


Seeing Byzantium through Edwin Freshfield's eyes: Arts and Crafts, antiquarianism, and learned societies at the end of the nineteenth century

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This article focuses on three Byzantine capitals acquired by Edwin Freshfield and later donated to the church of the Wisdom of God in Lower Kingswood, which provide us with two ways to see through Byzantium. The first looks at their original Constantinopolitan context lost at the time of their acquisition. The second reflects on how Byzantine materials attracted wealthy Western European collectors, who combined antiquarian curiosity with the quest for the authentic Christian faith. Their privileged status allowed them both to possess these witnesses of the sacred past and even to project their own image to posterity as being analogous to that of Byzantine patrons.

Keywords: Constantinople; antiquarian collections; Byzantine sculpture; Byzantine archaeology; archival records

Introduction (*Flavia Vanni, Jessica Varsallona*)*

This article, dedicated to Leslie Brubaker, is born from a research line we developed in parallel to our main PhD topics at the University of Birmingham. Leslie has always encouraged us to see through the objects and monuments we were studying to shed light on the people who produced, designed, and paid for them. The history of an

* We would like to thank Anna Kelley, Daniel Reynolds, James Cogbill, Rachael Helen Banes, and the anonymous reviewer for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. Any errors are our own.

object continues well beyond the moment of its production: when put in a different society and historical context, the object loses the original meaning only to acquire new ones. This article attempts to reconstruct the histories of three Byzantine capitals, once part of Constantinopolitan complexes, that were brought to England in the nineteenth century as part of the antiquarian activity of Edwin Freshfield, who later donated them to the church of the Wisdom of God in Lower Kingswood, Surrey. The unclear circumstances of their acquisition open a window on part of the cultural context that was inextricably linked with the birth of Byzantine studies, leading us to ponder how colonialist our discipline is. An interest in Byzantium connected intellectuals, parliamentarians, aristocrats, clerics, and members of the Arts and Crafts movement in a network of literary societies and new institutions, each with its own different agenda.

Only one capital is known from Freshfield's contemporaries, connecting his collection to the Musée du Louvre in Paris. However, the circumstances of the capitals' acquisition caused their removal from their original Byzantine context, resulting in our lack of knowledge of the building they decorated and of their date of production. In this article, we begin to return these capitals to their Byzantine Constantinopolitan context, albeit on paper, and unravel instruments of knowledge of the discipline of Byzantine studies in its infancy. Such studies embraced a fascination with and admiration for the Orthodox liturgy, as a mirror of the true faith, but also involved acts of appropriation.¹

The church of the Wisdom of God at Lower Kingswood (*Flavia Vanni*)

In 1891, the solicitor, scholar, and antiquarian Dr Edwin Freshfield (1832–1918) and Sir Henry Cosmo Bonsor (1848–1929) commissioned the young Arts and Crafts architect Sidney Barnsley (1865–1926) to build the church of the Wisdom of God in Lower Kingswood, Surrey in neo-Byzantine style; the church was dedicated on 17 July 1892.² While an interest in Byzantine art was gradually growing in British society, the use of the Byzantine style for an Anglican church at the beginning of the 1890s was innovative. The Byzantine style had been declared 'foreign' and inappropriate to express the (Anglican) Christian faith by the influential Cambridge Camden Society (from 1845, the Ecclesiological Society), which recognized Gothic as the only true form of Christian architecture in the West.³ In the years that followed, the Byzantine

1 See D. Winfield, 'The British contribution to fieldwork in Byzantine Studies in the twentieth century: an introductory survey' in R. Cormack and E. Jeffreys (eds.), *Through the Looking Glass. Byzantium through British Eyes* (Aldershot 2000) 57–65 (59) and, more recently, A. Kakissis (ed.), *Byzantium and British Heritage: Byzantine influences on the Arts and Crafts movement* (Abingdon 2023).

2 M. Greensted, 'The Arts and Crafts Movement: exchanges between Greece and Britain (1876–1930)', MPhil thesis, University of Birmingham 2010, 71–2; M- J. Brandon, *The Lost Jewel in the Arts and Crafts Crown. The Church of the Wisdom of God*. (Southampton 2001) 32–3; *The Church of the Wisdom of God* [guidebook] (2001), 1; J. Slinn, *A History of Freshfields* (London 1984) 131–2; M. Comino, *Gimson and the Barnsleys. 'Wonderful furniture of a commonplace kind'* (London 1980) 37–42.

3 See F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: the Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (Cambridge 1962) 178–97.

style was progressively rehabilitated by scholars and architects such as John Louis Petit, and by a series of lectures at the Royal Academy and the London Architectural Society (RIBA) in the 1840s and 1850s – but not without resistance from High Church conservatives. This prejudice regarding Byzantine architecture is important, because scholarship is still not clear about the ideology behind the mechanisms that brought its rehabilitation by the members of the RIBA and the Arts and Crafts movement and whether the use of this style was accepted by the Ecclesiological Society at this stage. We should note that Freshfield was a member of the Society.⁴

The church of the Wisdom of God was Barnsley's first architectural commission.⁵ Barnsley and Freshfield shared an interest in Byzantine architecture, fostered by their travels in Greece and Asia Minor, although pursued in different ways. Barnsley paid attention to detail and material, construction technique, and decorative pattern. He was probably introduced to Byzantine architecture while working at Norman Shaw's firm in London (1886), where he met Robert Weir Schultz and W.R. Lethaby, a prominent member of the Arts and Crafts movement who was working on a book on the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople.⁶ In the spring of 1888, Barnsley travelled to Greece with Schultz and in the following years was a student at the British School at Athens (BSA), probably funded by Freshfield, John Crichton-Stuart, third Marquess of Bute (1847–1900) (hereafter: Lord Bute), and the painter Edwyn Pointer.⁷ Freshfield, for his part, was passionate about Orthodox liturgy and the organization of church space in Byzantine architecture;⁸ he also studied the topography of Constantinople on his many visits and collected antiquities.⁹

4 On the rediscovery of the Byzantine style in Britain, see J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered* (London 2003) 165–85; N. Karydis, 'Discovering the Byzantine art of building: Lectures at the RIBA, the Royal Academy and the London Architectural Society, 1843–1858', *Architectural History* 63 (2020) 171–90. The writings of Ruskin, Lethaby and William Morris were influential, but still it is not clear what was the reception by Freshfield's environment.

5 M. Greensted, 'Sidney Barnsley, Byzantium, and Furniture-Making', in Kakissis, *Byzantium and British Heritage*, 217–39.

6 Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 168–472; Comino, *Gimson and the Barnsleys*, 37; Brandon, *The Lost Jewel*, 14–15.

7 For Freshfield's support, see Comino, *Gimson and the Barnsleys*, 37; Brandon, *The Lost Jewel*, 15–16. For Schultz and Barnsley as students, see the BSA annual report 1887–1888, 5; BSA Annual report 1889–90, 4, 5, 8 12–13; BSA annual report 1889–90, 10, 11–13, 25; BSA annual report 1890–91, 4–5, 14, 20–29; for their past work: BSA annual report 1891–2, 4–7, 23. On Lord Bute, see R. Macrides, '“What I want is to locate my dome”: the Byzantinism of the Third Marquess of Bute', in Kakissis, *Byzantium and British Heritage*, 81–109.

8 E. Freshfield, 'On Byzantine churches and the modifications made in their arrangements owing to the necessities of the Greek ritual', *Archaeologia: or Miscellaneous tracts relating to antiquity* 44 (1873/74) 383–92. E. Freshfield, 'Notes on the church now called the Mosque of the Kalenders at Constantinople', *Archaeologia: or Miscellaneous tracts relating to antiquity* 55.2 (1897) 431–8.

9 Freshfield first travelled to the Levant first in 1854 and found himself stuck on the Black Sea during the Crimean War. In these years, he met Zoë Charlotte Hanson, the daughter of Mr James Frederick Hanson, a

In 1888-89, Barnsley was admitted to the recently founded BSA as an architectural student, where he started studying the architecture of Byzantine churches in collaboration with Schultz,¹⁰ travelling with him to record surviving Byzantine monuments under the auspices of the BSA and the new Byzantine Architectural Fund, sponsored mainly by Freshfield and Lord Bute.¹¹ The most well-known product of those travels was a monograph on the monastery of Hosios Loukas and St Nicholas in the Fields published in 1901, thanks, again, to Freshfield's financial support.¹²

The study of Byzantine monuments greatly influenced Barnsley's subsequent Arts and Crafts production, especially of furniture, as is visible in the church of the Wisdom of God.¹³ Here, Barnsley combined his deep knowledge of Byzantine and Western medieval buildings with current trends in architectural construction. This is evident in the pitched roof of the western façade, based on the church of Hagios Vasilios of Arta (Epiros), as Mary Greensted has noted (fig. 1a).¹⁴ Another reference is in the masonry of the northern and southern façades (fig. 1b) probably modelled on Peloponnesian churches, such as the Zoodochos Pege of Samarina (in Messenia), that he visited with Schultz in 1889, as I was able to verify from their notebooks and photographs now in the BSA archive.¹⁵ The basilica plan and the apse mosaic recall the Hagia Eirene of Constantinople, while the marble pavement that of the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas.¹⁶ The wall's marble cladding with veneers symmetrically arranged follows Byzantine conventions too. The mosaic in the apse synthesizes motifs from the mosaics of the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas (visible in the decorative band underlining the apse arch) and the Hagia Eirene of Constantinople (the cross in the apse), while a rose motif on the blue background probably adds a reference to Morris' 'Trellis' wallpaper (fig. 1c). The mosaics were made between 1901 and 1902 (almost ten years after the church's initial construction), by Messrs Powell of Blackfriars based on drawings of Schultz after their *équipe* finished the work in the Anglican St Paul's Cathedral, London, under the direction of William Blake Richmond, and in the Catholic

member of the Levant Company in Smyrna (admitted 1820). The couple were married in 1860 in Smyrna by the Rev. John Minet Freshfield, Edwin's brother: Slinn, *A History*, 129-33.

10 See n. 7 above.

11 Their notebooks, records, and account books are now preserved at the BSA Byzantine Research Fund. Interestingly, among the subscribers to the fund, there were also Messrs George and Peto, the architectural office for which Schultz worked before joining the BSA: BSA Annual Report 1889-90, 24. On Schultz's career, see G. Stamp, *Robert Weir Schultz Architect and his Work for the Marquesses of Bute. An essay* (Mount Stuart 1981); D. Ottewill, 'Robert Weir Schultz (1860-1951): an Arts and Crafts architect', *Architectural History* 22 (1979) 88-115, 161-72.

12 R. W. Schultz and S. Barnsley, *The Monastery of Saint Luke of Stiris in Phocis, and the dependent Monastery of Saint Nicolas in the Fields, near Skripou, in Boeotia* (London 1901).

13 Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 75-6; Brandon, *The Lost Jewel*, 46-52.

14 Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 72-3.

15 Photo of the southern façade BRF/02/01/15/004; drawing of the southern façade BRF/01/01/15/019.

16 Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 77.



Fig 1. Church of the Holy Wisdom at Lower Kingswood (Surrey), England. A) Exterior, western façade; B) Exterior, northern façade; C) Interior, Apse mosaic showing one dedicatory inscription from Freshfield and his family (1902–3). D) Interior, western façade with most of the capitals mentioned in the *Memorandum* (all photographs by the Authors).

Westminster Cathedral under the direction of James Powell of Whitefriars.¹⁷ The wooden ceiling was modelled on another monument, Old Cleeve Abbey in Somerset, which a young Barnsley had drawn and painted, winning a Silver Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1886.¹⁸ While today the church is often ignored in the broader narrative of the Arts and Craft movement and the so-called 'Byzantine revival',¹⁹ this was not the case at the time of its construction. The 'honest' use of material and the organization of the work (builders, mosaicists) under Barnsley was presented as a case study of good practice by Schultz years later in his lectures *Reason in Building* (1909).²⁰ Its construction (1891–2) anticipates the more famous Westminster Cathedral (1895–1903), while it shared with it the mosaic chronology and its makers and materials.

However, the Wisdom of God not only looks to the Byzantine and Western medieval past, but also contains some Byzantine sculptures, an aspect that may seem at odds with the ethic of many members of the Arts and Crafts movement, especially after the foundation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877 by William Morris and Philip Webb, of which Barnsley was certainly aware.

Freshfield accompanied the donation of his Byzantine capitals with a Memorandum published in 1903 by the Society of Antiquaries of London.²¹ It contains information about the capitals' provenance, and includes an essay on the evolution of Byzantine capitals ornament, a topic he returned to in a lecture in 1909.²² The capitals were the property of Freshfield and his wife, Zoë Hanson, who brought them from Constantinople and Ephesos and preserved them in their garden until she died and Freshfield donated them to the church, where they are still to be seen on the western façade (fig. 1d).²³

This article does not aim at being a critical edition of the Memorandum, a task for another occasion, nor at solving the issue of Freshfield's involvement in the complex panorama of the rising scholarship in Byzantine studies. Rather, these capitals contribute to define Freshfield's multifaceted image as antiquarian, collector, solicitor,

17 Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 77; *The Church of the Wisdom of God*, 7–9. On the reconstruction of Freshfield's network and the mosaicist in St Paul's Cathedral, see Brandon, *The Lost Jewel*, 84–101.

18 Brandon, *The Lost Jewel*, 6–15, Appendices C–D. Mentions of the drawings feature in three articles in *The British Architect* on 26 March 1886; 16 April 1886; 23 April 1886. R. W. Schultz, 'Reason in Building' in T. R. Davison (ed.), *The Arts Connected with Building* (London 1909) 37.

19 An exception is Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 166–8.

20 R. W. Schultz, 'Reason in Building', 3–40.

21 E. Freshfield, *A Memorandum giving a short account of the Byzantine Capitals placed in the Church of the Wisdom of God, Lower Kingswood* (1903). Some of the capitals mentioned there have been studied by Rowena Loverance, in D. Buckton (ed.), *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (London 1994) 56 n. 42, 91, cat. nos 92–3.

22 Byzantine Research Fund (BRF) – Athens, BRF offprint publications, BRF press cuttings, 'The Builder, 29th May 1909'.

23 Freshfield, *A Memorandum*, 1.

and patron in a changing world at the dawn of the twentieth century. His interest in Constantinople was lifelong, as we shall see.

Freshfield and Byzantine Constantinople: the manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries of London (*Jessica Varsallona*)

To contextualize Freshfield's interest in Byzantium and preoccupation with the antiquities of Constantinople, it is necessary to introduce an unpublished manuscript now held in the archives of the Society of Antiquaries; Freshfield was a member of the council, treasurer, and president for many years.²⁴ A cover letter dated March 1891 and addressed to the assistant secretary of the Society, John Hope, specifies that this manuscript was originally written for the late William Church, Dean of St Paul's. He was a friend of Freshfield, who was also among the vice presidents of the St Paul Ecclesiological Society.²⁵ To it, in 1881, Freshfield delivered a paper on the antiquities of Constantinople and used pictures and a map to illustrate the presentation. The latter is probably the same one mentioned in the cover letter of the manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries in London. To John Hope, in addition to the manuscripts and the letter, Freshfield also sent his map, but specifically asked that it be returned. It is possible that this map is the one now in the BSA collection, where a note on the rear specifies that Freshfield's son (Edwin Hanson) donated it in 1920.²⁶ On the map, Freshfield referenced all the buildings mentioned by Alexandros G. Paspates' monograph,²⁷ together with the page numbers. In fact, Paspates was his main source of information for the monuments and topography of Byzantine Constantinople, and the manuscript of the Society mirrors this. As stated in his obituary of 1892, Paspates was a friend of Freshfield, who praised him for his knowledge of Constantinople, good character, and command of languages.²⁸

The manuscript at the Society of Antiquaries describes the edifices of Byzantine Constantinople in two different sections: 'churches' and 'secular buildings.' This separation is a false dichotomy, dividing complexes that should generally be explored together (such as the churches of Stoudios/Imrahor Camii, Myrelaion/Bodrum Camii, and Pantokrator/Zeyrek Camii from their cisterns). However, it clearly demonstrates

24 Society of Antiquaries of London, FRC formerly known as MS 829, *Lists and papers rel to Christian churches and other building in Constantinople*; P.J. Willetts, *Catalogue of manuscripts in the Society of Antiquaries of London* (Woodbridge 2000) 394, n. 829.

25 *Transactions of the St. Paul's Ecclesiological Society* I (London, 1881–5), XII, XXXVI, 169, iii.

26 Rare Map C 26 Stolpe's Plan of Constantinople (with annotations), digitized at https://www.bsa.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/MapC26_Constantinople.jpg.

27 A.G. Paspates, *Βυζαντιναί μελέται* (Constantinople 1877). See also R. Ousterhout, 'The rediscovery of Constantinople and the beginning of Byzantine archaeology: a historiographic survey', in Z. Bahrani, Z. Çelik, E. Eldem (eds.), *Scramble for the Past. A story of Archaeology in The Ottoman Empire, 1753–1914* (Istanbul 2011) 181–211 (195).

28 E. Freshfield, 'Dr Paspatis', *The Athenaeum* 3351 (1892) 92.

that Freshfield's interest was primarily in the Christian antiquities of Constantinople. Freshfield arranged the two sections in a topographical order, like a sort of tourist guide – he also explained in certain cases how to reach these monuments. After all, he had visited Istanbul on various occasions, and the manuscript reminds us that he was there in 1880 and 1890. In all likelihood, the manuscript was written in 1890–1, as the date of the cover letter indicates, when the church of the Wisdom of God was commissioned.

The manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries is important because it gives information about sites that have since disappeared and their preservation, notwithstanding a series of inaccuracies about the identification and dating of the buildings. Examples include the monuments in the alleged area of the monastery of Kyra Martha, or the lost sculptural decoration and paintings from the complexes of the mosques of Sekbanbaşı, Atik Mustafa Paşa, Sancaktar, and Kefeli. These sculptural fragments, if not lost, are now probably in collections around the world with generic labels.

Moreover, the manuscript mirrors Freshfield's activity in relation to the enhancement of Byzantine studies. A long section is devoted to the church of SS. Sergios and Bakchos/Küçük Ayasofya and its architectural relation with St Vitale in Ravenna, which are topics that he published in 1880 and 1885.²⁹ As indicated in the manuscript, Paspates did not have the chance to visit the former church of Kalenderhane Camii. Thus, Freshfield's description is a sort of 'first-hand material'. Also in this case, he visited the building in 1880, delivered a paper in 1881, and published his results in an article in 1897.³⁰ Slightly later, Alexander Van Millingen remembered the role of Freshfield in the study of the Kalenderhane, together with his generosity as founder (1908) and president of the Byzantine Research Fund at the BSA.³¹ It would be interesting to know if Van Millingen was aware of Freshfield's manuscript, its original purpose, and what his opinion about it was. As we shall see, Van Millingen and Freshfield were not always on the same page concerning Byzantine antiquities.

In addition, the manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries confirms Freshfield's interest in the contemporaneous developments of church architecture in England in connection to the Byzantine revival and the Orthodox communities. When he

29 E. Freshfield, 'On the Byzantine origin of the Church of St. Vitalis in Ravenna, with remarks on other churches in that City', *Archaeologia: or Miscellaneous tracts relating to antiquity* 45.2 (1880) 417–26; 'The Little Mosque of Santa Sophia', *The Athenaeum* 3016 (1885) 217.

30 E. Freshfield, 'Notes on the church now called the Mosque of the Kalenders at Constantinople', 431–8.

31 A. Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople. Their history and architecture* (London 1912) 183–7, 92. Together with Freshfield, Van Millingen obtained a permit for W.S. George to study Hagia Eirene. Freshfield sponsored the publication of these results (London 1912), and Van Millingen wrote a preface. See A. Taddei, 'Remarks on the decorative wall-mosaics of Saint Eirene at Constantinople' in M. Şahin, *Mosaics of Turkey and Parallel Developments in the Rest of the Ancient and Medieval World: questions of iconography, style and technique from the beginnings of mosaic until the late Byzantine era* (Istanbul 2011) 883–96 (883–4 with bibliography).

described the building of Vefa Kilise Camii in Istanbul, Freshfield noted that the Orthodox church of St Nicholas at Toxteth, Liverpool (1870, W&J Hay–Henry Sumners) was a copy of it.³² In the 1870s, Freshfield was also the legal adviser of the committee for the new Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Divine Wisdom in London (Bayswater), built between 1874 and 1879.³³ Thus, at the time of the commission of the church of the Wisdom of God at Lower Kingswood in 1891, Freshfield had already had the opportunity to observe and perhaps reflect on the developments of the neo-Byzantine style in England.

Finally, another passage of the manuscript informs us about one of the main drivers of Freshfield's interest in Byzantium. While describing the monastery of St John of Stoudios, Freshfield underlined the importance of this monastic community in Constantinople for the creation of hymns still in use in the Church of England.³⁴ Though further investigation is needed, it seems clear that through Byzantium, Freshfield was also looking for the origins of his own Anglican faith.

For the purposes of this study, it is relevant to note that, as in the Memorandum, in the manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries, Freshfield mentioned one of his Byzantine capitals now at Lower Kingswood, that of the Boğdan Sarayı. However, as we shall see, among all his capitals, this is the only one mentioned in this manuscript. The famous album of drawings dated to 1574 (now known as the 'Freshfield Album') with the representations of some of the Constantinopolitan monuments, which he purchased and which his son then donated to Trinity College, Cambridge, is the only other item of his collection that he mentioned here (in the section about Arkadios' Column).³⁵ How did Freshfield obtain these objects? What does the emphasis on the capital from the Boğdan Sarayı mean?

32 The circumstances related to the construction of this building are still unclear and require additional investigation. Records of the activity of Culshaw's and Sumners' firm are now at the Lancashire Archives, but in this collection, there are no drawings of St Nicholas at Toxteth, which was probably designed only by Sumners. <https://archivecat.lancashire.gov.uk/calmview/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=DDX+162> [accessed 8th June 2023] On Culshaw and Sumners, J. Sharples, 'William Culshaw (1807–74) and Henry Sumners (1825–95): rebuilding Victorian Liverpool', in C. Webster, *The Practice of Architecture. Eight architects, 1830–1930* (Reading 2012) 49–78.

33 Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 49.

34 *Lists and papers rel to Christian churches*. Freshfield, A *Memorandum*, 5. Through his translations of Greek hymns, the Ecclesiologist John Mason Neale (1818–1866) had already promoted Anglican-Orthodox connections: S. Drain, Neale, John Mason, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19824> [accessed 22 November 2023].

35 E.H. Freshfield, 'Some Sketches made in Constantinople in 1574', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 (1929) 519–22. On the album, N. Westbrook, 'The Freshfield Folio view of the Hippodrome in Istanbul and the Church of St. John Diipion', in G. Nathan and L. Garland (eds.), *Basileia: essays on imperium and culture. In honour of E.M. Jeffreys and M.J. Jeffreys* (Leiden 2011) 231–62.

The capital from the Boğdan Sarayı, Istanbul (Jessica Varsallona)

Within the church of the Wisdom of God, close to the northern limit of the apse, there is a small Byzantine capital (height: 28cm; width: 18cm; depth: 20cm) that, according to Freshfield's Memorandum (and the manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries), comes from the area of the Boğdan Sarayı in Istanbul (fig. 2a). The main elements of its carved decoration are four angular acanthus leaves that meet at the centre of each side of the capital, creating oval and triangular shapes. On the top, at the centre, between the abacus and the volutes (now reduced to flat leaves), each side of the capital shows a bulging heart. On one side, a large circular carved area frames a monogram or a combination of letters, which will be discussed in the following sections.

For Freshfield there was a connection between the Boğdan Sarayı and the Constantinopolitan church of 'St Nicholas of the English'. This common belief at the time derived from the Reverend C.G. Curtis, chaplain of the Crimean Memorial Christ Church, Istanbul since 1868. Curtis was passionate about the Varangians and the presence of the Anglo-Saxon *militia* in Constantinople. In his notes on *Broken Bits of Byzantium*, Curtis wrote that the alleged Church of St Nicholas was founded by an Anglo-Saxon nobleman in the eleventh century.³⁶ Curtis is also mentioned in the Freshfield Memorandum:

It is believed to have some reference to the church of the English regiment of the Varangian Guards, called St Nicholas of the English, from which church the capital came. I brought it from the wall of a building, which the late Canon Charles G. Curtis, of Constantinople, said was the church of St Nicholas, myself, and to that extent I can testify to where it came from.³⁷

The manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries informs us about Freshfield's attentive eye; he noted at Boğdan Sarayı the presence of traces of painting, together with an 'iron hook of a lamp' on the walls of the building. But while Freshfield said in his Memorandum that he took the capital directly from a wall of the Boğdan Sarayı, in this manuscript, he stated instead:

36 C.G. Curtis, *Broken Bits of Byzantium* (London 1869–91) II, pl. 42. Thanks to the late Claudia Barsanti, who was working towards a critical edition of this material, modern scholarship has rediscovered *Broken Bits* as a valuable source for the study of Byzantine Constantinople. See C. Barsanti and A. Paribeni, 'Broken Bits of Byzantium: frammenti di un puzzle archeologico nella Costantinopoli di fine Ottocento', in A. Calzona, R. Campari, and M. Mussini (eds.), *Immagine e ideologia. Studi in onore di Arturo Carlo Quintavalle* (Milan 2007) 550–65 (556). See also C. Barsanti, 'Restes de la reine des villes/Broken bits of Byzantium. Introduction à l'édition critique', *Eurasian Studies* 10 (2012) 127–52 (132–3); and 'Restes de la reine des villes/Broken bits of Byzantium. Introduction à l'édition critique. Deuxième partie. Con una nota introduttiva di Andrea Paribeni' in S. Pedone and A. Paribeni (eds.), *Di Bisanzio dirai ciò che è passato, ciò che passa e che sarà. Scritti in onore di Alessandra Guiglia*, I (Rome 2018) 235–49 (236; 243–4).

37 Freshfield, *A Memorandum*, 5–6.

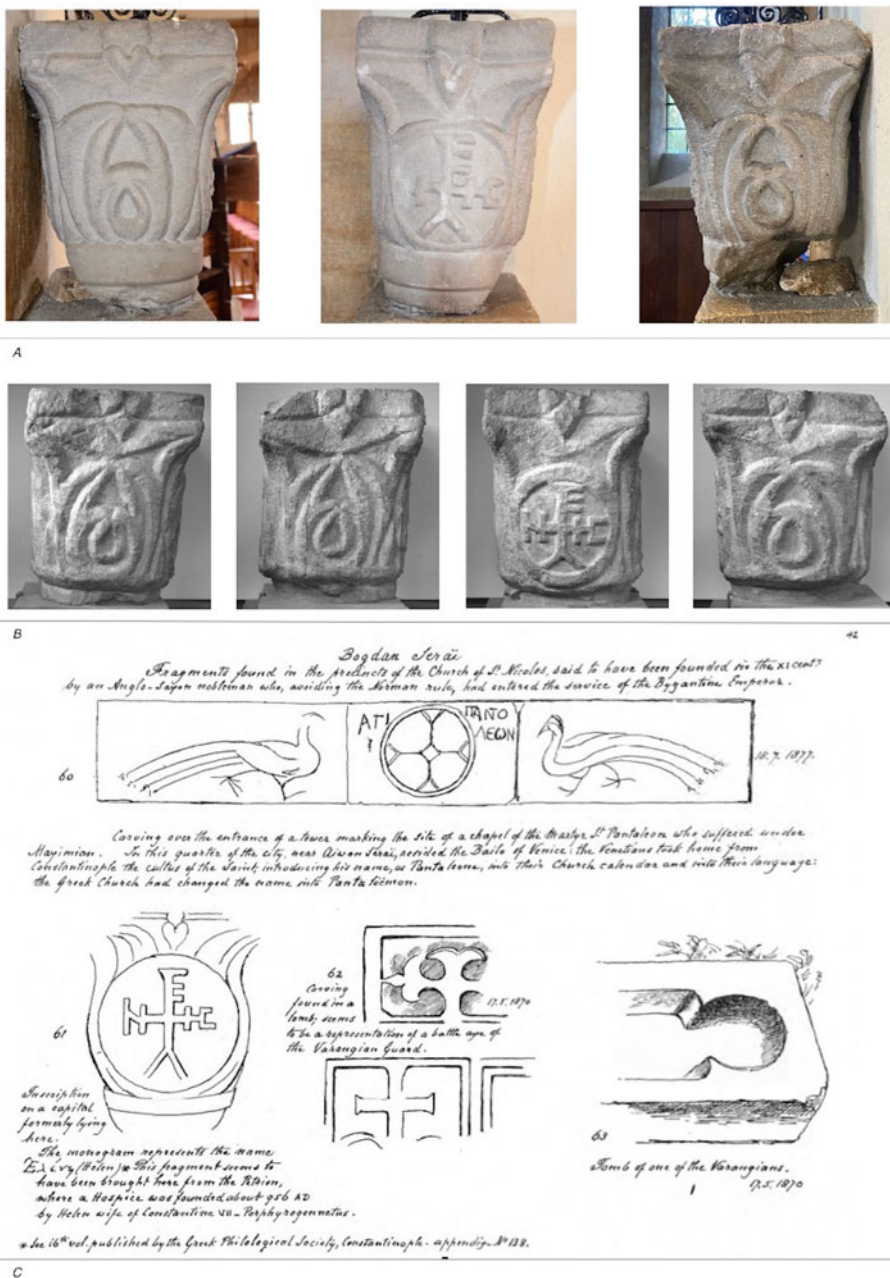


Fig 2. Sculptural materials from the Boğdan Sarayı. A) Byzantine Capital, Constantinople, 13th–15th c., Lower Kingswood (Surrey), Church of the Holy Wisdom of God (photographs by the Authors); B) Byzantine Capital, Constantinople, 13th–15th c., Paris, Musée du Louvre, MNC 1159; Ma 3055, Département des Antiquités grecques, étrusques et romaines, <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010276833> [accessed 11 October 2023]; C) C.G. Curtis, *Broken Bits of Byzantium*, London 1869–1891) II, pl. 42.

I found in the garden a broken capital of white marble and late Byzantine design which I have at home.³⁸

The reasons for these divergences are not clear. Many years had passed between the writing of the manuscript (1891) and the Memorandum (1903), and Freshfield might have forgotten the details. Moreover, Freshfield's and Curtis' data does not align with our current understanding of the Boğdan Sarayı today. Recent scholarship no longer supports any connection between the Byzantine church and the English tradition, which linked Curtis' and Freshfield's revived interest for the medieval past to the definition of English identity. Boğdan Sarayı is the only existing example of a semi-independent palace chapel in Constantinople.³⁹ It was a lavish oratory, at some point with a funerary purpose, and it was originally annexed to a now lost aristocratic palace.⁴⁰ The name Boğdan Sarayı refers to the transformation of this aristocratic building into the Moldavian embassy, the purpose for which it was used from the sixteenth century until 1784, when a fire destroyed it.⁴¹ The complex was first the property of the Raoul family, who sold the building in 1520 to Michael Kantakouzenos, who in turn sold it to a Moldavian prince. What remains today is only the lower floor of the chapel of this former complex. This building was probably the church dedicated to the Virgin first and then to St Nicholas that John Kallimachis donated in 1760 to the Russian monastery of St Panteleimon on Athos.

The remaining chapel measures 9 × 4 m, and its apse points north, which is unusual for Constantinopolitan churches.⁴² In Paspates' lithograph of 1877, it is still possible to see parts of the joining walls on the southeast side.⁴³ Van Millingen's pictures still show the upper floor of the building and the low dome probably built in the Ottoman period.⁴⁴ Its orientation toward the north, the presence of a lower floor interpreted as a funerary crypt with three sarcophagi facing east, and the remains of the altar placement

38 Until mid-2023, on the Web, it was possible to watch an amateur video made before cleaning of the area, which showed a group of people 'finding' an additional late Byzantine capital in site of the Boğdan Sarayı. This video has now been removed.

39 S. Eyice, *Istanbul, Petit guide à travers les monuments byzantins et turcs* (Istanbul 1955) 73, no. 104; T.F. Mathews, *The Byzantine Churches of Istanbul. A Photographic Survey* (London 1976) 36–9; W. Müller-Wiener, *İstanbul'un Tarihsel Topografyası. 17. Yüzyıl Başlarına Kadar Byzantion-Konstantinopolis-İstanbul* [1977] (Istanbul 2016) 108; S. Eyice, *Son devir Bizans mimarisi* (Istanbul 1980) 43–5; V. Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel 1204–1328: Verfall und Zerstörung, Restaurierung, Umbau und Neubau von Profan- und Sakralbauten* (Wiesbaden 1994) 143–4; V. Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual in the Churches of Constantinople. Ninth to Fifteenth Centuries* (New York 2014) 129–30.

40 Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches* 280–7; J. Papadopoulos, 'Note sur quelques découvertes récentes faites à Constantinople', *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres - Comptes Rendues* 64 (1920) 59–66 (63–5); R. Janin, *La Géographie Ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantin, Première partie, Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat (Ecuménique, Tome III, Les églises et les monastères* (Paris 1953) 442–3.

41 Janin, *La Géographie*, 384–5.

42 Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, 129.

43 Paspates, *Boğdan Sarayı* 360.

44 Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, plate LXXX.

suggested the identification of the space as a former memorial chapel.⁴⁵ Raymond Janin, who also erroneously dated the building to the tenth or eleventh centuries, firstly associated the monument with St John of Petra – as had Van Millingen, following Andreas David Mordtmann – but did not confirm this hypothesis in later publications.⁴⁶ The building is indeed very close to other structures dated (at least partially) to the Byzantine period, such as the Kasım Ağa Mescidi, the site of the Odalar Camii, and the Kefeli Mescidi, which on different occasions have been interpreted as part of the important monastery of St John of Petra.⁴⁷ As with the other buildings just mentioned, the masonry of the Boğdan Sarayı is late Byzantine and highly refined.⁴⁸ In particular, the multifaceted apse confirms its attribution to the Palaiologan period (1261–1453).⁴⁹

Exploring Boğdan Sarayı today means dealing with fragments. Until a couple of years ago, its ruins were exposed to the elements and often vandalized. Now, the structure has been cleared and is surrounded by a park. Parts of the pictorial decoration mentioned in early literature about the monument still exist, though in very poor condition.⁵⁰ Fragments of mural paintings can just be seen on the surfaces of a space between the eastern walls. On the western wall, it is possible to see a fragment of a white marble cornice interrupted on its inner side. It looks like a part of a standard string-course cornice, but the relationship between its positioning and the division of the building floors, as illustrated by Van Millingen,⁵¹ does not correspond, especially if the string-course cornice continued initially inside the building. According to Paspates' drawing and old pictures of the outer side from the east, no string-course cornice was visible from the external sidewalls.⁵² Old pictures document the building's eastern side

45 Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, 280–7; Papadopoulos, 'Note sur quelques découvertes récentes', 63–65; Janin, *La Géographie*, 442–3.

46 Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, 282; R. Janin, 'Les sanctuaires du quartier de Pétra (Constantinople)', *EO* 34 (1935) 402–13 (408–9); R. Janin, 'Les sanctuaires du quartier de Pétra (Constantinople) (fin)', *EO* 35 (1936), 51–66 (55–62); Janin *La Géographie*, 443.

47 N. Asutay-Effenberger, 'Das Kloster des Ioannes Prodromos τῆς Πέτρας in Konstantinopel und seine Beziehung zur Odalar und Kasım Ağa Camii', *Millennium* 5 (2008) 299–325; C. Barsanti, 'Una ricerca sulle sculture in opera nelle cisterne bizantine di Istanbul: la Ipek Bodrum Sarnici (la cisterna n. 10)', in A. Rigo, A. Babuin, and M. Trizio (eds.), *Vie per Bisanzio. VII Congresso Nazionale dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini, Venezia, 25–28 novembre 2009*, I (Bari 2013) 477–508; J. Varsallona, 'Kefeli Mescidi in Istanbul. A preliminary analysis of its features and historical context', *Eurasian Studies* 20.1 (2022) 69–87.

48 S. Eyice, *Son devir Bizans mimarisi* (Istanbul 1980) 43–5.

49 Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, 129–130. E. Zanini, 'Materiali e tecniche costruttive nell'architettura paleologa a Costantinopoli: un approccio archeologico', in A. Iacobini and M. della Valle (eds), *L'arte di Bisanzio e l'Italia al tempo dei Paleologi 1261–1453* (Rome 1999) 301–20.

50 Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, 285.

51 Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, 287, fig. 98.

52 Paspates, *Βυζαντιναί μελέται*, 360; Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, plate LXXX; Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, 130.

but, unfortunately, only after the dismantling of the upper floor.⁵³ Since it is not a structural element, the fragment lets us hypothesize, as for other Constantinopolitan buildings of the same period, on the reuse of marble *spolia* for the construction of the Boğdan Sarayı. It is difficult to establish if the Lower Kingswood capital was one of these *spolia*, perhaps adapted and re-carved, or a brand-new item. As we shall see, stylistic analysis suggests a late Byzantine date, which would correspond to the construction of the Boğdan Sarayı.

A twin capital at the Louvre and the Hellenic Literary Society of Constantinople (Jessica Varsallona)

In 1920, M.J. Papadopoulos (headmaster of the Lycée Français in Pera) reported that German 'archaeologists' had performed an illegal excavation at Boğdan Sarayı, and that the estate owner had illegally traded the resulting artefacts beginning in 1918.⁵⁴ Papadopoulos stated that the Patriarch himself had intervened to put an end to this pillage, but evidently, it was too late. There are obvious reasons to believe that this sale started long before 1918, but the capital now in Lower Kingswood is not the only victim of this trade in the early twentieth century. In fact, the Louvre had acquired a capital in 1886, which is a sort of twin of that at Lower Kingswood (height: 22 cm; width: 19cm; depth: 17cm).⁵⁵ This item was registered as a gift by Mgr Gabriel, grand vicar of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Istanbul (fig. 2b). Durand and Brooks stylistically dated the Louvre capital to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, while Moutafov proposed to date it to the fifteenth century, based on the reading of its monogram in connection with the name 'Helena' and thus, the empress Helena Dragaš, wife of Manuel II Palaiologos (r. 1391–1425). In 1395, Manuel II and his wife left 500 *hyperpyra* to the monastery of St John of Petra. Helena was a Serbian princess, daughter of Constantin Dejanović, and the monastery of St John of Petra was restored after 1308 by her great-great-grandfather, king Milutin (r. 1253–1321). As mentioned, the area identified as that of the monastery of Petra is not so far from the Boğdan Sarayı. However, Manuel II and Helena specifically designated their donation for funerary liturgies in memory of the princess' father, who died in that year at the Battle of Rovine in the service of Sultan Bayezid I. Thus, though Moutafov tried to connect the Paris capital to a hypothetical reconstruction of Petra sponsored by Helena, this cannot be securely demonstrated: sources inform us only about a monetary gift with a different purpose.

53 Mathews, *Byzantine Churches*, 36–9.

54 Papadopoulos, 'Note sur quelques découvertes récentes', 63–5; Janin *La Géographie*, 442–3.

55 J. Durand, *Byzance : L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, 6 novembre 1992 - 1er février 1993 (Paris 1992), 432, n. 321. S. Brooks, 'Capital with monogram', in H.C. Evans (ed.), *Byzantium Faith and Power 1261–1557. The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New Haven 2004) 112, no. 57; E.S. Moutafov, 'A Byzantine monogram of a lady on a marble capital from the Louvre', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire de l'Art* 51 (2014) 129–35. See also A. Héron de Villefosse, *Catalogue sommaire des marbres antiques* (Paris 1922) 181.

About the monogram (and in connection to the Lower Kingswood item), Melvani wrote that the capital might relate to a female member of the Raoul family named Helena, if the previous scholarship was correct about the identification of the Boğdan Sarayı, and that it was possibly part of a former chapel *templon*.⁵⁶ However, though the small sizes of the capitals mirror the miniature size of the private chapel, thus supporting the idea of their realization *ad hoc* (rather than reuse) and provenance from the small annex, a relation of the capitals with the destroyed palace rather than the chapel cannot be excluded. If so, they would provide a rare witness to secular architectural decoration of one of the aristocratic palaces of Constantinople in the early Palaiologan period. Unfortunately, further clarification is not possible with the available data.

Loverance has already underlined the analogy of the Paris capital, for style and dimensions, with the almost identical capital now displayed in Freshfield's church at Lower Kingswood and their provenance from the Boğdan Sarayı.⁵⁷ At this point, the illustrations from *Broken Bits of Byzantium* (most of which were made by Mary Adelaide Walker, Curtis' sister) prove even more useful than the text.⁵⁸ Four of them refer to materials associated with the Boğdan Sarayı. Probably because of Curtis' proposed 'English connection', the sarcophagus and the fragment in drawings 62 and 63 (both dated 17.5.1870) are interpreted as '...a representation of a battle axe of the Varangians Guard' and the 'Tomb of one of the Varangians'. Perhaps these were part of the sarcophagi mentioned by Papadopoulos and brought to light during the illegal excavations. The adjacent undated sketch 61 indeed confirms the provenance of the Surrey and Paris capital from the Boğdan Sarayı, as it represents the same typology of capital and monogram (fig. 2c). Unless there were more than two almost identical capitals from this site, the characteristics of the capital represented in *Broken Bits of Byzantium* seem to coincide with the one now at Lower Kingswood. In fact, the sketch includes the two lower bands below the monogram, which are missing in the Paris item but not in Freshfield's one. If this is the case, one might speculate that the personal connection between Rev. Curtis and Freshfield might have played a role in purchasing the capital.

In *Broken Bits of Byzantium*, the caption to drawing 61– that representing the capital – reads:

Inscription on a capital formerly lying here. The monogram represents the name 'Ελένη (Helen)* This fragment seems to have been brought here from the Petrion, where a Hospice was founded about 956 AD by Helen wife of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus.

56 N. Melvani, *Late Byzantine Sculpture* (Turnhout 2013) 183, no.12, 193.

57 R. Loverance, '211 - Marble capital', in D. Buckton (ed.), *Byzantium. Treasures of Byzantine Art*, 197.

58 Curtis, *Broken Bits*, pl. II, figs 60–3. Barsanti, 'Restes de la reine des villes', 130–2.

*See 15th vol. published by the Greek Philological Society, Constantinople - appendix n. 138.

This interpretation, which is also based on the hypothetical reading of the monogram as that of 'a' Helena, refers to a publication dated 1885.⁵⁹ The topographic mention of the *Petrian* reinforces the difficulties in determining the actual extension of the large monastic complex of Petra. The date of the referenced publication suggests that drawing 61 – or perhaps just its caption – was made at least fifteen years later than drawings 62 and 63 (17.5.1870).⁶⁰ The caption also tells us that the capital was no longer *in situ*. As mentioned, the Paris capital reached France in 1886; though the Memorandum generically dates the acquisition of the Byzantine capitals of Lower Kingswood between 1861 and 1902, the manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries suggests that the acquisition of the one from Boğdan Sarayı happened between the 1880s and 1891. This makes the date of Freshfield's acquisition from the Boğdan Sarayı close to the date of the gift of the Louvre capital.

At this point, one might suspect that all the emphasis that Freshfield put on underlining the authenticity of this capital, both in the manuscript and the Memorandum, relates to the suspicion that copies of Byzantine artefacts were circulating and even sold as original. Did Freshfield know of the existence of another almost identical capital? Was someone dubious about the originality of one of these capitals? With his words in the manuscript and the Memorandum, Freshfield seems willing to certify the provenance and authenticity of his piece.

After all, in the same communication that referred to the illegal selling of objects from Boğdan Sarayı, Papadopoulos clearly stated that: 'Quant aux objets en ivoire dont M. Wiegand a enrichi le Musée de Berlin, tous sont faux, fabriqués par une bande de faussaires qui ont leur atelier dans le grand Bazar.'⁶¹

This suggests the presence of forgers, a market of fake Byzantine ivory objects in Istanbul, and international buyers on behalf of European institutions. We cannot exclude the possibility that the same was happening with Byzantine sculptural fragments.⁶²

Based on the Louvre records, 'Mgr Gabriel' donated the capital, together with two Constantinopolitan bricks with brickstamps.⁶³ The inventory records of the Louvre indicate André Leval as the intermediary of this transaction. Leval was a

59 En Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος, Σύγγραμμα Περιοδικόν 15, 1881–2 (1885), appendix 138, 33–4.

60 Drawing 60 is instead dated 18.7.1877.

61 Papadopoulos, 'Note sur quelques découvertes récentes', 61.

62 I thank Leslie Brubaker, who pointed me in the direction of copies and forgers.

63 An initial search through the archives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople has been unsuccessful for the identification of 'Monsignor Gabriel'. His two bricks are recorded as MNC 1160 and MNC 1161 in the Louvre inventories. I thank Laura Favreau of the Museum of the Louvre for having facilitated the research by sharing the related inventorial data and reports, and specifically the minute of the Commission des Musées Nationaux dated 4th November 1886, where it is possible to read the details about this acquisition.

Constantinopolitan scholar particularly interested in the antiquities of his city, specifically its inscriptions. Among his publications, one can find a photographic album of Chora/Kariye Camii, and articles on the epigraphic records of Constantinople, including an inscription located close to the church of Sts Sergios and Bakchos/Küçük Ayasofya (1887).⁶⁴ This building was particularly dear to Freshfield, who visited it at least in 1881 and published a short article on it in 1885.⁶⁵ In a publication of the Hellenic Literary Society of Constantinople, dated 1888 but written in August 1886, Leval informs us that Manuel Gedeon, the archivist of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, donated two bricks (with brickstamps) from the land walls of Constantinople to the Louvre in July 1886,⁶⁶ only one month before the gift of Monsignor Gabriel. Leval probably was not aware of the imminent gift of Mgr Gabriel, but Leval, Gedeon, and possibly Gabriel (like Paspates) were members of the Hellenic Literary Society of Constantinople, which is the ‘Greek Philological Society’ mentioned on the caption of drawing 61 of *Broken Bits of Byzantium*, and thus, the missing knot in this archaeological journey from Constantinople to France and England.

The Hellenic Literary Society of Constantinople was established in 1861, gathered experts in the humanities from the Ottoman Empire and abroad (Europe), and had its own collection of antiquities.⁶⁷ Leval, Gedeon, Van Millingen, Mordtmann, and Curtis were among the members of its Archaeological committee, and the latter even became its president. Edwin Freshfield was among the corresponding members from 1877, and in 1880 donated a series of twenty-four photographs of antiquities and former Byzantine churches of Constantinople to the society.⁶⁸ In sum, though the specific passages of the Surrey-Paris transactions are still missing, it is clear that the

64 A. Leval, ‘Inscription grecque de Constantinople’, *Revue Archéologique* 8 (1886) 45; A. Leval, ‘Inscription de Constantinople’, *Revue Archéologique* 9 (1887) 347–50; A. Leval, *Catalogue explicatif des principales mosaïques peintures et sculptures existant à Kabrié-Djami à Constantinople et photographiées par Pascal Sébah* (Constantinople 1886).

65 Freshfield, ‘The Little Mosque of Santa Sophia’, 217.

66 A. Leval, ‘Αρχαιολογικά’, *Εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος, Σύγγραμμα Περιοδικόν. Εικοσιπενταετηρίς 1861–1886* (1888) 615–20. According to J. Bardill, *Brickstamps of Constantinople* (Oxford 2004) I.64, at the Louvre, there is the record of Gedeon’s gift (July 1886), but the items cannot be located. Their inventory number is MNC 1162 and MNC 1163.

67 On the society, A. Papatheodorou, ‘The Hellenic Literary Society at Constantinople between Ottomanism and Greek irredentism’, *Yıllık - Annual of Istanbul Studies* 4 (2022) 115–19 and ‘Ottoman policy-making in an age of reforms: unearthing Ottoman archaeology in the 19th and early 20th centuries’, DPhil diss., University of Oxford 2017, esp. ch. 4. I thank Dr Papatheodorou for sharing her unpublished work with me, which has been crucial in reconstructing Freshfield’s contacts in Istanbul.

68 Papatheodorou, ‘Ottoman policy-making’, 311. Another member of the Society was Albert Solin-Dorigny. In 1874, he donated three Constantinopolitan bricks (from the area out of the west entrance of Hagia Sophia) to the Musée des Antiquités Nationales de Saint-Germain-en-Laye in Paris, thus demonstrating a common pattern of collection-donation of some of the international members of the society. Bardill, *Brickstamps of Constantinople*, 159 and C. Barsanti, ‘Un taccuino di disegni costantinopolitani al Victoria & Albert Museum di Londra’, in O. Brandt and P. Pergola, *Marmoribus vestita: miscellanea in onore di Federico Guidobaldi* (Vatican City 2011) 136–57 (156). Solin-Dorigny

Hellenic Literary Society of Constantinople is the *trait d'union* between Freshfield, Gabriel and the Boğdan Sarayı, the capital(s) of which were well known to among the members of the Society. In fact, its features and provenance were collectively debated and then published in the Society's journal. Similarly, in 1873, the annual publication generically mentioned a drawing of the Society's album, which later ended up in Freshfield's collection as the Freshfield Album.⁶⁹ As we have seen, this is the only other item of his collection mentioned in the manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

In sum, willingly or not, the Hellenic Literary Society of Constantinople had an impact on the development of the private and public collections of Byzantine antiquities throughout Europe. Though the preservation of the material heritage of Istanbul from dispersion was of utmost importance and among the core goals of the society,⁷⁰ its intellectual activities constantly updated its members' knowledge about erratic finds in Constantinople, shaped the taste, and broadened the options for collectors and directors of museums, such as Charles Newton of the British Museum and Theodor Wiegand of the Royal Museum in Berlin, who were among its members.⁷¹ The extent of this impact, the dynamics, and the legislative framework of these exchanges still need to be understood.

The capitals from the Blachernai (*Flavia Vanni*)

Among Freshfield's collectables from Constantinople, there are also three capitals that were 'brought' from the area of the Palace of the Blachernai, as we know from the Memorandum. We will focus here on two of them, currently unpublished, whose chronology and original location still need to be established and discussed in light of recent developments in the study of Constantinopolitan topography.

Freshfield took the first capital (figs. 3a-b) 'in the platform upon which the Imperial palace of the Blachernae stood, in the western quarter of Constantinople, now called the Aivan Serai'; in particular in the 'Gate of the Palace called *Ypsili*, which led to the Imperial Church of the Blachernae'.⁷²

The Gate *Ypsili* is mentioned in Pseudo-Kodinos as *Ta Hypsela* (The High Places), the gate connecting the Palace to the church of the Blachernai.⁷³ Magdalino locates it on the hill south of the *hagiasma* of the Blachernai, suggesting that it was a tall

made donations of antiquities to the Louvre as well, Héron de Villefosse, *Catalogue*, 135, 156–8, 159, and 181.

69 Papatheodorou, 'Ottoman policy-making', 319.

70 Papatheodorou, 'Ottoman policy-making', 295–345.

71 Papatheodorou, 'Ottoman policy-making', 306–7.

72 Freshfield, *A Memorandum*, 5.

73 Pseudo-Kodinos, *Treatise on Offices*, ed. R. Macrides, J. A. Munitiz, D. Angelov (Farham, 2013) 97, 181 n. 508, 199, 374; R. Macrides, 'The citadel of Byzantine Constantinople', in S. Redford and N. Ergin (eds), *Cities and Citadels in Turkey: from the Iron Age to the Seljuks* (Leuven 2013) 280, 288.



Fig 3. Lyre Capital from the Blachernai area and comparisons. A) Lyre Capital, Blachernai area, Constantinople, 5th-6th c., Lower Kingswood (Surrey), Church of the Holy Wisdom of God (photographs by the Authors); B) Lyre Capital from the Blachernai area as it appears in Freshfield's Memorandum (1903); C) Lyre capital, 5th-6th c., Ayasofya courtyard (after Guiglia, Barsanti, Paribeni 2008).

structure with a towered gatehouse.⁷⁴ However, this was not the location Freshfield went to at the time.

As already noted, during his visits to Istanbul, Freshfield surely followed Paspates' volume (1877) to identify Byzantine monuments, as we can see by both the structure of the manuscript of the Society of Antiquaries in London of 1891 and the map now at the BSA.⁷⁵

Paspates identified *Ta Hypsela* gate as a big gate on Aivaz Efendi Street.⁷⁶ The street does not appear on Freshfield's map, which is not detailed enough, showing only Aivaz Efendi Camii. Nonetheless, thanks to the more detailed insurance map of Jacques Pervititch (1929), we can locate Aivaz Efendi Street (Caddesi) running next to the homonymous mosque, which allows us to say that it corresponds to today's Dervişkade Sokak.⁷⁷ Paspates identified the Blachernai church with the area of the Aivaz Efendi Camii (today İvas Efendi Camii), a hypothesis already discarded by Van Millingen (1899) and Papadopoulos (1928), who rather suggested that the area of the *hagiasma* and the nineteenth-century church of St Mary of the Blachernai was the location of the Byzantine one;⁷⁸ on this identification there is now a scholarly consensus. Pervititch's map, following Henderson and Van Millingen's map, also identifies two passages connecting the Palace platform to the north-eastern area, one of which may have been *Ta Hypsela*, even though scholars agree that it is impossible to reconstruct a precise topography of the Palace.⁷⁹

Therefore, Freshfield probably took the two capitals from part of a surviving gate of the Palace of the Blachernai close to today's Dervişkade Sokak, which we now know was not the gate connecting the Palace to the church of the Blachernai, but perhaps part of the palace's substructures.⁸⁰

The chronology Freshfield proposed for the larger capital needs some revision too. Indeed, in the Memorandum, he states:

74 P. Magdalino, 'Pseudo-Kodinos' Constantinople', in P. Magdalino, *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot 2007) study XII, 3.

75 As discussed above, Freshfield openly states the use of Paspates' volume in Freshfield, 'Notes on the Church now called the Mosque of the Kalenders at Constantinople', 431.

76 Paspates, *Βυζαντινὰ μελέται*, 98 other mentions are also in 91, 92, 97.

77 The map is available here: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10100721v/f1.item.zoom#> [accessed 30/10/2023]. For a preliminary study of Jacques Pervititch, see M. Sabancioğlu, 'Jacques Pervititch and his insurance maps of Istanbul', *Dubrovnik Annals* 7 (2003) 89–98.

78 A. Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople. The walls of the city and adjoining historical sites* (London 1899) 115 (map), 116–19, 128, 130, 152, 164, 165–6, 169, 174, 195, 196, 197, 201; J. B. Papadopoulos, *Les Palais et les églises des Blachernes* (Thessaloniki 1928) 121. Paspates identified the church of the Blachernai in the Téké Seik-Sélim area. More recently on the topography of the Blachernaei, N. Asutay-Effenberger, 'The Blachernai Palace and its defence', in Redford and Ergin, *Cities and citadels*, 253–75.

79 Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, 115.

80 Asutay-Effenberger, 'The Blachernai Palace and its defence', 264.

The larger capital is certainly of the date of the Comneni. There was a sort of classical revival at the time, and the capital is just such a one as you might expect to see in the classical revival in France, or even in Canterbury Cathedral.⁸¹

However, the capital should in fact be dated to the early Byzantine period. It is a type of Corinthian capital, called ‘lyre’, comparable to Types 5 and 6 in Kautzsch and IVb in Pralong.⁸² It is composed of a lower row of acanthus leaves, while the upper one has leaves marking only the corners. The volutes have almost disappeared, creating in the centre a sort of ‘V’, leaving the space to a scroll with a different type of leaf on each side of the capital. The abacus is composed of two bands with a central element (perhaps a flower) which is no longer identifiable. The ‘lyre’ capitals from Constantinople, in particular those now in the area of the Hagia Sophia and dated to the mid-fifth to the mid-sixth century (fig. 3c) are the closest comparisons.⁸³ This chronology fits well with the Lower Kingswood capital.

The second capital (height: 21.4, width: 16.7, depth: 16cm) is smaller than the first and it is now also on the western façade of the church of the Wisdom of God (fig. 4a). Freshfield noted that it was immured into a wall near the larger one and dated it to the middle Byzantine period, at the earliest.⁸⁴ The capital’s dimensions suggest that it may come from a *templon* or an enclosing structure. The decoration comprises two acanthus leaves meeting at the capital’s centre. The leaf stick marks the capital’s corner. This decoration, although simple, does not find many comparisons, and Freshfield already noted that it was peculiar.⁸⁵ He also noted some similarities with the capital he brought from Boğdan Sarayı, which, however, should be taken with caution.⁸⁶ Indeed, while the two capitals are similar in their way of arranging the

81 Freshfield, *A Memorandum*, 5.

82 R. Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien. Beiträge zu einer Geschichte des spätantiken Kapitells im Osten vom 4. bis ins 7. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig 1936) 59–60, fig. 353 tab. 22. 184 Table 14, 226, 230 tab. 16; C. Barsanti, ‘L’esportazione di marmi dal Proconneso nelle regioni pontiche durante il IV–VI secolo’, *Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte*, S III, XII (1989) 125–35; A. Pralong, ‘Recherches sur les chapiteaux corinthiens tardifs en marbre de Proconnesse’ PhD diss., Université Paris 1 (Panthéon-Sorbonne 1997) 115–17, cat. N. 539–42, 545–46, 552, 555, 570; C. Barsanti, ‘Capitelli di manifattura costantinopolitana a Roma’, in F. Guidobaldi and A. Guiglia Guidobaldi, *Ecclesiae Urbis, Atti del Congresso Internazionale di studi sulle chiese di Roma (IV–X secolo), Roma, 4–10 settembre 2000* (Vatican City 2000) III 1464–71; A. Pralong, ‘La typologie des chapiteaux corinthiens tardifs en marbre de Proconnesse et la production d’Alexandrie’, *Revue Archéologique*, n.s. 1 (2000) 87, 88, 93, 96, 97.

83 A. Guiglia, C. Barsanti and A. Paribeni, ‘Saint Sophia Museum Project 2008: The Byzantine marble capitals in the Ayasofya Müzesi, Istanbul’, in 27. *Araştırma sonuçları toplantısı 1. Cilt.* (2009) 416, 426 fig. 3.

84 Freshfield, *A Memorandum*, 5.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.



A



B



C

Fig 4. Capital from the Blachernai area and comparisons. A) Byzantine Capital, Blachernai area, Constantinople, 11th c. Lower Kingswood (Surrey), Church of the Holy Wisdom of God (photographs by the Authors); B) Byzantine Capital from Sumer Bank in Bakirköy (after Dennert 1997); C) Byzantine capital, 1029–1066, tomb of George I and George the Hagiorite, katholikon of the Iviron Monastery (photograph by M. Vanni).

leaves, in the Blachernai capital the leaves are contained in the trapezoidal shape of the capital profile, while in the Boğdan Sarayı one, they curve creating a more naturalistic effect characteristic of Palaiologan sculpture.

The closest comparison to the Blachernai capital should be seen instead in a capital now in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, inv. no. 4862 (fig. 4b) for dimensions, type of acanthus leaves and the lower collar made of two bands, with the upper one bigger. Dennert categorized the Archaeological Museum's capital as a templon variation of the 'Kapitelle mit je einem großen Blatt auf den Kanten' and dated it to the eleventh or twelfth century on the basis of the acanthus leaf type.⁸⁷ The dimension of the piece (preserved height including capital, collar and colonnette: 55cm, capital height: 22cm) are almost identical to the Blachernai one (capital height: 21.4cm), leading us to wonder whether they were made for the same building or produced in series and used in two imperial palaces. Thanks to the Istanbul Archaeological Museum records, we know that it was found in 1946 during the excavation for the construction of the textile factory of Sumer Bank in Bakirköy, Istanbul, located in the area of the ruins of the Hebdomon harbour and its structures, churches included.⁸⁸ However, the original context is now lost, and the only available chronological indicator is typological and stylistic analysis.

A securely dated comparison can help us in clarifying the chronology of the two Constantinopolitan capitals: the stucco examples of the tomb of George I and George the Hagiorite in the katholikon of the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos, dated 1029–66 (fig. 4c).⁸⁹ They show the same shape, dimensions and type of acanthus leaves; the main difference is the use of a different motif on the lateral sides and the collar made of a cordon instead of two bands as in the Constantinopolitan examples. Stucco production tends to be less standardized than marble due to its more localized production (we do not have exportation centres as for marble) and different media as models.⁹⁰ The comparison of the Iviron capitals with the marble ones from Constantinople thus appears particularly strong. Similar models in Constantinople and Athos in the eleventh century are not surprising, especially in relation to the Iviron monastery. Indeed, George the Hagiorite (hegoumenate ca 1044–56, d. 1065), travelled often to Constantinople to gain the emperors' support for consolidating the power of his Georgian community over their Greek brethren in the monastery, a task continued by his successors.⁹¹ In light of the noted comparisons, a dating to the eleventh century can then be applied to the smaller

87 M. Dennert, *Mittelbyzantinische Kapitelle. Studien zu Typologie und Chronologie* (Bonn 1997) 121, cat. n. 262, pl. 47.

88 I am grateful to Emrah Kahraman from the İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri for his invaluable help with this capital's record. For the Hebdomon area, see A. Taddei, 'Notes on the so-called "Palace of Ioukoundianai" at Hebdomon (Constantinople)', *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 20.1 (2014) 77–84.

89 Th. Pazaras, 'Γύμνιας ανάγλυφες διακοσμήσεις της μεσοβυζαντινής εποχής στο καθολικό της Μονής Ιβήρων', *Μακεδονικά* 36 (2007) 47–64.

90 F. Vanni, 'Byzantine stucco decoration (ca 850–1453). Cultural and economic implications across the Mediterranean'. PhD diss. University of Birmingham 2021, 85–93.

91 B. Martin-Hisard, 'La Vie de Georges l'Hagiorite (1009/1010–29 juin 1065). Introduction, traduction du texte géorgien, notes et éclaircissements', *Revue des études byzantines* 64–65 (2006–7) 132–48; F. Vanni, 'Byzantine stucco decoration', 120–9.

capital from the Blachernai and to the one from the Hebdomon. The latter should be connected to the eleventh-century restoration of the Hebdomon, the church of St John the Theologian by Basil II, who chose it as his burial place.⁹²

To conclude, Freshfield's Memorandum needs to be approached with caution. The main reason is that since his time, the field of Byzantine sculpture has benefited from more in-depth scholarship.⁹³ Freshfield's knowledge of Constantinople relied on contemporary authorities who were largely based on texts, and with an inaccurate knowledge of the actual architectural remains.⁹⁴ The topography of the Blachernai would soon see some drastic revisions through Van Millingen's publications. With these Freshfield disagreed, as we shall see in the next section.

Freshfield's Blachernai through the archival records of the British School at Athens (*Flavia Vanni*)⁹⁵

Freshfield's interest in the Blachernai Palace surely started with his travels.⁹⁶ It is impossible in this paper to reconstruct how many journeys he made there or to identify the exact year when he bought the capitals, since we have only the Memorandum date (1903) as a *terminus ante quem*. From his obituary, we know that he travelled to Asia Minor every year due to Mr Hanson's property in Smyrna, which he inherited through his wife Zoë.⁹⁷ Perhaps an indicator of one of Freshfield's first visits to Byzantine monuments in Smyrna is the introductions he asked the British Prime Minister and long-term client of the family legal firm, William Ewart Gladstone, to write in 1871 before departing for his regular two-month trip there.⁹⁸ Gladstone was also an honorary member of the Hellenic Literary Society and a member of the committee that gave birth to the BSA in

92 John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811–1057*, ed. J. Wortley (Cambridge 2010) 348, n. 275.

93 See for example Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien*; A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople (IVe - Xe siècle)* (Paris 1963) and *Sculptures byzantines du Moyen Âge. II (XI-XIV siècle)* (Paris 1976); Dennert, *Mittelbyzantinische Kapitelle*; N. Melvani, *Late byzantine sculpture* (Turnhout 2014); C. Vanderheyde, *La sculpture byzantine du IXe au XVe siècle. Contexte - Mise en oeuvre - Décors* (Paris 2020). See also bibliography in nn. 82–3 and 89–90 above.

94 Ousterhout, 'The rediscovery of Constantinople', 183, 195–202.

95 I thank Amalia Kakissis, Archivist at the BSA, for her invaluable help in navigating the BSA and BRF collection.

96 Freshfield's interest in imperial palaces is testified in an early article on the Laskarid palatial complex at Nymphaion (Kemalpaşa), near Nicaea (İznik), E. Freshfield, 'The Palace of the Greek emperors of Nicaea at Nymphio', *Archaeologia*, 49.2 (1886) 382–90.

97 Brandon, *The Lost Jewel*, Appendix F.

98 Slinn, *A History of Freshfields*, 131. On the relationship between Gladstone and Freshfield, see F. B. Yildizeli, 'W. E. Gladstone and British policy towards the Ottoman Empire', PhD diss., University of Exeter 2016, 109–111.

1886.⁹⁹ While returning from the trip, which also touched upon Bulgaria and Greece, Freshfield sent him a long letter discussing the state of the Churches there.¹⁰⁰

From the manuscript at the Society of Antiquaries of London, we know that Freshfield visited Constantinople at least in 1880 and 1890.¹⁰¹ This information corresponds with another letter now at the BSA dated to 1902, where he mentioned another trip to Constantinople ten years before.¹⁰² His interest in the Blachernai Palace continued throughout his life. In an letter to Professor J. B. Bury (then at Trinity College, Dublin) dated 11 October 1900, he confessed to having bought some capitals from the area of the Blachernai which in his view demonstrated that the Tekfur Sarayı was indeed part of the palatial complex, in opposition to Van Millingen's opinion.¹⁰³ From further correspondence between Schultz, at the time Honorary Secretary of the Byzantine Research Fund, and Walter S. George, BSA Student, it appears that Freshfield sent some instructions and notes to George about the Blachernai Palace.¹⁰⁴ Freshfield was indeed ready to come to Constantinople during one of his business trips to Smyrna. In the meantime, Schultz encouraged George to take drawings and sketches for Freshfield even though he should verify the feasibility of Freshfield's requests, while reassuring him that 'No doubt he (Freshfield) will be willing to pay for this as it is his special hobby for the moment'.¹⁰⁵

Freshfield's interest in the Blachernai did not seem to have resulted in any publications, but rather in a collection of photographs that he regularly exhibited at the Society of Antiquaries of London.¹⁰⁶ His role in the antiquarian network seems to have been as a first-hand witness and as the person who knew how to access monuments in Greece, Constantinople, and Asia Minor. During his travels, he built relationships with imams as well as owners of property with Byzantine ruins in Constantinople and elsewhere and his ambiguous role as a sort of 'guide' and sponsor appears as early as the first BSA reports on Schultz and Barnsley's work in

99 *BSA Report of the executive committee*, 1886. On Gladstone and the Hellenic Literary Society, see Papatheodorou, 'The Hellenic Literary Society', 115–16.

100 Yildizeli, 'W. E. Gladstone and British policy towards the Ottoman Empire', 110–11.

101 For the dates in the manuscript, see *Lists and papers rel to Christian churches*, n. 11 'Sekban Pasha Mesdjidi' and n. λ 'The stores close to the Church of St Thekla'.

102 Byzantine Research Fund (BRF) – Athens, 'BRF committee, notes, accounts etc', Letter from Edwin Freshfield to Professor Bury, 12 November 1902 (uncatalogued), 2.

103 Byzantine Research Fund (BRF) – Athens, 'BRF committee, notes, accounts etc', Letter from Edwin Freshfield to Professor Bury, 11 October 1900 (uncatalogued).

104 Byzantine Research Fund (BRF) – London, 'BRF corporate records, series 4, Folders 1–6', Letter from Walter S. George to Robert W. Schultz, 28 December 1909 (uncatalogued); Letter from Walter S. George to Robert W. Schultz, 6th February 1910 (uncatalogued);

105 Byzantine Research Fund (BRF) – London, 'BRF corporate records, series 4, Folders 1–6', Letter from Robert W. Schultz to Walter S. George, 14 December 1909 (uncatalogued).

106 Byzantine Research Fund (BRF) – Athens, BRF offprint publications, BRF press cuttings, 'The Builder, 29th May 1909'.

Greece.¹⁰⁷ However, the political situation changed significantly at the turn of the century. In an article titled 'Smyrna and Constantinople under the Constitution', published in *The Times* on 19 November 1909, Freshfield commented on the effects of the revision of the Ottoman Constitution by the Young Turks (1908–19) on access to monuments.¹⁰⁸ He reported a lack of central authority in Smyrna, which did not facilitate foreigners' visits, while in Constantinople, access to many monuments was strongly regulated through letters and authorizations, which were to pass through the embassy.¹⁰⁹ Many other monuments that he could visit in the past were also closed, and he concluded: 'Therefore, from the point of view of an antiquary, the Constitution has in no way improved his chances of studying the antiquities or even of seeing them without a special firman obtained through the Ambassador as before.' He went on to say that 'The only institution which seems to me to flourish is the time-honoured backsheesh, which seems to me to have greatly flourished, judging by the increased amount that has to be given', and concluded: 'Never have there been such obstructions in Constantinople; never has there been such uncertainty in Asia Minor.'

These passages show that the actions of the movement of the Young Turks was closely followed by the community of antiquaries to which Freshfield belonged and which he sought to update with first-hand reports such as this. While noting his disappointment with the unstable political scene, we also need to bear in mind that in these years, there was a tightening in the legislation concerning the exportation of antiquities abroad with new regulations of 1906;¹¹⁰ one wonders, therefore, whether his disappointment may have been connected to this aspect too, though it could not have been committed to writing.

Conclusions: antiquarians, faith, and colonialism (*Flavia Vanni, Jessica Varsallona*)

This article has shown that some relatively small Byzantine objects witnessed relevant historical phenomena, and not exclusively those related to the history of their production, style, and patronage. Indeed, the journey of the Lower Kingswood capitals is informative for a series of reasons.

In the nineteenth century, Byzantine materials inspired the interests of wealthy Western collectors, who combined an antiquarian curiosity for the past and its

107 *British School at Athens Annual Report 1889–1890*, 4, 12; *British School at Athens Annual Report 1890–1891*, 5. A letter to Bury testifies of his connections in Istanbul: Letter from Edwin Freshfield to Professor Bury, 12 November 1902 (uncatalogued), 2; on page 7 he continued: 'I found my old friend the Imaum there and we walked hand in hand to the amusement of his mates'.

108 Byzantine Research Fund (BRF) – Athens, BRF offprint publications, BRF press cuttings, 'The Times, 17th November 1909'.

109 This may have been the case for Freshfield's request for an introduction to Gladstone in 1871.

110 Papatheodorou, 'Ottoman policy', 161–74, 184–8.

archaeology with the quest for the origins of Christianity.¹¹¹ In this way, the meaning of these sculptures, which anonymous masters originally crafted as visual embodiments of power and piety for aristocratic founders, changed. At least in the case of Lower Kingswood, the Byzantine capitals became the original ‘broken bits’ reconnecting the Christian community in Surrey to the ‘authentic’ faith, in this case represented by Byzantium. These examples show how the narratives of this connection with the Byzantine legacy specifically involved the main centres of Christianity (such as Ephesos),¹¹² with the capital city, Constantinople, playing a considerable role. As mentioned, Freshfield stressed the prominence of the Constantinopolitan monastery of St John of Stoudios for the creation of hymns used in the Anglican church.¹¹³ The interest in the organization and rites of the ‘Greek’ church in comparison with the Anglican was already expressed by Freshfield through his letters to Gladstone and by his article ‘On Byzantine churches and the modifications made in their arrangements owing to the necessities’ (1876).¹¹⁴ His article matched his later foundation at Lower Kingswood and sets Freshfield among the supporters of the use of Byzantine style for Anglican churches, a position that had been contested by his colleagues in the Ecclesiological Society less than twenty years earlier.

Through the patronage of the church at Lower Kingswood, it seems that Freshfield was projecting to posterity his image as a parallel to a Byzantine *euergetes*. His and his family’s piety is commemorated by inscriptions in the narthex and in the apse mosaic; the Memorandum and the donation of the capitals from main centres of Christian history portray him as a pious benefactor and an erudite man. His attitude adds another layer to the phenomenon of the ‘Byzantine revival’: the role and the figure of the patron.¹¹⁵

Much recent debate in historiography focuses on whether certain disciplines, among them Byzantine studies, were (or are) colonialist.¹¹⁶ The privileged status of collectors and patrons like Freshfield allowed them to transform their interest into the ‘right’ to possess those witnesses of the sacred past. The capitals of Lower Kingswood demonstrate that, at least in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the appreciation of Byzantium and its cultural and religious legacy in Western Europe passed through mechanisms of appropriation that were close to imperialistic dynamics. In the case of

111 Winfield, ‘The British contribution’, 59.

112 Archival records show that, through D’Alessio, in 1878, Freshfield requested a preliminary permission to start an archaeological excavation at Ephesos, which was not granted. Papatheodorou, ‘Ottoman policy’, 116–17. This is particularly relevant considering Freshfield’s possessions in Asia Minor and that one of the capitals now at Lower Kingswood indeed comes from Ephesos.

113 *Lists and papers rel to Christian churches*; Freshfield, *A Memorandum*, 5.

114 Freshfield, ‘On Byzantine churches’.

115 The role of inscriptions and their location in neo-Byzantine architecture has not been investigated by scholars as a phenomenon of the Byzantine revival.

116 B. Anderson and M. Ivanova, *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline? Toward a critical historiography* (University Park MD 2023).

the territories of the Ottoman Empire, such appropriations benefited from the not yet adequate legislation relating to antiquities.¹¹⁷

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117 Indeed, the Ottoman law struggled to recognize as antiquities artefacts associated with religion, whether early Christian or Islamic: Papatheodorou, 'Ottoman policy', 89–192.