



CONSTANTINOPLE &  
THE  
CONSTANTINOPOLITANS  
THROUGH THE  
CENTURIES

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#ACGUKOCT9EVENT  
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# Programme

- Opening & introductions by the ACGUK Chairman
- 'Byzantium: The Empire of Constantinople' by Dr Chrysos (presented by Dr Stathakopoulos)
- 'The Constantinopolitans in the Post-Byzantine Period' by Dr Vassiadis
- Panel Discussion: 'The Constantinopolitans Today'
- Q&A

# Our Guest Speakers



**Dr Dionysios Stathakopoulos,  
Snr Lecturer in Byzantine Studies,  
King's College**



**Dr Evangelos Chrysos, Emeritus  
Professor, University of Athens,  
Greece**



**Dr George Vassiadis, Research  
Associate, Hellenic Institute,  
RHUL**

# Our Guest Speakers



**Presbyter Savvas Vasileiadis, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain**



**Niki Beales, President of the Greek Orthodox Community of Milton Keynes; Chapel of Panagia of Vlachernae**



# CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE CONSTANTINOPOLITANS THROUGH THE CENTURIES

**Byzantium: the Empire of Constantinople**

Professor Evangelos Chrysos  
University of Athens



# CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE CONSTANTINOPOLITANS THROUGH THE CENTURIES

## The Constantinopolitans in the Post-Byzantine Period

Dr George Vassiadis  
Hellenic Institute

## The Greeks of Constantinople : Terminology

Κωνσταντινουπολίτες = *Konstantinoupolites*, inhabitants of the city of Constantinople

Πολίτες = *Polites*, inhabitants of *the* city, ie Constantinople

Ρωμαίοι / Ρωμιοί = *Romaioi/ Romioi*, Romans, inhabitants of the East Roman or Byzantine Empire, and by extension Greeks in general

Rum = the Turkish word for Ρωμαίοι / Ρωμιοί

**The Greek Community of Constantinople:  
Institutions and Patrimony (19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries)**

**Parishes / local communities: 48**

**Churches: 103**

**Monasteries: 8**

**Cemeteries & burial grounds: 50**

**Schools: 75**

**Hospitals, Old People's Homes, Orphanages, Asylums: 5-10**

**Sylogoi / Philanthropic organisations: 100+**

**Sports teams, theatre groups, etc**

# The Greeks of Constantinople: Population Statistics (conservative estimates)

Date	Greek Population of Constantinople	Total Population of Constantinople
<b>1850</b>	140,000	750,000
<b>1885</b>	170,000	850,000
<b>1897</b>	200,000	900,000
<b>1906/07</b>	210,000	1,000,000
<b>1914</b>	225,000	1,068,000
<b>1922</b>	300,000	1,000,000
<b>1924</b>	200,000	881,000
<b>1927</b>	126,645 (including 26,431 Greek citizens)	691,000
<b>1935</b>	94,642 (including 17,642 Greek citizens)	740,800
<b>1945</b>	85,000 (including about 15,000 Greek citizens)	845,300
<b>1955</b>	80,000 (including about 13,000 Greek citizens)	1,000,000
<b>1965</b>	30,000	1,743,000
<b>1975</b>	10,000	2,547,000
<b>1985</b>	3500	5,494,900
<b>2015</b>	1500 (?)	14,657,434



# Panel Discussion

## The Constantinopolitans Today

## What is the key role the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, as you witness it today, in the preservation of the Greek Orthodox community in Istanbul?

Without going in detail to historical events, I will note the main channel of influence and institutional contact between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek element of Constantinople.

For centuries, the most stable poles of power in the region since the rise and establishment of the Eastern Roman Empire were the Emperor followed by the Church of Constantinople, the Senate, the Constantinopolitan aristocracy and the people. And I say, "usually after the Emperor", since historically it has been proven that the only institution that has influenced the palace historically, politically and socially and has survived to this day, is the Church. It is sufficient to consider that at the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, the **ecclesiastical offices** of the Church of Constantinople are referred to as 'institutions' organized by the Patriarchate in the fashion of the imperial palace.

Until the 15th century, officials of the Patriarchate, and in particular the Patriarch, who has been called 'Ecumenical' since the 6th century, was the leading mind for the unification of churches, and have been the main shapers of political life, both at home and abroad. But as the interests of the Church and the State were not identical, there were conflicts.

At the time of the Fall, political rulers sought cooperation with the Western countries to secure allies against Ottoman expansionism. On the other hand, the Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church as a whole sought for better internal cohesion, empowerment of the territory and promotion of the empire's rebirth. The state's tendency towards the West left open windows for the penetration of the Catholic Church, which the Patriarchate was fighting against.

## **What is the key role the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, as you witness it today, in the preservation of the Greek Orthodox community in Istanbul? (cont.)**

The Orthodox Church, as a historical reality, seemed to be the only political perspective of the time. This is because the politicians' aim to unite the Catholic and Orthodox Churches whilst expecting Western help against the Ottomans, caused delays and deterioration in the rebuilding of the empire as well as civil animosity, and subsequently, accelerated the destruction. So, if we consider today that the Patriarchate survived the Fall, then it is easy to conclude that, at least in political terms, it was probably right to hope for only the restoration and reconstitution but not for outside help.

Despite the shrinking of the Patriarchate during the years of the Turkish occupation - but mainly after the Asia Minor disaster, there is a strong internal cohesion which, has been the key for its preservation and survival throughout the world. Testament to this are the communities that are linked to the Patriarchate that exist within Istanbul and Turkey as well as hundreds listed in almost all continents.

Let's not forget, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, for Constantinople and the Constantinopolitans, is the seat of all-Orthodoxy, the foundation and the vehicle via which our faith travels through time. It is the land of our Saints and Martyrs who have built worldwide Christianity-centred and Ecclesiastical communities, full of Orthodox families. Every Constantinopolitan has in its heritage this part of our history which emanates from the Ecumenical Patriarchate (shorthand: Phanari). From the apostolic era to the persecutions, the bitter lament of the mothers who've lost their children, and the last breath of Gregory V as he was brutally executed and all the bloodshed and sacrifices, we've endured, the light still remains strong in Phanari.

## **As a Constantinopolitan living abroad, in the era of globalisation, what are your experiences and/or thoughts on our future as a community?**

The Constantinopolitan communities worldwide have an obligation to keep alive our Christian Orthodox ideals and traditions. It is our duty now to relay and preserve our glorious heritage to the future generations and honour our ancestors and 'Poli' (Constantinople).

As long as our history remains alive so will our future as Constantinopolitans. As long as there is connectedness and support of the Constantinopolitans from all of us, we can hope for the full restoration of our rights as a community, the free and unhindered contact with 'Poli', the preservation of traditions and the revitalization of the religious sentiment that we are fighting to keep.

The era of globalization has a twofold influence on the future of a community; especially when, in our case, the community is not geographically confined to its original *place of creation* but extends both geopolitically and historically, and is influenced by all the phenomena that govern the social context in which it develops and operates. . In search of the side effects of globalization, on one hand, there is the concern that the community is diluting any historical identity (whether inside Turkey or abroad) whilst on the other hand, its freedom and rights seem to be enhanced.

## **As a Constantinopolitan living abroad, in the era of globalisation, what are your experiences and/or thoughts on our future as a community? (cont.)**

It is widely understood that the seed of Greek Orthodox tradition has not only survived the ages, through fire and ashes, but also appears to be regenerated, blooming and bearing new fruit. And this is because, with the grace of God, justice triumphs and despite the historic points that have made us Constantinopolitans hunted for centuries, we've now emerged justified and restored.

Today, with the speed and spread of information, we must open new ports of communication with the wider public to readdress injustice, gain rights and protection and share our rich Constantinopolitan history with future generations, removing all blind spots and shadows of the past.

We must also emphasize the need to transcend the territorial boundaries of the Greek Orthodox Christianity and to support the Orthodox Church beyond the territory of Greece. For it is the Ecumenical Patriarchate that preserves Hellenism and Orthodoxy outside the borders of Greece, not by placing faith in the freezer of time and history, but by bringing it to life through all institutions and creating new generations of Orthodox Greeks resulting in the spread of faith and the morals and customs directly associated with it. The Greek Orthodox tradition has now become a worldwide heritage.

## **The Byzantine Empire influenced many cultures and helped shaped Christian Orthodoxy, what are the key qualities, in your opinion, that are still engrained in our religion and DNA as Constantinopolitans?**

The main attributes that characterize the Constantinopolitans are, first of all, the nostalgia of the homeland, the lost lives, the land, the heritage, history and culture. The culture and lights of Asia Minor and especially of Constantinople, shone in the heart of troubled Greece and shaped the national ideal and the Christian Orthodoxy.

The struggles and sacrifices of the Greeks of Constantinople provided the feedstock for rebuilding all of Greece and the foundation of what would later become the centre of trade, culture and prosperity. Through the tireless efforts and work of the Constantinopolitans, we can ensure the promotion of the rights of the Constantinopolitan community in Istanbul, as well as the expatriate Greeks of Imbros, Tenedos and Asia Minor, and the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne, protecting minority communities. This can boost the existing work of our Ecumenical Patriarchate to further maintain the geopolitical balance in Turkey, the Aegean, the Balkans and throughout Europe and the world.

In the blood of the Constantinopolitans, there's strong multiculturalism with deep Greek roots. Constantinople itself was a cradle of cultures, a hub of nations, and the birthplace of ethics and the Greek-Christian tradition. It shines and will continue to shine its light on our hearts and souls. It will always be the beacon of cultures, and no matter how hard they try to extinguish the fire that is burning, they will never succeed because it is the same fire inside us as it burned in the hearts of our fathers and grandparents.

- 1. Growing up in Istanbul, did you feel like you belonged there? Were you ever made to feel like an outsider?**
- 2. What steps do you think are necessary to safeguard the future of the Greek community of Istanbul?**
- 3. When you tell people that you are a Greek from Istanbul, what do they say?**



# Panel Discussion

## Q & A