

**ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF  
CONSTANTINOPLE &  
THE CONTRIBUTION OF GREEK-ORTHODOX COMMUNITY TO  
THE FORMATION OF CITY (1878-1908).**

***THE EXAMPLE OF KALFA PERICLES D. FOTIADIS***

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**ABSTRACT**

During the second half of the 19th century Istanbul was characterized as the prominent multicultural and multireligious city, this character of the city was strongly reflected on its physical structure. The Greek- Orthodox community was playing an important role in the trade and finance services and the high education level of the community members determined their orientation as individual professionals, such as architects. The activity of them concerned not only the limited boundaries of the community but also the whole population of the city. Simultaneously, it attempts to enlighten the contribution of the community to the formation of urban space and draw future conclusions for the architectural "identities" that could characterize the cosmopolitanism phenomenon. This article has as goal to record and analyze the work of well known architects as Pericles Fotiadis, also some others work like Dimadis, Kambanakis, Kyriakidis etc, who formed the image of Istanbul simultaneously with its urban development.

The work of Pericles Fotiadis, architect, has always fascinated me. His most famous construction Zografeion Lyceum, the high school I graduated from, is an example of a magnificent building which at the same time is very functional. Its vast neoclassical façade, inspired by Schinkel's work and Hansen's façade of the University of Athens, manages to reflect the highly simple elements of the Greek temples, but also the revival of the spirit of democracy and secularism as opposed to the dominance of clergy, who until then had influenced the construction of all community buildings belonging to the Greek minority in the Ottoman Empire.

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For understanding the architectural reality, in the City during that period, we must put a question: was neoclassism a style that represented or reflected the national ideals of the Greek community? The subject of the thesis that I have currently been working on the NTUA is to research the architectural and urban development of neighbourhoods where the Greek Orthodoxes lived during the last quarter of the 19th century, i.e. the time of the reign of Sultan Abdul-Hamit II. Also with the help of the Greek daily and periodical publications to research the trends of ideas and the potential references to the build environment. The lecture is an introduction to the polymorphism of this milieu in the relation to the work of Fotiadis.

Pericles Fotiadis (1859-1960) was 32 years old when he was awarded the

competition prize together with the final design and supervision of the construction of the Zographeion High School (Gymnasion, in greek). It was a pioneer project necessary for the "education of the Nation", implemented with the donation founded by banker Christakis Zographos. At that time, Fotiadis was about to finish his studies in the Imperial School for Fine Arts, an equivalent of today's technological universities. His success is better described by an anonymous article of the time, in the *New Review* (*Νέα Επιθεώρησις*, September 1893): "*The society ... feels and expresses its admiration for the scientific and methodic genius of the young architect who is studying in this school, Mr. P. Fotiadis, who ... managed to erect a broad and extremely magnificent building, an equivalent of which would be hard to find amongst the tenths of thousands of buildings found in our capital*".

Fotiadis took his first steps in graphic arts by studying with Koromilas in Athens, intending to continue his studies in Paris. Circa 1877 he graduated from the Hellenic-French Hatzihristou Lyceum. He had already

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been working as an architect since 1886, while still a student. At that time it was not necessary for someone to have a university degree in order to build a building. Even in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a great number of public works, not only buildings, were constructed by expert builders, *kalfas*, who were addressed also by the title of *ustaba'ly*. The fact that he was young and his concern about his lack of experience were the reasons for setting up a Technical Committee headed by the imperial architect Vasilaki efendi Ioannidi, the designer of the other great schools for the Greek community, the girl high schools of Zappeion and Ioakeimeion.

Pericles came from a bourgeois family; his father Dimitrios Fotiadis, was a teacher who had had his education with Theofilos Kairis, a great theologian. His brother Fotis Fotiadis, was a doctor and an advocate of the demotic language, author of the classic book *The Language Issue and our Educational Rebirth*, Constantinople 1902.

Starting in 1886 Fotiadis worked in Ottoman Empire for 37 years.

Within this period, the number of his published buildings in Constantinople and other cities of the Empire amounts to 85. (This figure does not include non-implemented designs, supervisions, exhibitions, expert opinions and the mausoleums of notable men that were carried out between 1892 and 1924).

He settled in Athens in 1925, and he was appointed at the Technical Services Department of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, where Fotiadis was promoted to the position of Supervisor for the years 1930-1932. In that period, this industrious *kalfa* designed and supervised 91 public works, such as hospitals, infirmaries, public clinics and sanatoria, along with 24 private projects. He retired at the age of 73, and died at the ripe age of 101.

After this biographical introduction of the architect, and starting with his work in Constantinople, I would like to focus on the built environment of

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the City and point out primarily the production of public buildings for the various ethnic groups in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – period which has been described as “the climax of the Greek Orthodox element”. For reasons of brevity, I shall skip the constructions of the Armenian and the Jewish communities, which were among the most powerful groups of the cosmopolitan society of the capital of the Empire. Yet, I shall selectively refer to the work of the prominent family of imperial architects, the Balyans, of Armenian descent, and various foreign, mainly Italian, architects such as the Fossati brothers, D’Aronco, Mongeri and others, without omitting the representatives of the ruling Ottoman society, Kemalletin Bey and Vedat (Tek) Bey.

At the turn of the century the population of Constantinople was over one million, and one fourth of its residents were Greek-Orthodox, or *Romioi*. The number of foreign architects, in relation to the local Armenian and Greek *kalfades*, or craftsmen, keeps increasing due to the growing influence of Western capital and to the expansion of the community of the Franco-Levantines. The modernization of the town planning put forward by the *Regulations on Roads and Buildings*, as well as the measures taken for protection from frequent fires created the need for structures that were different from the traditional wooden dwellings. Stonework or the mixed masonry of brick, stone and timber, known as *kargir*, came into existence, thus increasing design and calculation requirements.

There were three reasons why the Ottoman Empire had to make these necessary town planning re-adjustments:

- a) to ensure protection from the frequent fires;
- b) to widen the streets;

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- c) to create new housing areas for the increasing population due to urbanization and the influx of refugees (whereas in western Europe the city embellishment operations were dictated by hygiene problems caused by industrial development).

The re-adjustment of town planning and building regulations were part of the broader reform effort of the Empire, known as the Tanzimat. Already, during the reign of Mahmut II, Helmut von Moltke, staff officer of the Prussian army, created the first town plan, which depicts the first planning decisions (1836). The most useful part of the Moltke plan was the preparation of the *Building Regulation* (Ebniye Nizamnamesi) published in

1848, which determined the expropriation procedures, the issuing of building permits, the inspection of buildings, the width of roads and streets and the height of buildings that would be erected on them. This regulation was further completed after the great fire at HocaPaşa (1864), when 2910 buildings were burned down, and it became applicable to the entire dominion.

According to the 1864 *Regulations for Roads and Buildings*, houses had to be constructed with stone, but due to poverty, practically this was difficult; as a compromise at least the walls in-between houses and the ground floor walls had to be built with stone or brick. Thus traditional architecture, as well as street layout, starts to change and "popular neoclassicism" and/or eclecticism make their appearance at the end of the century, with the terrace-houses projects, known as Akaretler, and the apartment buildings. Most important, however, is the transformation of the urban landscape, fostered by the widening and the alignment of streets and the construction of infrastructures, such as sewage and water system, natural

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gas and telephone. Open spaces located within the walls of the city that used to be agricultural fields, gardens or orchards, start being built.

In 1882, a new *Building Law* (Ebniye Kanunu) benefits from the preexisting 1873 law for expropriations, and plays an important role in the implementation of the orthogonal grid pattern for the new neighborhoods, as well as in those ravaged by fire. The great fire at Pera (1870), which destroyed over 300 houses, was the cause for enacting the law for expropriations.

A symbolic act, the transfer of the Sultan's residence from the old city, to the neo-baroque building of Dolmabahçe, on the banks of the Bosphorus, built by the prominent architects of the Balyan family, Garabet and Nikogos, between the years 1842 and 1856, was accompanied by the transformation of the local government system after the first year of the reign of Sultan Abdul-Mecit. Thus in 1857 Constantinople was divided into 14 selfgoverned sectors, which corresponded to the regions of the Byzantine emperors. The new system imitated the French model of *arrondissements*, especially the sixth sector, which included the region of Pera, from Galata as far as Yıldıız, was the most westernized. At Yıldıız was the summer palace of Hamit II, which was designed by Sarkis Balyan, Nikogos' brother, between 1861 and 1876.

From the second half of the 19th century onward, we have public or semi public buildings, such as schools, charitable institutions, cultural centers, athletic clubs, which are not inferior to their European models. Even the traditional form of orthodox churches is changed, churches such as Agia

Triada at Taksim and Kadiköy are permitted to be taller, to have a dome and not to be hidden behind a high fence. Private buildings adopted all styles and morphological variations of eclecticism, with a preference to the

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neoclassical models of late romanticism, as well as other contemporary architectural trends such as *Art nouveau*, the *Arts & Crafts* movement and the *Jugendstil*.

The 1890s A.D. Mordman map, depicts the demolition of the sea wall along the Sea of Marmara and the Golden Horn as well as the rail line, which ends at the Sirkeci station. The latter is a work of the German Professor Jachmund completed in 1889, reflecting an architectural Orientalism, in harmony with the “image” of Constantinople. The Haydarpaşa station, starting point of the Baghdad railway, does not appear on the map as it was completed in 1909, by the German architects Helmet Cuno and Otto Ritter in a Central European neo-renaissance style. Similarly a first attempt is made to construe the “proper image” of the built environment for the Greek Orthodox community during its phase of transformation and consolidation of national consciousness. The jury for the Zographeion building, qualified the winning project by Fotiadis as “creation of a man proficient in Science” and its architecture as being “truly Greek in style fitting for a school”. Immediately after completing the Zographeion, Fotiadis also participated in a second architectural competition for the Patriarchal Theological School of Chalki, now Heybeliada, since the old building had been destroyed in the 1894 earthquake. The Holy Synod gave its approval for the College to be built with stone, in accordance with the desire of its benefactor, Pavlos Stefanovik Skylitsis, and to be “simple, humble and without adornment”, and for its functional pattern to follow the older cell system. The jury selected the Byzantine style project by Fotiadis. Aristidis Pasadaios, a historian of architecture, makes a favorable judgment about this project and, even though he places it in its own period, that of extreme eclecticism, he points out the genius of the designer who

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combined Byzantine elements with an early Italian Renaissance style. Pasadaios feels that Fotiadis can be distinguished from Dimadis, to whom he refers as a “German bred neoclassicist”, and presents as an example the Great School of Nation (Μεγάλη του Γένους Σχολή), at Fener, the decorative elements of which fill the building surfaces to capacity. Yet, it is rather risky to make similar comparisons between buildings, for example the Great School and the Zappeion, girls’ high school, which were designed almost fifteen years before the Zografeion and the Theological

School. At the end of the century eclecticism was already giving its place to the modern trends — which included the *Art Nouveau* in France and in Belgium, *Arts & Crafts* in England and *Jugendstil* mainly in Central Europe. We mustn't also forget that, the designer should quite often take into consideration, the “tastes” of the contractor. As an example, we could mention the Orientalist style used in the facade of a small mosque at Galata, by the Patroklos Kambanakis (1903-1904), another talented architect. The Neo-Byzantine style of the Great School, which was designed by Constantinos Dimadis in 1880, in an almost exclusively Greek neighborhood, was an exception to the rule of that period. Few buildings in the City resemble the monumental appearance of the Neo-gothic pseudocastle that often decorate the romantic hillsides and the forests of South Germany and Austria.

The most prominent trend in the activity of the Greek Orthodox communities at the end of the century is the polymorphism of the architectural structures, mainly the institutional and public buildings, which are characterized by the dominating vernacular architecture using timber and covered balconies, *sachnisi* (in Turkish *çýkma* or *cumba*). Typical examples

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of this are the two churches in the municipality of Kontoskalion, now Kumkapý, the neo-renaissance Agia Elpida and the neo-byzantine Agia Kyriaki (by Fotiadis, 1894), the magnificent neoclassical Marasleion Elementary School (1901), the Zappeion girls School (1885), the Ioakeimeion girls School (1884), both by Vasilaki efendi Ioannidis, the Central girls School at Pera, the Orphanage of the Princess Island, by A. Vallaurý (1905), and finally the Baloukli Hospital complex, designed mostly by Fotiadis. The activity of the Orthodox community has continued until today. However preserving a decades-long heritage has been very expensive if we take into consideration the diminishing number of the members of this in recent years.

The multifarious work of Fotiadis is evidence of his ability to assimilate the new requirements of modernism and his daring spirit for both his time and environment. As an example to that, we could mention the Excelsior apartment building, which was built with reinforced concrete in a Bauhaus style at Ayazpaıa, approximately in the 1920s. The designing of Zografeion was especially challenging due to the irregular shape of the building plot and the narrow street of Turnacybaıý that was Fotiadis handled the difficulties masterfully in front of the facade and separated it from the Galatasaray High School. The building has one main side only; to decorate it he preferred the simple Doric capitals and a pediment that stresses the central axis of the facade. It was not accidental that the young architect himself boastingly

called the building “an ornament for the nation”, in its inauguration. Returning to the middle of the 19th century, we can see the most serious change in the layout and the landscape of Constantinople since the occupation in 1453. It was the influence of the western way of life on the built environment, especially in the district where the majority of the

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inhabitants was made up of the Turkish Muslim ruling class, the army officials and the bureaucrats. The transfer of the army barracks outside the walls to the Bosphorus shore triggered a large population movement towards them, but also to the inland district above Dolmabahçe, and similarly from Kadýköy to Bostancı on the coastal zone of the Asian shore. From the small *chalets* to the famous *yalýs* (the houses by the sea as summer resorts), the country villas and the *konaks*, or houses with gardens, constructions are erected in all possible styles, but especially in the *art nouveau* and the *rustique* styles. The railroad intensified and expanded the trend of installation of the privileged citizens in the suburbs, with the modern *banlieues* at Makrohorion (Bakýrköy), at Agios Stefanos (Yeílilköy) and the baths at Florya on the European shore of the Sea of Marmara. The cosmopolitan image of Constantinople was completed with the summer resorts at the Princes Islands, which were by no means inferior to the Côte d’Azur or the spas in Switzerland and Germany.

The basic difference from Europe was that this image reflected the excessive debt of the state, more specifically of the court officials, to the bankers of Galata. It must be pointed out that the blossoming of enterprises and credit institutions was not the result of a high capital accumulation at national level, but rather the consequence of exuberant foreign loans taken by the Ottoman state to face its demands for capital.

At the end of the 18th century the north shore of the Golden Horn, was an empty space dotted with the cemeteries of all denominations. In less than 50 years this area became the most populous place in the capital where building activities were more intense than anywhere else. The district of Galata, Karaköy, continued to play a primary role in the financial life of Constantinople, especially due to the extension of the port in the 1890s and

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the attraction of manufacturing activities in the zone between the two bridges of the Golden Horn. Finally, Taksim Square was created after the demolition of the barracks and the expansion of the Pera district to the north, towards the Pangalti suburb; there the area surrounding Tatavla, now KurtuluI, developed from a workers quarter to a middle class residential area.

Foreign architects, such as the Fossati brothers, who built the Russian Embassy, restored Agia Sogia and designed the first University, Darülfünun, at the ancient location of the Magnavras Byzantine Palace. Raymondo d' Aronco embellished the main Street at Pera with his art nouveau buildings, such as the Apartman Botter, or some buildings of the Yýldýz Palace. Alexander Vallaurý, Professor at the School of Fine Arts, developed an intense architectural activity from 1883 to 1908, and his projects include the Medical School (the present-day Haydarpala Lyceum), the Istanbul Boys School, the Archaeological Museum, the Ottoman Bank and various other buildings. Julio Mongeri, and numerous others contributed to the turning of the oriental image of Istanbul into cosmopolitan scenery. In the beginning of the 20th century some breathtaking embellishment proposals come to the forth concerning three squares in the Old City. In 1902 during the reign of Hamit II, the chief supervisor for the Architectural Department of the Municipality of Paris, Joseph Antoine Bouvard, was invited to propose methods for the creation of central public spaces in accordance with existing models in France. The area of the circus at At Meydaný and the area around the monuments of Agia Sofia and Sultan Ahmet were cleared of all adjacent buildings. The second great operation was planned for the Bayezit Square – where the University of Istanbul and the Bayezit mosque are located presently. It was both the economic inability

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and the opposition of the public against these westernizing attempts that did not permit the implementation of the project, except for the creation of an artificial pont.

The 1910s was the period of the “first national style architecture” in Turkey, when architects such as Kemalletin and Vedat Tek designed private apartment buildings and public buildings such as the Post Office and the 4th Vakýf Han; with Ottoman motifs and a stylistic morphology that echoes the classical mosque architecture, the “Neo-Ottoman” style is born in arts. The famed architect and Professor Sedat Hakký Eldem holds that until the middle 19th century vernacular architectural creation based upon a timber frame with covered balconies (*sachnisi*) was carried out by Greek and Armenian architects–*kalfades*; but later on the opening made to the West and the extreme mimicry eradicated traditional patterns of the past. Architecture, after having lost any personal involvement, made a comeback to sophistication and the fanciful quest for individualities. Accordingly architects changed their attitude and searched for innovative approaches in order to set themselves apart from old accepted principles. These attempts slowly but steadily destabilized the old professions and abolished the tradional organizations of the royal architects and the builders, “*esnafs*”.



That was the inevitable price to pay for modernization and may be paralleled with the abolition of the privileges of Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. Finally the fact that more and more people got official education as architects lead to the opening of this profession which used to be a privilege of a specific esnaf. Their participation in public affairs would now determine the change affecting the image of urban space; according to an accurate remark: "Architecture is not an expression of a community, but rather of the powers that rule it".

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