era l'immagine di Santo Agostino fatta di bronzo, la quale fu levata via dal Gran Turco, perchè dicevano li suoi Astrologhi et indovini, che insino che la detta statua di Sant' Agostino starà sopra la detta colona, li Cristiani sempre haverano possanza contro i Maomettani; e così

³ E. Jacobs, "Cyriacus von Ancona und Mehmed II," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 (1929–30), 200; F. Babinger, "Johannes Darius (1414–94) Sachwalter Venedigs im Morgenland, und sein griechischer Umkreis," *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte* 5 (1961), 75–78; M. Vickers, "Theodosius, Justinian or Heraclius," *Art Bulletin* 58 (1976), 281.

⁴ J. Raby, "Cyriacus of Ancona and the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980), 242–46.

⁵ Unger (1879; above, note 1), p. 135; C. Mango, "Letter to the Editor," *Art Bulletin* 41 (1959), 353; A. Vasiliev, "Pero Tafur, a Spanish Traveller of the Fifteenth century and his visit to Constantinople, Trebizond and Italy," *Byzantion* 7 (1932), 105; M. Letts, tr., *The travels and adventures of Pero Tafur* (London 1926), pp. 140–41. Several MSS of Buondelmonti's *De Insulis*—not just the Marburg MS, as Lehmann (above, note 1), 54—have an emended text which indicates that the column was scaled and an inscription on the horse deciphered: cf. Bodleian Canon. Misc. 280, f. 54^r and Marciana It. cl. X 124; on the latter Mango (above, note 1), p. 174, note 4. On Bod. Canon. Misc. 280, C. Mitchell, "Ex libris Kiriaci Anconitani," *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 5 (1962), 283–99.

fu levata via la detta colona. Ancora nel fondo di quella vi è una bella fonte, la quale gietta in un livello per tre canoni di metallo acqua suavissima.⁶

Angiolello's account is contradicted, however, by Hartmann Schedel, who in his *Liber cronicarum*, first published in 1493, records that the equestrian statue was damaged by lightning in the great storm of 12th July 1490, and as if by way of proof Schedel includes a woodcut of the scene (Fig. 2).⁷ Lightning certainly struck the church known by the Turks as Gün Görmez Kilisesi, which was being used as a powder store and which blew up causing great damage, but there is no mention, *pace* Schedel, in either Ottoman or Christian sources of storm damage to the statue.⁸ Nevertheless, Schedel claims to have derived his account from Venetian merchants trading in Istanbul, and such a source would appear to deserve some credence.

The impasse between Angiolello and Schedel can be resolved by recourse to the Ottoman sources, which are unanimous in bearing out Angiolello. The most detailed account is by the late fifteenth-century author Derviş Şemseddin Mehmed Karamani, in a Turkish version of his *Tarih-i Ayasofya*.⁹ The passage concerns the dying injunction of the Emperor Estuanos (Justinian) to his nephew. This included the building of a tall column opposite Ayasofya and the making of a "bronze" (*bakır*) statue of Estuanos riding a horse. The statue was to carry a gold globe in one hand,

⁶ A. Capparozzo, ed., *Di Gio. Maria Angiolello e di un suo inedito manoscritto* (Nozze Lampertico-Balbi) (Vicenza 1881), p. 21; J. Reinhard, *Essai sur J. M. Angiolello* (Angers 1913), p. 167 gives a *résumé* of the Vicenza MS. The passage does not appear in the section on Constantinople in the standard edition of Angiolello, ed. I. Ursu, *Donado da Lezze, Historia Turchesca (1300-1514)* (Bucharest 1909), pp. 158-64, esp. 160-61, a section which is for the most part derived from Buondelmonti's description.

⁷ H. Schedel, *Liber cronicarum cum figuris et ymaginibus ab initio mundi* (Nuremberg 1493), fol. CCLVII^r; L. Baer, *Die illustrierten Historienbücher des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Strassburg im Elsass 1903); V. von Loga, "Die Städteansichten in Hartmann Schedels Weltchronik," *Jahrbuch der (königlichen) Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 9 (1888), 93-107, 184-96; C. Jenkins, "Dr. Hartmann Schedel and his book," *Mediaeval Studies presented to Rose Graham*, ed. V. Rutter and A. J. Taylor (Oxford 1950), pp. 98-137; J. Ebersolt, *Constantinople Byzantine et les Voyageurs du Levant* (Paris 1919), p. 78, note 3; Lehmann (1959, above note 1), 40, note 8.

⁸ Oruç Bey, *Die frühosmanischen Jahrbücher des Urudsch, nach den Handschriften zu Oxford und Cambridge*, Quellenwerke des islamischen Schrifttums II (Hanover 1925), p. 136, line 4; R. F. Kreutel, *Der fromme Sultan Bayezid* (Osmanische Geschichtsschreiber Band 9) (Graz, Wien, Köln 1978), p. 51; Mango (above, note 1), pp. 180-82.

⁹ The complex problems of the various legendary histories of Ayasofya are discussed by F. Tauer, "Notice sur les versions persanes de la légende de l'édification d'Aya Sofya," *Fuad Köprülü Armağanı. Mélanges Fuad Köprülü* (Istanbul 1953), pp. 487-94; P. Wittek, "Miscellanea," *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 14 (1964), 263-72. The Persian versions are summarized by F. Tauer, "Les versions persanes de la légende de la construction d'Aya Sofya," *Byzantinoslavica* 15 (1954), 16-18. For Estuanus fulfilling his uncle's order, see also Hoca Sadeddin, *Tac ü Tavarîh* (Istanbul 1279/1861-2), I, p. 441; ed. I. Parmaksızoğlu, *Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, Tâcü't-Tevârih* (Istanbul 1974-), II, p. 303; G. de Tassy, "Description de la ville de Constantinople, traduite du turc de Saad-uddin," *Journal Asiatique* 5 (1824), 144.

while the other hand was to be open, the globe signifying to onlookers his control of the world. Estuyanos dies, and the passage reads:¹⁰

çün Estünyüşa memleket-i tãc u taht müyesser oldu 'amm îsiniñ vaşıyyetin iltizãm idüb Ayãşöfiya mukabelesinde ol 'âlî mîlî büny âd idüb tamãm kıldı. ve 'ammisiniñ heykelini ust âdlara baķırdan düzdürdü ve ol mîlîñ üzerinde berkitdi, şöyl(e)kim anuñ gibi heybetlü ş üreti 'âlemde kimesne görmemis idi. Baķır ât ol ş üret ile tã bizim zamãnımıza deđin mevc üd idi. Onu ğammãzlar ğamz idüb söziyle Sulţãn Meĥemmed Hãn Ğazî (raĥmat Allãh 'alayhi raĥmatan wãsi'atan) yıkdırdı ve ol ş üretleriñ bãķırından 'âlî toblar yãpdırdı. Amma mîl henüz Ayãşöfiya muķabelesinde ĥãli üzere mevcüddur.

When Estunyus [Justin II, 565–578 A.D.] was favored with the kingdom of the throne and crown he undertook the injunction of his uncle and constructed that tall column, opposite Ayasofya, and completed it. He had craftsmen cast the statue of his uncle from “copper” [bronze] and he secured it to the top of that column, with the result that no-one had seen as majestic a statue in the world. The “copper horse” [*bakır at*] existed in that form until our present time. Story-mongers gossiped about it and on their word Sultan Mehemed Han Gazi (may God's extensive mercy be upon him) had it pulled down; and from the copper of those statues he had splendid cannons made, but the column is still standing as it had been opposite Ayasofya.

The correspondence between Şemseddin's and Angiolello's account is striking, all the more if one believes that there is little to distinguish astrologers and story-mongers.

Neither Angiolello nor Şemseddin, however, provides a date for the removal or destruction of the statue. This omission is made good by Aşıkpaşazade, the source for Neşri. According to Aşıkpaşazade, Mehmed had the “copper horse,” together with crosses and bells—other potent symbols of Christianity as well as sources of bronze—melted down and turned into ordnance in preparation for his siege of Belgrade in 1456. In other words, the Augustaion was removed from its column some time between June 1453 and the winter of 1455–56.¹¹

Schedel's reference to the statue's survival in 1490 is nothing more than a “pious fiction,” although it is not clear whether Schedel or his Venetian informants were guilty of the fabrication. Such a fiction nonetheless testifies to the fascination the statue exerted on contemporaries, Christians

¹⁰ Topkapı Sarayı Museum Library, Revan 1498, fol. 37B–38A; cf. Istanbul University Library, TY 259 f. 50A.

¹¹ Aşıkpaşazade: *Die Altosmanischen Chroniken des 'Aşıkpaşazāde*, ed. F. Giese (Leipzig 1929), 138 ch. 127; *Tevārih-i Āl-i 'Osmān: 'Aşıkpaşazāde Tā'rihi*, ed. 'Alī Bey (Istanbul 1332/1914), 147; in Ç. N. Atsız, *Osmanlı Tarihleri*, I (Istanbul 1949), pp. 196–97; ed. and trans. R. F. Kreutel, *Vom Hirtenzelt zur hohen Pforte, Osmanische Geschichtsschreiber*, III (Graz, etc. 1959), p. 206.

and Turks alike. For the Christians of Istanbul and Galata there was profit in perpetuating the talisman's existence, or at least its memory; while for the newly settled Turks the marvels of the City—the copper horse, and that other celebrated talisman, the Serpent Column, and the various monumental stone columns and obelisks—were so awe-inspiring that continual reference is made to them in the *Legendary History of Constantinople* which was incorporated into the *Anonymous Chronicles*.¹²

Angiolello and Şemseddin differ, however, over the fate of the column itself, which Angiolello states was removed and Derviş Şemseddin claims was left standing. Angiolello appears to have mistakenly conflated the removal of the statue and the column, whereas in reality the column survived into the first decades of the sixteenth century. According to Gyllius, the Turks fully dismantled the column, as far as the stylobate, thirty years prior to his writing (1544–50).¹³ Turkish sources suggest the column collapsed during either Selim's (1512–20) or Süleyman's (1520–1566) reign,¹⁴ and indeed the column is no longer visible in Matrakçı Nasuh's city-view of Istanbul of 944/1537–38.¹⁵

Mehmed had no part, therefore, in the disappearance of the Augustaion column, although he did remove its statue. Despite his error Angiolello must be referring to the "Augustaion Rider," because not only does he

¹² F. Giese, *Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken. Teil I, Text und Variantenverzeichnis* (Breslau 1922), pp. 74–111; *Teil II, Übersetzung* (Leipzig 1925), pp. 101–48.

¹³ For Gyllius, see note 2 above.

¹⁴ Ali al-Arabi, writing in 970/1562–63, claims that the column was destroyed under Süleyman (Istanbul, Bayezid Library, MS Cevdet K284, fol. 156 ff. I owe this reference to the kindness of Professor Ménage). A late recension of the *Anonymous Chronicles* (W3) refers to another column "collapsing suddenly [*ansızın yıkıldı*] one night during the time of Sultan Selim [1512–1520]." This is described as surmounted by a cross, and must be the Column of Constantine in the Forum of Constantine, which was given a cross finial in the mid-twelfth century by Manuel I Comnenus. As this column, known as *Çemberlitaş*, is still standing, the recension of the *Anonymous Chronicles* is in error, and presumably intended to refer to the Augustaion column: Giese (1922, above, note 12), p. 94, line 17, and apparatus p. 297; and Giese (1925, above, note 12), p. 126. *Yıkıldı* could mean "dismantled," but the qualification "suddenly" makes this translation unlikely. Night would have been a perverse and dangerous time for workmen to have dismantled such immense columns. As in the case of the Serpent Column, therefore, the Turks were accused by Europeans of destructiveness, when the blame in fact rested with nature. According to Gyllius, the Ottomans stripped the column of its bronze cladding, but this had already been removed by the Crusaders of 1204: Unger (1879, above, note 1), 135. Hoca Sadeddin, in the *Tac ü't Tevârih*, which he dedicated to Murad III in 982/1575, states that the statue of the "copper horse" was standing "until recently" (*yakın zamana değin*) (see above, note 9).

¹⁵ W. Denny, "A Sixteenth-Century Architectural Plan of Istanbul," *Ars Orientalis* 8 (1970), 49–63. The Augustaion column is visible in O. Panvinio's view of the Hippodrome (Fig. 3) and in the first editions of the so-called *Vavassore* view of Istanbul. Although it was first published in 1600 (*De ludis circensibus*, Venice), Panvinio's view must date from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. It cannot, however, be earlier than 1491, since it depicts what can only be the Firuz Ağa Mosque, which was built in that year: K. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls: Byzantion-Konstantinopolis-Istanbul bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Tübingen 1977), pp. 70–71; Mango (above, note 1), p. 180.

describe the statue as bronze, on a high column outside the entrance to Hagia Sophia, but he mentions a fountain at the base of the column; and a fountain is attested at the stylobate of the Augustaion column by Gyllius. Several recensions, notably L and W3, of the Anonymous Chronicles also mention a fountain in connection with the "copper horse."¹⁶

There is no evidence that the Augustaion statue was destroyed as part of a deliberate campaign by the Sultan against the monuments of Byzantium.¹⁷ On the contrary, Mehmed made a rich collection of Byzantine sculpture which he gathered within the precincts of the Saray, including almost all the imperial porphyry sarcophagi from the Church of the Holy Apostles, the honorific stele of Porphyrius the charioteer, the statue of the *Wise Judges*, and the miraculous marble toad of Leo the Wise; while he also formed a collection of Christian relics the envy of any Western power.¹⁸ Nor was the Augustaion melted down merely to satisfy an omnivorous demand for war materials, for Mehmed preserved the *bronze* Serpent Column, and even ensured its future safety by having a threatening mulberry tree cauterized to its roots.¹⁹

Yet whereas the Serpent Column was a beneficent talisman in Turkish eyes, and safeguarded the City from snakes, the "copper horse" they considered a potential threat. Whether or not Mehmed himself believed in the magical efficacy of the horse, there was sufficient Turkish pressure to

¹⁶ Giese (1922, above, note 12), p. 82, esp. line 6; Giese (1925, above, note 12), p. 110. W3, for example, reads: "(Yanço bin Mâdyân) bir ülü mil yapırdı beş yüz arşün miğdâr şimdiki hâlde Ayâsofya dñündeki çeşme üzerindeki bakır ât mîlî kim vardır . . ." A. Mordtmann, *Esquisse topographique de Constantinople* (Lille 1892), p. 64, no. 116, identified a sheet of iron over the entrance to a cistern as the site of the former Augustaion column.

¹⁷ Sadeddin (see above, note 9) claims that the "copper horse" and other similar monuments were removed by Mehmed. Derviş Şemseddin also talks of "statues" (in the plural) providing metal for Mehmed's cannon. There is little evidence, however, of similar statues extant in Constantinople just before the Fall. Three bronze statues of "Saracen Kings" on columns near the Augustaion column are mentioned by Russian pilgrims to Constantinople in 1390 and 1420, but they had apparently been removed by 1432: Mango (above, note 1), p. 175; B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient* (Geneva 1889), pp. 202, 228.

¹⁸ On Byzantine sculpture found in the Saray, C. Mango, "Three Imperial Byzantine Sarcophagi Discovered in 1750," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962), 397-402; *idem*, "Notes on Byzantine Monuments. III," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23-24 (1969-70), 372-75; Müller-Wiener (above, note 15), p. 39, with additional bibliography; cf. C. Mango, "The Legend of Leo the Wise," *Zbornik Radova, Recueil des Travaux de l'Académie Serbe des Sciences. Institut d'Études Byzantines* 6 (1960), 59-93, esp. 74-75. F. Babinger, "Reliquiensbacher am Osmanenhof im XV. Jahrhundert," *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte* 2 (1956), overlooks A. Thevet, *Cosmographie de Levant* (Lyons 1554), fol. 635^v, ch. 139, claiming that he heard from a 105-year-old Greek Bishop near Epirus that Mehmed, according to Gennadios, kept several relics from Hagia Sophia "dans son cabinet." For a review of Babinger, see U. Heyd, *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 107 (1957), 654-56.

¹⁹ V. L. Ménage, "The Serpent Column in Ottoman Sources," *Anatolian Studies* 14 (1964), 169-73; R. M. Dawkins, "Ancient Statues in Mediaeval Constantinople," *Folklore* 35 (1924), 209-48 and 380; J. Ebersolt (above, note 7), *passim*, but esp. pp. 130, 162, note 2; Capparozzo (above, note 6), pp. 21-22.

have the statue destroyed. The Greeks of the city countered by claiming that the Augustaion was a talisman, not this time against the Eastern enemy, but against the plague. Only by stressing that it was protective of the entire community, Turks included, could the Greeks hope to save their statue. The Greek claim was evidently known to the Turks, for the *Anonymous Chronicles* refer to a copper horse with plague-repelling powers; “. . . some say that copper horse was a talisman, whereby, according to the belief of the Infidels, plague would not enter Istanbul, as long as that copper horse was standing.” According to the late and doubtless ingenuous account of the Greek Patriarch Jeremias II (d. 1595), the Sultan, when he learnt that the statue was a defence against the plague, tried to have it restored, though he failed for lack of skilled craftsmen.²⁰

The Ottomans destroyed one of the greatest of Byzantine sculptures before their unsuccessful siege of Belgrade. Exactly 70 years later, after their successful conquest of Ofen in 1526, the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Paşa brought back to Istanbul several bronze statues which had originally been commissioned by Matthias Corvinus from the Florentine-trained Giovanni Dalmata—one of Hercules, the others of Diana and Apollo—and placed them on columns in front of his palace, that is on the Atmeydan, only a short distance from the former site of the Augustaion. These statues did not survive long, and their summary fate provoked Gyllius' remark that the Turks were *acerrimi hostes statuarum, & totius artis Vitruvianae*.²¹

As if by way of confirmation, only a few years ago a massive statue of a recumbent female nude, the personification of *Güzel Istanbul*, was hurriedly removed after protest from the crossroads at Karaköy and relegated to an obscure corner of Yıldız Park.

Postscript

The fifteenth-century sources are unequivocal that the “Augustaion Rider” was melted down and converted into cannon. Yet little under a century later

²⁰ Giese, see above, note 14. I. Leunclavius, *Annales Sultanorum Othmanidorum a Turcis sua lingua scripti*, etc. (Frankfurt 1588), pp. 43–44, *Pandectes 130 (Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J-P. Migne, Paris 1866, vol. 159, cols. 820–821), who translates a W3 text of the Anonymous Chronicles, also attributes in his commentary plague-protective powers to the statue: Ménage (above, note 19), 170, note 11; Jeremias' account is recorded by Lubenau: W. Sahn, *Beschreibung der Reisen des Reinhold Lubenau* (Mittheilungen aus der Stadtbibliothek zu Königsberg in Pr. IV–V, 1914), I, pp. 141–42. Mehmed was said to have destroyed the statue himself, just as he was accused of damaging the jaw of one of the serpents of the Serpent Column: Ménage (1964, above, note 19). In nineteenth-century Athens the Kolanaki was still regarded as a talisman against the plague: Dawkins (above, note 19), 229.

²¹ P. Gyllius (above, note 2), II, pp. 89–90. J. v. Karabacek, “Miniatur des Persers Behzad des Jüngereren,” *Zur orientalischen Altertumskunde IV—Muhammedanische Kunststudien*, Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien. Phil.-hist. Klasse, *Sitzungsberichte* 172, Abh.1 (Vienna 1913), 85 ff. Ibrahim Paşa's statues are also mentioned in Sehi Bey's *Tezkere*, although not in the Şukri edition, but the Istanbul University Library MS cited by O. Rescher, *Türkische Dichterbiographien I: Sehi's Tezkere* (Istanbul 1942), pp. 128, 142. For Ibrahim's Palace, N. Atasoy, *Ibrahim Paşa Sarayı* (Istanbul 1972).

Gyllius saw large fragments of the statue being taken from the Saray for precisely the same purpose. It is clear that Gyllius refers to the Topkapı Sarayı when he talks of the statue being kept in the "Courtyard of the Royal Palace." The Topkapı Sarayı was not, however, built at the time of Mehmed's Belgrade campaign in 1456. There are two puzzles, then. First, how did a statue which Mehmed, we are told, had destined for the melting-pot, survive his reign, at least in fragments. And, second, was the statue removed from the column directly to the area that was to become the First Court of the Topkapı Sarayı, or was it, more intriguingly, brought there only after the establishment of the palace in the 1460s? In the latter event, it must have found a temporary home elsewhere, perhaps at the Eski Saray, before being transferred to the Yeni (Topkapı) Saray.²²

Even partial preservation of the statue suggests that the fragments meant more to the Sultan than a convenient supply of metal. Transfer of the statue's fragments from one site to another argues that they had some significance for him. The simplest explanation is that they were preserved as evidence of the destruction of this powerful Christian talisman. However, given Mehmed's careful collection of other examples of Byzantine statuary, one must ask whether the "Augustaion Rider" did not form part of that collection; if, indeed, he did not attempt to preserve it intact. There is no doubt that Mehmed removed the statue from the column, but can we be certain that Mehmed destroyed it? Angiolello merely says that it was *levata via* by the Sultan.²³ The statue was, however, so massive that it could not have been displayed openly, in the First Court for example, without observers such as Angiolello or Promontorio de Campis taking notice of it.²⁴

There are, then, numerous unsolved questions about Mehmed's treatment of the Augustaion statue. Perhaps the Patriarch Jeremias II's account of Mehmed's efforts to repair the statue is not as ingenuous as one first supposed.

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²² There can be no doubt that Gyllius (Bk. I, ch.vii) refers to the Topkapı Sarayı, which he calls the "Regium Clastrum." The Eski Saray is termed by Gyllius (Bk. III, ch. vi) the "Palatium Gynaecoonitidum Regiarum" "The Palace of the Imperial Harem."

²³ A compromise hypothesis—that the statue was only partially destroyed by Mehmed, the rider being melted down, while the mount was left unharmed—is feasible technically because Antique equestrian statues were constructed in sections: Bovini (above, note 1). That the "Augustaion rider" was so constructed is evident from the fact that the rider's headdress and the orb are recorded at various times as being blown down in high winds: C. Mango, *Art Bulletin* (1959, above, note 5); Unger (1879, above, note 1), 135. However, Gyllius (see above, note 2) measured fragments both of the rider—his leg and nose, the latter more than nine inches long—and of the horse.

²⁴ For Angiolello, see above, note 6. F. Babinger, "Die Aufzeichnen des genuesen Iacopo de Promontorio-de Campis über den Osmanenstaat um 1475," Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philos.-hist. Klasse, *Sitzungsberichte*, Jahrg. 1956, 8. Heft (Munich 1957).



Figure 1. Drawing c. 1436 by Cyriacus of Ancona and Giovanni Dario of the equestrian statue of Justinian, from a humanist miscellany. Budapest, University library, MS 35, fol.144^v.

