

# YILLIK

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# YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies

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**Assistants:** Osman Kocabal, Ryan Mitchell

**Contact:** istanbulstudies@iae.org.tr

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In the first piece of the “Interventions to the Istanbul Studies” special dossier in this year’s Meclis, Roland Betancourt reminds us of the imperial and violent legacies of Hagia Sophia. We had begun working on the “Interventions” series back in the Summer of 2020, amid the biggest wave of the Black Lives Matter protests that swept across North America as well as many other parts of the world in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, and in response to the intertwined issues of police brutality and systemic racism. We were inspired by successive academic associations that affirmed their commitment to fighting against racism and anti-Blackness, exposing and eradicating issues of discrimination embedded in their fields. That was also the time when the public in Turkey as well as students of Ottoman, Byzantine, and Turkish studies were heavily engaged with the debates around the re-conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque. As the move was justified or criticized based on differing interpretations of the legal and symbolic status of the monument, as well as contradicting visions of larger histories of Istanbul, we witnessed firsthand how the study of Istanbul was instrumentalized and politicized for the goals and ambitions of competing stakeholders. Yes, neither Hagia Sophia and Istanbul, nor the research devoted to them, have been “innocent participants in the vicissitudes” of empires, nation-states, ideologies, and other manifestations of power and resistance. As we have cherished the emerging spaces for academic and public discussions initiated by our colleagues worldwide on our own disciplines’ complicity and willful participation in systems of oppression, we have realized that we must also commit to self-reflexivity and open Istanbul studies to a critical investigation of its own biases, embedded discriminations, and habits of objectification and tokenism. Under the generous guidance and co-editorship of three members of our Advisory Board—Koray Durak, Cemal Kafadar, and Christine Philliou—we are excited to present the first three pieces of our “Interventions to Istanbul Studies” series, where Betancourt is joined by Zavier Wingham and Lerna Ekmeçcioglu. We are hoping that this series will contribute to ongoing critical discussions on the study of Istanbul and its connected fields.

The critical study of Istanbul does not begin or end in our special dossier, of course. The third volume of *YILLIK* includes five research articles on different periods of Istanbul, written from a variety of perspectives, using diverse methods. The Early Career Article Prize is awarded to Ezgi Dikici, whose erudite study of the properties of court eunuchs in early modern Istanbul brings a new perspective to how the members of the royal household engaged with their urban setting. Gavin Moulton’s article on the Şişli Mosque critically engages with the ways in which the mid-twentieth-century architectural practice reimagined and appropriated the stylistic vocabulary of Ottoman architecture; while Semra Horuz shows how Ottoman intellectuals traveling to Europe in the nineteenth century reimagined Istanbul and projected their ambitions for their capital to the European towns they visited. Gökçen Erkılıç brings the insights of a materialist methodology into the study of the transformation of Istanbul’s ports and coastal zones. Finally, Muhammed Tatlısu situates Karabet Keşişyan as a central figure in the Ottoman history of publishing and printing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fact that two research articles of the present volume highlight the importance of Black and Armenian actors in the history of Istanbul is apropos given the goals of our special Meclis dossier.

In addition to the special dossier, this year’s Meclis includes M. Baha Tanman’s notes on the recent restoration of the Haseki Mosque. In Cabinet, Alison Terndrup analyzes a nineteenth-century engraving that depicts an eighteenth-century courtly procession from the Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Collection. We publish four book and two exhibition reviews, with topics varying from the architectural practice and discourse in the last two decades in Turkey to the famous bronze horseman of Justinian. Our reviews section is followed, as always, by the most recent edition of the Istanbul Bibliography.

The third volume of *YILLIK*, just like the second, has been prepared in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. As the disease took its toll on our communities in numerous ways, Istanbul studies has lost one of its brightest minds. Yavuz Sezer (1979–2021), an architectural historian of the Ottoman Empire, passed away on March 24, while we were expecting an article submission from him. Our scholarly community also lost, not due to the pandemic, one of its most esteemed members, architectural historian Doğan Kuban (1926–2021), who passed away on September 22. We are privileged to publish two In Memoriam pieces by his student and colleague Zeynep Ahunbay, and his colleague and niece Zeynep Kuban. The latter piece presents a bibliography of Kuban’s work on Istanbul compiled by Zeynep Kuban and her students. This volume is therefore dedicated to the memories and intellectual legacies of Dr. Sezer and Professor Kuban.