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According to legends inspired by the natural and social make-up of ancient times, the original location of Istanbul was Eyüp, at the end of the Golden Horn.

These legends are mostly derived from written “lineages, anecdotes and etymological similarities,” rather than on historical sources, and they have been collected in “anthologies” by dictionary writers.¹

Dionysios from Byzantium, in his work called *The Bosphorus by Way of the Sea*,² was the first to describe the original site of the city, the tip of the Golden Horn: “The end of the sea is called *Hypalodes*, ‘swamp, mud,’ due to the muddy and marshy deposits carried by streams that settle down here. So, its shores are neither rocky nor sandy; because of the sedimentations only small boats can sail. The muddy waters of two separate streams come together before they join the waters of the bay. At that point there are beautiful grassy areas and pastures where herds of animals graze. As God encouraged colonists who sought His prophecy, He pointed at these streams and said:

*How fortunate are those who will settle
in that sacred city,*

*Close to the shores of Thrace and the
entrance to the Black Sea,*

*Where the twin streams join the earth-
brown waters,*

*Where fish and deer are nourished from
the same pastures..*

These words have been uttered for actual things. Indeed, deer do come down from forests in the winter and graze on the reedbeds of the swamp. On the other hand, fish share the sea and the streams, hiding in the calm waters of the Keras Bay and afflicted by the languor of their well-fed bodies, feed lazily on roots in shallow waters. Kydaros Stream flows in the west and Barbyzes in the north. Some say that Barbyzes was Byzas’ teacher, others think he was the sea

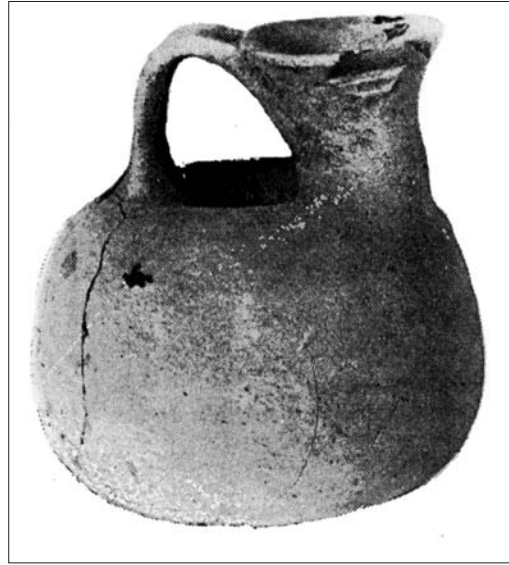


Illustration 1. An ascus found in Alibeyköy (N. Fıratlı, op.cit. fig. 13)

guide of Iason and his Minyai³ companions; whereas, another group of people believe that he was a local hero. Semystra’s altar is at the point where the two streams unite and flow to the opposite cape where they join the sea. The site is named after the altar. Semystra was the nymph of Nais and nanny of Keroessa. Io, by Zeus’ skill and Hera’s fury was transformed into a cow and traversed many a place prodded by a cattle fly, hopped to this place and writhed with labor pains -because she was loaded with divine sperms- and gave birth to a daughter. Semystra took care of the baby, nursed her and brought her up. The child carried the scars of her mother’s transformation: there were two projections on both sides of her forehead like horns. For this



Map 1. The two streams which merge above Eyüp, 1803. (Istanbul Maps, Turkish Industrial Development Bank, 1990)

1. G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, Paris, 1984, p. 25.

2. *Anaplous Bosporou (Per Bosporum Navigatio)*; believed to have been written between the II-IV. centuries. This study was based on the text C.

Wescher, *Dionysii Byzantii de Bospori Navigatione*, Paris 1874. For the text in P.

Gyllius, *De Bosporo Thracio*, Lyon 1565, which served to preserve the work until the present time see P. Gyllius, *Istanbul Boğazi*, translated from Latin by E. Özbayoğlu, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2000.

3. Orkhomenos community, the descendants of a hero; however, *argonautai* may have been used for “Argo navigators.”



Illustration 2. Artemis with the dog, Silaharağa. (Ist. Archeol. Mus.)



Illustration 3. Selene, Silaharağa. (Ist. Archeol. Mus.)

4. *Periegesis tes Oikoumenes* is dated between the I. and II. centuries. G. Bernherdy, *Dionysios Periegetes (cum commentariis Eusthatii)*, New York, 1974 was used as the basis.

5. *Ethnika*: covers local names and adjectives derived from them, Stephanos being the grammar author. It is believed to have been written between the VI-X. centuries as a "short summary" of a prior work called *Epitome*, which covered legends and origins of cities founded.

6. *Historia Rhomaïke te kai pantodape* or *Khronike Historia*; a history of the world beginning with the Assyrian Bel kingdom up to the death of Anastasios (518); is covered in Th. Preger, *Scriptores Origines Constantinopolitanarum*, Leipzig, 1901-1907.

reason Keroessa was called 'horned.' Keroessa and Poseidon had Byzas, who was honored as a god. Byzantion was founded by Byzas. Semystra almost became the site for a city; the colonists had decided to have the city there. But, when the sacrificial fire was lit, a crow flew among the flames and carried away a piece of the meat to the Bosphorus Cape. The other Hellenic peoples took this as an omen from Apollo and, guided by a shepherd who followed the crow from a high place, proceeded to where it flew."

So, this is how Dionysios relates the story of the founding of a city on a horn-shaped fertile land where two streams, Kydaros (Alibey Stream) and Barbyzes (Kağıthane Stream) unite and flow into the Keras Bay (Haliç); a city easily defendable and suitable for farming and fishery.

Dionysios, then the author of *The Geography of the Present World*,⁴ repeats the above prophecy, with only the third line missing, while describing the city which is named Byzantion after Byzas, the son of Keroessa and the commanding guide of Megara citizens.

Stephanos of Byzantion, the author of *Nations*,⁵ states that people of Megara have taken this prophecy from Delphoi and repeats the lines, except the second one, and supplements them with a new line which does not appear anywhere else in the literature.

As to Hesykhios, who mentions the legend in *The History of the Roman Empire*,⁶ he is anxious to relate to readers "a story which is convincing." So, after stating the prophecy which, he says, the people of Argos adopted from Pytiha -all lines being the same as Dionysios'- he relates that a crow carried a piece of the sacrificial meat to the Bosphorus Cape and a *boukolos* (shepherd) followed it, and so the site was called Boukolia after him. Hesykhios, also mentions the different versions of the story: some believe that "the people of Megara, who are the descendants of Nisos, have come to this place by way of the sea, guided by Byzas, and named the place after him"; for others "Byzas is the son of Semystra, a local nymph." He then, proceeds to say that some people relate other tales, but he wants to tell "a story which is convincing," a story the origin of which is Io, the daughter of Inakhos, the king of the people of Argos. The story is as follows: "Argos, who is said to have many eyes, guards Io's virginity. But, when Zeus falls in love with the girl, he uses Hermes to trick and kill Argos and transforms the girl into a cow, so that she would not be recognized." According to Hesykhios, Hera, in her fury, sends a cattle fly after the cow and thus has Io travel over many lands to escape from it. She reaches the Bosphorus, the "cow pass," where the name Bosphorus comes from. Hesykhios continues to write that "Io, later arrives at the place where the two streams unite and prophesies to people about the future and gives birth to Keroessa; the reason why the place is called Keras or 'horn.' Some believe that this name is associated with the goat Amaltheia's horns and symbolizes the fertility of the land." Hesykhios goes on to narrate that Keroessa surpassed all other girls of Thrace in beauty, so Poseidon falls in love with her and the fruit of their love is a boy, who is

brought up by nymph Bizye from Thrace and so is named Byzas. Hesykhios adds, "Bizye, even today, provides our citizens with water."⁷

In the rest of his story, Hesykhios narrates: "Byzas grew up among wild animals and barbarians in the mountains of Thrace, so when he became an adult, local leaders sent envoys to seek his friendship and alliance. Melias, the King of Thrace, sent him to fight a wild beast. When he returned triumphant, he knocked over a bull at the spot where the two streams unite, to sacrifice it to the gods. But, suddenly an eagle appeared, snatched the heart of the bull, flew to the cape of the Bosphorus across from Khrysopolis and landed at its shore."

Today, Khrysopolis is called Üsküdar. Hesykhios, after providing information about this place, writes that Byzas made plans for the city he was to establish and erected its flawless seven-towered walls with help from Poseidon and Apollon - the towers were so well-placed that it seemed as if they communicated with each other and reverberated with echoes.⁸

In legends narrating the founding of the city, Dionysios speculated that Byzantium's boundaries traced the shape of a horn consistent with the landscape; whereas, Hesykhios enriched it with new names. The eagle which snatched the heart of the sacrifice to carry it to the Bosphorus Cape, as Hesykhios narrated, is also echoed by Constantinus⁹ in his speculative legends about the founding of the city.

Hesykhios' text would appear, almost unaltered - only lacking the last two lines - in excerpts found in Georgios Kodinos' yearbook called *Origins of People of Istanbul*, which was written in 1400's (Bonn 3-6).



The literature on to the origin of Byzantium is also enlightening: Plinius (4, 46) states that the old name of this city was Lygos. This is associated with country names such as Lygii, Ligii, Ligures and city names such as Lugdunum (for instance the Latin name of Lyon), and refers to the swampy region. Byzantium relates to byssos, "depth of sea," mentioned in Homeros (Ilias, 24, 80); whereas, antion is associated with "the city guard at the entrance to the sea."¹⁰ Plinius, in the section where he describes the site of the city, may have somehow blended written information with, for instance, the word Paludes, or "swamps."

Archeological data seems to support these legends: stone tools dating back to Paleolithic (100,000 years) and Middle Paleolithic (50-60,000 years) times were found at archeological sites near the banks of the Davutpaşa Stream northwest of central Istanbul, and at Paşaalanı and Kotamençe ridges; there are traces of possible valuable archeological finds close to Alibey and Kağıthane stream beds¹¹ and an archaic *ascus*¹² was found in Alibeyköy. All these indicate that the area was settled at the time of the legends. However, due to alluvial soils deposited by two flowing streams, it is difficult to carry out archeological investigations at the site

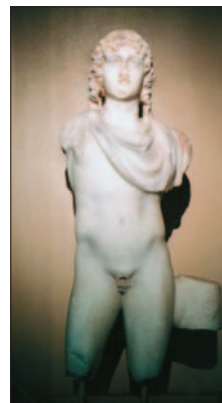


Illustration 4. Apollo, Silah tarağa (Ist. Archeol. Mus.)

7. The present Vize is an aqueduct built at the time of Hadrianus (117-138) that supplied the City with much water; Khronikon Paskhale, Bonn, I 619.

8. Dio Cassius (75, 5-6), describes the towers with these words: "There were seven towers lined up between Thrakion Gate (probably the Hagia Sophia Square today) and the water (Haliç/Golden Horn)... If someone... approaches the first tower and shouts or throws a stone in its direction, not only is it echoed by the particular tower, but the next one echoes it as well. Each tower causes the next one to behave in the same way and the sound is echoed by all in sequence."

9. When Constantinus comes to Khalkedon (Kadıköy) in search of a new capital and starts to build, eagles fly over, snatch the ropes (for some stones) from the workers' hands, cross the Bosphorus and carry them to Byzantium. When this recurs several times, the emperor is informed. Constantinus goes to Byzantium, in person, to inspect the place; he finds it appropriate and, in view of the divine omen, changes his mind and moves the workers to this new location to establish the city with much effort. He then names it after himself, (Kedrenos, Bonn, I 496; Zonaras, Bonn III 13-14).

Map 2. The two streams which merge above Eyüp, From J. von Hammer, *Constantinopolis und der Bosporos*, I, Pesth 1882.

Map 3. The two streams which merge above Eyüp, P. A. Dethier, *Der Bosphor und Constantinopel*, Kerpen 1873.

10. G.Semerano, *Le Origini della Cultura Europea*, Dizionario Etimologico, II. Firenze 1994, sv Byzantion. Semerano claims that the name Byzantion does not originate from Byzas or byzia, and traces its origin to Akkadians and Sumerians.

11. TAY, *Türkiye Arkeolojik Yerleşmeleri*, 1, Ege Yayınları, İstanbul 1996, "Kemerburgaz Yöresi." (TAY, *Turkish Archeological Settlements*, 1, Ege Yayınları, İstanbul, 1996, "Kemerburgaz Region")

12. N. Firatlı, "New Discoveries Concerning the First Settlement of Ancient

Istanbul-Byzantion," *Proceedings of the Xth International Congress of Classical Archeology*, 572.

13. See E. Özbayoğlu, *The Princely Islands Survey, Late Antiquity Research Group*, London, 2001, 1.

14. N. De Chisemartin-E. Örgen, *Les documents sculptés de Silahtarağa*, Paris 1984. S. Eyice, "Eyüpsultan Semtinde Tarih ve Sanat Tarihi," II. Eyüpsultan Sempozyumu, Tebliğler, 8-10 Mayıs 1998, Eyüp Belediyesi, 14. (S. Eyice, "History and History of Art Pertaining to Eyüpsultan District", II. Eyüpsultan Symposium, Communications, May 8-10 1998, Eyüp Municipality). In describing the ancient archeological finds Eyice says, "I remember coming across the ruins of some old structures in 1941-42 at the summit of the hill in Silivri, behind the power plant."

15. Name or surname derived from the word father- here used for a church senior.

16. *Itinéraires Russes en Orient*, French trans. Khitrowo, Geneva, 1889, 163; 233.

Illustration 5. Serpent heads, Silahtarağa. (İst. Archeol. Mus.)

Illustration 6. Giant head, Silahtarağa. (İst. Archeol. Mus.)

where Semystra's altar once stood. Even if the Bosphorus, whose formation is dated back to 6,000-5,000 B.C. by M. Özdoğan,¹³ and the Golden Horn (Haliç) may have buried ancient finds under alluvial soils, it is known that migrations, which intensified starting 3000-2000 B.C., led to the founding of Byzantion on the grounds of present Topkapı Palace in 658 B.C., the site to which the crow flew after seizing a piece of Byzas' sacrifice. On the other hand, at Silahtarağa, which is close to the area where the two streams unite and where the sacrifice was offered to the gods, many works of art were found in 1949 while laying the foundations of a building. Among these were well-preserved statues made from Prokonnesos (Marmara Island) marble of a Byzantion Artemis with a dog, Selene (for some Nike) with a flying scarf and Apollo, about sixty other pieces and giant statues with serpent legs made from grayish black Bosphorus (for some Bakırköy) limestone. These are referred to as *gigantomakhia*, "battle of giants," and belong to different times - from the time of Marcus Aurelius (120-180) to the second half of the 3rd century. They are also thought to belong to a *nymphaion*, "monumental fountain," which is a reference to Semystra's sacred altar.¹⁴

Eyüp also stood out during the last periods of antiquity with its other structures. The dis-

trict, which was outside the city walls, was called "*Kosmidion*," originating from Kosmas *patronymikos*.¹⁵ In Rome, at the end of the 3rd century, Kosmas and Damianos, two Muslim doctors who died for Islam, were recognized as *anargyroi*, "moneyless" saints because they treated gratis their patients. The church, which was constructed during the time of Theodosius, in the middle of the 5th century, is the most famous of six churches dedicated to these two people and it is in Eyüp. This religious structure, which was damaged during raids by the Avar, was restored and enlarged in the 9th century. It has been described by Psellos (IV 31): "(IV. Mikhael), surpassed all other emperors before him in manpower and wealth dedicated to religious structures and enlarged this building, surrounded it with a wall, added new buildings and transformed it into a sacred *asketerion*, 'monastery.' With such dimensional harmony, its beauty became incomparable: the floors and the walls were covered with most precious marbles, the whole church glimmered with gold gilded mosaics and frescoes, and the *hieron* was adorned with lively depictions. He also put in beautiful baths, provided plenty of water, laid magnificent lawns and did whatever else is pleasing to the eye."

Some Russian pilgrims who visited this





Illustration 7. Collection of finds from Silaharağa (İst. Archeol. Mus.)

Christian church have commented that part of the sacred remnants of Cosman and Damian were in the church while their skulls were in the Prophet Daniel Monastery; whereas, others claimed that they had seen their gold-gilded skulls in the church itself. Based on dates when these people visited the place, 1350 and 1434, it is believed that the church was at its original location up to the time of its transport to Istanbul.¹⁶

Eyüp and its environs have constituted a sacred-religious center throughout history. Eyüp is both the site of the Eyüp Sultan Tomb and the place where Ottoman sword girding ceremonies took place. It has been considered to be a “most sacred place” and a “most important site to visit” ever since the city was conquered by Fatih Sultan Mehmet. It had a special place on the calendar for “ceremonies-rituals-visits” and in the planning process for them.¹⁷

The sword girding ceremonies were held each time a sultan ascended the throne and involved girding. The ceremony then was followed by a parade of the ceremonial party to the palace, accompanied by applauses from the people. P. A. Dethier claims that this is a ritual

inspired by an old tradition in which the Roman *legio* (legions) raised the *imperator* (emperor) on shields in open plains above Eyüp, and he proceeds to state that the so-called *Hebdomon* refers to the hall in the palace where the emperor is crowned.¹⁸ Undoubtedly, Dethier bases his views on P. Gyllius¹⁹ who asserted that *Hebdomon* is near Eyüp, on a hill overlooking the Blakhernai district. Actually, this was accepted for three hundred years, from Gyllius’ time until the end of 1800’s, when Al. van Millingen²⁰ identified *Hebdomon*, which means “seventh,” as Makriköy (Bakırköy) which is seven miles from Eyüp. Kampos, the plain in *Hebdomon*, is equivalent to *Campus Martius* in Rome where Romans held ceremonies for their *imperator* (emperors) and raised them on shields: Valens (364),²¹ Arcadius (383), Honorius (393), Theodosius II (402), Marcianus (450), Leon I (457), Zenon (474), Basiliskos (475), Maurikios (582), Phokas (602), Leon from Isauria (717), Armenian Leon (813) and Nikephoros Phokas. (963)²²

Kamos (the plain where the Veliefendi Hippodrome stands today) was a military zone where the military troops from Thrace, as well

17. C. Kafadar, “Eyüp’te Kılıç Kuşanma Törenleri,” *Eyüp: Dün/Bugün, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları*, İstanbul, 1994, 51. (C. Kafadar, “Sword Girding Ceremonies in Eyüp,” *Eyüp: Yesterday/Today, History Foundation National Publications*, İstanbul, 1994, 51).

18. *Der Bosphor und Constantinopel*, Kerpen 1873, V.

19. P. Gyllius, *İstanbul’un Tarihi Eserleri*, trans. from Latin by E. Özbayoğlu, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1997, IV 4. (P. Gyllius, *Historical Works of Art in İstanbul*, trans. from Latin by E. Özbayoğlu, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1997, IV 4).

20. *Byzantine Constantinople, The Walls*, London 1899; 316-341. See R. Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*, Paris, 1964, 447.

21. Ammianus Marcellinus (26, 4,3): “With the approval of everyone, Valentinianus announced outside the district (*Hebdomon*) that his brother Valens was the emperor.”

22. Janin, *ibid.*: R. Demangel, *Contribution a la topographie de l’Hebdomon*, Paris 1945, 5 7. G. Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, trans. from German by f. İşıltan, TTK Ankara 1981. (G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the State of Byzantium*, trans. from German by F. İşıltan, TTK Ankara 1981). On page 56 is written: “Leon I. was probably the first emperor who was crowned personally by the patriarch of İstanbul. All of his devoted Christian predecessors were contented with old Roman traditions and were crowned by a high military or civil servant, accepted to be raised on shields, and were applauded by the army, the people and the members of the senate.”

as the selected troops called Theodosianos gathered to be instructed. It is also the place from where the ceremonial imperial regiments began their march to the Golden Gate through which they entered the City and proceeded, accompanied by the applause of the people, to the Senate and, in later years, to Ayasofya (Haghia Sophia).

Zonaras (*Annales*, 7, 22) describes a Roman victory ceremony with the following words: "When a triumphant (*Triumphum*) victory is won, the commander is immediately saluted by his soldiers as the triumphator and he sends the news to the city by messengers carrying *fasces*, 'bouquet of whips entwined around a battle ax' and tied with bay leaves... He puts on his victory costume, wears an amulet (*kolçak*), a kind of charm against the evil eye, puts on a laurel made of bay leaves, takes a wreath of bay leaves in his right hand, and gathers the people to praise his troops and to give out rewards and medals in their presence... After the ceremonies, he rides in his carriage. This is not the type of carriage used in races or battles; it has a round shape like a tower. If he has children, he takes some of them with him on the ride... A ceremonious slave, who holds an ornamented valuable crown over the head of the triumphator, also rides in the carriage and frequently repeats the words 'Look behind!' This is to say, 'don't forget that you are mortal, think of your remaining years, don't be fooled by your present good luck and be arrogant.'... A bell and a whip are fastened to the carriage. They symbolize the fact that his luck may turn around some day and he may be whipped to death... Thus, the city is entered. The symbols for everything won are carried in front of the procession; war loots, conquered fortresses, cities, mountains, rivers, lakes, or seas."

Hebdomon (Bakırköy), with its palaces containing crowning halls and its Kampos where ceremonial processions were arranged and marched from, served as the district where the emperors had their second homes. It later lost this function as a result of invasions from the

Balkans. The identity of the first sultan whose girding ceremony took place in Eyüp may be debatable; but, it is known that Vahdettin, who ascended the throne in Eyüp, on July 3, 1918 was the last one. Eyüp was where girding ceremonies of sultans took place during a certain era, but in all, with Semistra's sacred altar, Cosmas and Damian' church with sacred spring and the tomb and sacred spring of Eyüp Ensari, it was the most important place to visit in every stage of history.