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Georges Kazan

What's in a Name? Constantinople's Lost 'Golden Gate' Reconsidered

Abstract

The Golden Gate (Porta Aurea) provides critical information about how Constantinople's emperors sought to present themselves, their capital and its empire to the city's inhabitants and to the outside world. Today, the most famous gate to bear this name survives in the Theodosian Walls of Constantinople. However an earlier Golden Gate may once have stood about a mile to the east, in the Walls of Constantine. This study will explore the origins of the Golden Gate at Constantinople by examining the construction, purpose and dating of this lost gate. As with many aspects of Constantinople's material history, evidence remains sparse. A broad range of material has therefore been considered, including archaeological and written evidence not only from Constantinople but also from across the Roman Empire. At Rome, the tradition of triumphal monuments such as the Porta Triumphalis is considered, along with arches and gates dedicated by Constantine in Rome and on routes leading to it. At Alexandria, the dedication of city gates to the Sun and Moon is noted, and compared with Constantine's use of solar imagery in his triumphal monuments in Rome. Returning to Constantinople, evidence including finds from recent excavations is used to argue that the lost gate was the main entrance for triumphal processions through the Walls of Constantine. A reconstruction of its appearance and decoration is proposed, based on historical accounts and comparable evidence. The article concludes that while it appears likely that a triumphal entrance existed in the Walls of Constantine at Constantinople, probably planned by Constantine and completed soon after his death in 337, it had no official name, and was first described as a Porta Aurea only by the Notitia of Constantinople by ca 427, possibly due to gilded decoration that was either original or applied in ca 416 when a bronze statue of the defeated rebel Priscus Attalus was probably set up on the gate. This lost triumphal gate would therefore not only have inspired the construction of the Golden Gate in the Walls of Theodosius, but may also have influenced its design. While these conclusions are tentative, it is anticipated that this research on evidence concerning the former gate will provide a solid basis for the study of the latter.

The Golden Gate (*Porta Aurea*) is of major importance to our understanding of how Constantinople's emperors sought to present themselves, their capital and its empire, within the context of both existing Roman traditions and their own adoption of

Christianity. As a triumphal entrance, it marked the passage of victory processions into the New Rome. As a gilded portal to a restored Roman Golden Age of peace and prosperity, it was often used to celebrate the defeat of internal threats or challenges to the empire's stability (e.g. by imperial usurpers), and the subsequent restoration of *Pax Romana*. As Greco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian traditions merged within the crucible of Constantinople, religious symbolism became increasingly important to the concept of the Golden Gate, as illustrated by its increasingly frequent role in religious celebrations, such as the ritual translation of holy relics into the New Jerusalem.

The most famous Golden Gate to bear the name survives today in the Theodosian Walls of Constantinople.¹ In the Middle or Late Byzantine period, an ornate 'Propylaic Gate' was erected in the outer wall just in front of the Theodosian Golden Gate, and the term 'Golden Gate' is sometimes also used to refer to this or to the ensemble formed by the two monuments.² In addition to these, there is a tradition that about a mile to the east, set in the walls of Constantine, stood an earlier Golden Gate, the first to receive the title of *Porta Aurea*. As this article shall discuss, there are reasons for investigating this further. This study will explore the origins of the Golden Gate at Constantinople by examining the construction, purpose and dating of this gate in the Constantinian Walls, now lost, using the available archaeological and written evidence, as well as the gate's contemporary monumental context. It therefore seeks to provide the most coherent explanation of the existing evidence which, as for many aspects of Constantinople's material history, remains sparse. While the Golden Gate in the Theodosian Walls, which still stands largely intact, presents far more secure evidence and warrants further examination in its own right, the present study seeks to establish as far as possible a broad context within which to approach this, by exploring the meagre surviving evidence and relevant material context for what the written sources suggest was its predecessor, the lost triumphal entrance in the walls of Constantine.

In the absence of plentiful material evidence, written sources have provided the basis for our understanding of Constantinople's ancient topography, a subject about

The present work derives from a broader study of all three gates that are part of the tradition of the Golden Gate at Constantinople. I would like to thank Marlia M. Mango, Cyril Mango, Murat Sav, Jonathan Bardill, Bryan Ward-Perkins, Tassos Papacostas, Maria Parani, Michael Vickers, and Simon Davies for their useful advice.

¹ The first of its kind, the *Porta Aurea* of Constantinople, inspired Golden Gates in other cities. Golden Gates, mostly medieval, are known at Antioch, Benevento, Genoa, Kiev, Milan, Pisa, Pula, Ravenna, Rimini, Rome and elsewhere. Survey work, including the excavation of exploratory trenches, was carried out by T. Macridy and S. Casson, 'Excavations at the Golden Gate, Constantinople', *Archaeologia*, 81 (1931), 63–84. A full excavation of the area and a complete survey of the gate in the Theodosian Walls would be necessary to permit a conclusive consideration of the surviving material evidence. A review of previous scholarship concerning the Golden Gate is provided in J. Bardill, 'The Golden Gate in Constantinople: A Triumphal Arch of Theodosius I', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 103 (1999), 671–96.

² The term 'Propylaic Gate' was used by archaeologists who excavated at this site in 1927 to refer to the gate in the outer wall. Its lost collection of panel reliefs warrants special attention in its own right that is beyond the scope of the present article. While Macridy and Casson ('Excavations') concluded from its foundations and those of the wall that a gate had probably existed there since the construction of the outer wall in c. 447, the present superstructure is widely recognised to be a separate addition, dating to the Middle or Late Byzantine period. See C. Mango, 'The Triumphal Way of Constantinople and the Golden Gate', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 54 (2000), 173–88 at 181–86; S. Guberti Bassett, 'John V Palaiologos and the Golden Gate in Constantinople', in J. Langdon *et al.*, eds, *To Hellenikon: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr*, 2 vols, (New York, 1993), vol. I: *Hellenic Antiquity and Byzantium*, 117–33.

which there exists a long history of learned disagreement.³ Further exploration, excavation and documentation of the surviving monuments is therefore extremely useful. With the emergence of new evidence from the excavation of the putative site of the so-called Constantinian Golden Gate, and the existence of several monumental parallels outside Constantinople that have largely escaped the notice of scholarship on the city's Golden Gates, it thus seems worthwhile to review the available evidence within the context of this information and even to propose a tentative, albeit speculative, reconstruction of the monument's history and probable form.

A Triumphal Gate In The Walls Of Constantine

In Antiquity, city gates could serve to mark sacred civic boundaries and provide a monumental framework for ceremonial processions into and out of the city. The Roman triumph was an honour traditionally awarded by the Senate to a victorious commander (*imperator*), and involved his honorific entry, in full pomp, into the urban area, where his military authority traditionally did not hold sway.⁴ The moment and place of entry thus held special importance. At Rome, a *Porta Triumphalis* ('Triumphal Gate') is recorded from at least the first century AD, although no such gate survives today and its existence as a permanent structure is debated by scholars.⁵ Written sources suggest that the *Porta Triumphalis* was closed to ordinary traffic, and only opened by decree of the Senate for the passage of a triumphal procession.⁶ At Constantinople, the New Rome, both the *Porta Aurea* in the Constantinian Walls and the Theodosian Golden Gate stood on a triumphal route leading from the Hebdomon to the Great Palace (Fig. 1).⁷ Understood within the above context, the construction of these gates at Constantinople could thus have drawn upon the tradition of the *Porta Triumphalis*. Since the gate in the Constantinian Walls no longer survives, one must first turn to the written sources to explore this possibility further, and to determine whether such a gate actually existed, and if so, whether it could have been built by Constantine.

According to Manuel Chrysoloras' description of Constantinople (c. 1411), an ornate gate did in fact exist in the walls of Constantine at their intersection with the Mese, the main thoroughfare that led past the Forum Tauri and the Forum of Arcadius. He recounts that this ancient city gate was so tall that a ship with its rigging could pass under it, was built of great marble blocks, defended with towers, crowned with a colonnade, and that outside it stood a column that had once borne a statue.⁸ Its location

³ Compare also the largely text-based R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, (Paris, 1964), with archaeological works such as W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls: Byzantion, Konstantinupolis, Istanbul bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts*, (Tübingen, 1977).

⁴ M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (Cambridge Mass., 2007), 202.

⁵ H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus. An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph*, (Leiden, 1970), 132–63; B. Niese, ed., *Flavii Josephi Opera*, 7 vols, (Berlin, 1885–1895), vol. VI: *De Bello Judaico*, 588 (7.130–31), and R. G. M. Nisbet, ed., *M. Tulli Ciceronis in L. Calpurnium Pisonem Oratio*, (Oxford, 1961), xxiii, refer to it as a permanent monument in the time of Vespasian. Cf. Beard, *Roman Triumph*, 96–101.

⁶ Beard, *Roman Triumph*, 96, with reference to H. B. Foster and E. Cary, ed. and trans., *Dio's Roman History*, 9 vols, Loeb Classical Library, 175 (Cambridge Mass., 1914–1927), vol. VII, 97–99 (56.42).

⁷ See Mango, 'Triumphal Way', esp. Diagram 2.

⁸ Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistola ad Joannem imperatorem*, PG 156, coll. 23–54: 45D.

is generally identified with the Exokionion ('the small column outside').⁹ If the testimony of the *Patria* is to be trusted, the place took its name from a column bearing a statue of the emperor Constantine that stood outside the gate.¹⁰ The gate at the Exokionion would thus have been situated at the end of the Via Egnatia's new coastal route, established by Constantine by 333, and which by 364 (at the latest) had become the main route for imperial and triumphal processions into the city.¹¹ If the gate was contemporary with the walls in which it stood, it would have been planned under Constantine (306–37), and completed by his son, Constantius II (337–61).¹² Such a gate would therefore have served as Constantinople's earliest triumphal entrance and remained in use for almost the entirety of the city's history.¹³

In order to consider whether the construction of this gate can be dated to the reign of Constantine, or to a later emperor, one must again turn to the written sources. The gate appears under a variety of different names, mostly consisting of vague references to its antiquity, appearance or local topography, which may suggest that it bore no official title.¹⁴ In addition to the above indications in Chrysoloras and the *Patria* concerning the existence of an honorific column bearing Constantine's statue, the gate's connection with Constantine is made apparent in a source from the eighth century, which describes an ornate gate in this area of the city. Known as the Gate of Atalos, this bore several statues that fell during the severe earthquake of 740, including bronze images of Constantine and of Atalos himself.¹⁵

Who was this Atalos? The principal public figure of this name, in the years since the foundation of Constantinople, was Priscus Attalus, prefect of Rome in 409, proclaimed emperor in the West by Rome's Visigothic conquerors in 409–10 and 414–15, and whose overthrow was celebrated at Constantinople in 416.¹⁶ This identification would explain the presence of a statue of 'Atalos' upon the gate in the Constantinian Walls, which would therefore have commemorated him not as victor but as vanquished, and demonstrates that the gate received some decoration during the reign of Theodosius II (408–50). The source may even have confused a statue with a trophy or

⁹ The site was popularly known as the Hexakionion ('with six columns'), which the region's Turkish name preserves as *Altı Mermer*. See A. van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople: The Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites*, (London, 1899), 20–22; A. Berger, ed. and tr., *Accounts of medieval Constantinople: the Patria*, (Cambridge Mass., 2013), 2.54, n. 69.

¹⁰ *Patria*, 2.54. Another statue, said to be of Constantine VI (780–97), stood on a small column on the north side of the Exokionion plaza (*Patria*, 2.56). This has been ascribed to Constantine the Great by Mango, suggesting a conflation with the statue outside the gate. See C. Mango, 'Epigrammes honorifiques, statues et portraits à Byzance', in B. Kremmydas, C. Maltezou and N. M. Panagiotakis, eds, *Αφιέρωμα στον Νίκο Σβορώνο*, 2 vols, (Rethymno, 1986), vol. I, 23–35 at 33.

¹¹ Mango, 'Triumphal Way', 174–75.

¹² On the completion of the walls of Constantine, see Julian, *Orationes*, I.33, in J. Bidez *et al.*, eds, *L'empereur Julien. Oeuvres complètes*, 2 vols, (Paris, 1932–1964), vol. I, 59.

¹³ The route is clearly described in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies*, which details the passage of triumphal processions from the Golden Gate in the Theodosian Walls, through the Exokionion, to the Milion. See Mango, 'Triumphal Way', esp. Fig. 2.

¹⁴ It has been variously termed the 'Ancient Gate', or the 'Ancient Gate of the Forerunner' after a local church to John the Baptist (*Patria* 3.191; van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, 20–22), the 'Gate of Saturninus' after the nearby House of Saturninus (van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, 32), and the 'Xerolophos Gate' after the hill on which it stands (van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, 29).

¹⁵ See C. de Boor, ed., *Theophanis Chronographia*, 2 vols, (Leipzig, 1883–1885; repr. Hildesheim, 1963, New York, 1980), vol. I, 412 (AM 6232 /AD 740); Mango, 'Triumphal Way', 175–76.

¹⁶ A. H. M. Jones and J. R. Martindale, eds, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vols, (Cambridge, 1971–1992), vol. II: AD 395–527, 180–81.

spoil of Priscus Attalus: for example, it was common practice to publicly display the heads of vanquished usurpers in this way.¹⁷

The walls of Constantine at the Exokionion collapsed in the earthquake of 867, which presumably also caused serious damage to the gate.¹⁸ Triumphal processions would continue to pass along this route in the centuries that followed, suggesting that the gate retained its status as a triumphal entrance. Chrysoloras' description of 1411 suggests that elements of the gate were still visible or remembered at that time. Mango has identified these with the *Porta antiquissima pulchra* marked on Buondelmonti's panorama from c. 1422.¹⁹ By c. 1390 images of the Crucifixion and of the Second Coming had been painted on the gate, giving rise to yet another name, also preserved in the Turkish topographical record: Isakapı – the Gate of Jesus.²⁰

Icons of Christ are known to have been displayed over several major gates during the Byzantine era. These include, for example, the Chalke Gate at the entrance to Constantinople's imperial palace, and the Cherubim Gate at Antioch. The masonry of the Golden Gate in Constantinople's Theodosian Walls was also decorated with carved crosses and the cruciform imperial monogram. The tradition appears to have been a tutelary concept, with the display of Christian images gradually replacing that of Greco-Roman symbols of triumph and victory at major city gates.²¹ Already by the sixth century the Theodosian Walls had become associated with an invisible line of spiritual protection, watched over by the Virgin Mary herself.²² In 626, when the city was attacked by Persian, Slav and Avar armies, the contemporary homily of Theodore Synkellos suggests that her icons were set over the gates during the siege, at the orders of Patriarch Sergius.²³ Synkellos and George of Pisidia also mention that an

¹⁷ See M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West*, (Cambridge, 1990), 46.

¹⁸ I. Bekker, ed., *Georgius Cedrenus: Historiarum compendium*, 2 vols, (Bonn, 1839), vol. II, 173.

¹⁹ C. Mango, *Topographie de Constantinople. Le développement urbain de Constantinople (IV–VII siècles)*. *Travaux et Mémoires. Monographies*, 2 (Paris, 1985; repr. with addenda, Paris, 1990), 24–25. Christoforus de Buondelmontibus, *Liber Insularum Arcipelagi*, (Venice, 1466), map F. 37v: 'CONSTANTINOPOLIS'.

²⁰ See G. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries* (Washington D.C., 1984), 146; C. Mango, 'The date of the Anonymous Russian description of Constantinople', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 45 (1952), 380–85, (repr. with addenda in C. Mango, *Studies on Constantinople*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 394, (Aldershot, 1993), XXI); T. Papazotos, 'To Isa Kapisi Mescidi στην Κωνσταντινούπολη, μονή του πατριάρχου Αθανασίου', *Δελτίον Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Έταιρείας*, 18 (1995), 39–48 at 46; Mango, 'Triumphal Way', 176.

²¹ The Gates of Edessa and Philippi in Macedonia both featured inscriptions of Christ's *Letter to Abgar*, which was believed to offer divine protection against enemies. See A. Lidov, 'Holy Face, Holy Script, Holy Gate. Revealing the Edessa paradigm in Christian imagery', in A. Calderoni Mazetti, C. Dufour Bozzo and G. Wolf, eds, *Intorno al Sacro Volto*, (Venice, 2007), 145–62. A stone relief of Victory installed to the left of the Kynegos Gate (Ayvan Saray) remained *in situ* until 1894, when it was removed to the Istanbul Archaeological Museum: see N. Firatli, C. Metzger, J.-P. Sodini, A. Pralong and A. Arel, *La sculpture byzantine figurée au Musée Archéologique d'Istanbul*, (Paris, 1990), 37, no. 68. A relief of the Virgin Mary said to have been fixed to the right side of the Gate is now lost, but was recorded as being in place as late as the seventeenth century: see G. Mendel, *Musées impériaux ottomans: Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines*, 3 vols, (Constantinople, 1912–1914) vol. II, 449–53, no. 667. Cf. M. Mundell Mango, 'Imperial art in the seventh century', in P. Magdalino, ed., *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, (Aldershot, 1994), 109–38 at 112. Constantinople's Rhesium Gate also possessed a relief of a saint.

²² H. B. Dewing and G. Downey, eds and trans., *Procopius*, 7 vols, Loeb Classical Library, 48, 81, 107, 173, 217, 290, 343 (Cambridge Mass., 1940, repr. 2002), VII: *On Buildings*, 40 (I.3.9).

²³ Theodore Syncellus, *Homily on the Avar siege of Constantinople*: see L. Sternbach, ed., 'Analecta Avarica', in F. Makk (ed.), *Traduction et commentaire de l'homélie écrite probablement par*

acheiropoietos of Christ (a miraculous image not made by human hands) was brought to the walls before the decisive engagement.²⁴ The display of Christ's image in this way may have become more common following the miraculous discovery of the *Mandyllion*, a relic preserving an imprint of Christ's features, above one of the city gates at Edessa.²⁵ The emperor Romanos Lekapenos notably decided to parade the *Mandyllion* through the Golden Gate in the Theodosian Walls in 944, as part of the relic's translation to the royal chapel of the Pharos in the Great Palace, presumably passing through the remains of the triumphal entrance in the walls of Constantine which lay along the same route.²⁶

With the glory days of the Roman Empire long gone, therefore, and hopes of a lasting military victory fading, Constantinople's emperors increasingly turned their attention towards Christian expectations of a divine triumph, with consequences for the monuments and ceremonies that had traditionally served to celebrate imperial victory. At Isakapı, a small Byzantine church was built in the eleventh or twelfth century and restored in the fourteenth century, which may have incorporated elements of the gate's masonry (Fig. 2).²⁷ The church and remnants of the gate were destroyed by an earthquake in 1509, after which a small mosque and *medrese* were built on the site of the church, attributed to the Ottoman architect Sinan.²⁸

A Constantinian '*Porta Aurea*'?

According to the written sources, therefore, there once existed a magnificent gate at the site where Constantinople's main thoroughfare, the Mese, met the walls of Constantine. The iconography on display and the gate's place within those walls on a route marked out by Constantine connect it with his reign, while other elements of its decoration seem to have been installed under one of his successors, Theodosius II. The sources also show that this would have been the city's main triumphal entrance in the fourth century. Only once, however, is this lost gate in the walls of Constantine designated as a *Porta Aurea* (Golden Gate).²⁹ This is in the *Notitia of Constantinople*, a document revised up

Théodore le Syncelle sur le siège de Constantinople en 626, Acta universitatis de Attila Jozsef nominatae, Acta Antiqua et Archaeologica 19, Opuscula Byzantina 3 (Szeged, 1975), 74–96. It should also be noted that this has been questioned in modern scholarship on the development of the cult of the Theotokos and her icons. See, for example, C. Angelidi and T. Papamastorakis, 'Picturing the Spiritual protector. From Blachernitissa to Hodegetria', in M. Vassilaki, ed., *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, (Aldershot, 2005), 209–23.

²⁴ Theodore Syncellus, *Homily on the Avar siege*; George of Pisidia, *Avar War*, in A. Pertusi, ed. and tr., *Giorgio di Pisidia, Poemi: Panegirici epici*, Studia patristica et byzantina, 7 (Ettal, 1959), 196–97; L. Dindorf, ed., *Chronicon Paschale*, (Bonn, 1832), a. 626. The contemporary *Miracula* of Saint Demetrius similarly describes this saint warding off Slavic attacks on Thessaloniki. See P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Demetrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, vol. 1: *Le texte*, (Paris, 1979).

²⁵ Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.27, PG 86, coll. 2415–2866: 2745–2750.

²⁶ F. Combefis and I. Bekker, eds, *Theophanes Continuatus*, (Bonn, 1838), VI.48, p. 432. See A.-M. Dubarle, 'L'homélie de Grégoire le référendaire pour la réception de l'image d'Edesse', *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 55 (1997), 5–51; Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *Narratio de Imagine Edessena*, PG 113, coll. 421–54; M. Guscini, *The Image of Edessa*, (Leuven, 2009), 7–69.

²⁷ M. Sav, 'İsakapı (Esekapı-İbrahim Paşa-Manastır) Mescidi', *Kültür İstanbul Özel Sayısı İl*, 7 (2007), 48–54; M. Sav, 'İhya sürecinde temel araştırmasına dönük mescid kazıları', *Restorasyon Yıllığı Dergisi*, 2 (2011), 91–109 at 105–07.

²⁸ Sav, *Kazıları*, 106.

²⁹ See Mango, 'Triumphal Way', 175.

to c. 427, where such a monument is listed in the city's Region XII.³⁰ Thereafter, the term *Porta Aurea* is used only to refer to the Golden Gate in the later Theodosian Walls.

As Bardill has demonstrated, the Theodosian Walls were begun under the emperor Arcadius between 404 and 405, and completed by 413 under his son, Theodosius II.³¹ It is generally believed that this Theodosian Golden Gate was built by the time the walls were finished, and would therefore have been already standing by the time the *Notitia* was completed, although no such gate is mentioned therein. Furthermore, the closing remarks of the *Notitia* make it clear that the *Porta Aurea* mentioned stood within the Constantinian Walls, and not those of Theodosius.³² This information raises a number of questions: could the *Notitia* have confused or conflated a gate in the walls of Constantine with the Theodosian Golden Gate, or simply have mistakenly situated the Theodosian gate within the city's Region XII, or did a *Porta Aurea* indeed exist at this time in the walls of Constantine?

In order to consider this question further, one must explore the possibility that Constantine planned the triumphal gate in Constantinople as a *Porta Aurea* from the outset, and examine the significance of the concept of a *Porta Aurea* at Constantinople and within the wider Roman tradition. One of the inscriptions placed over the central arch of the Theodosian Golden Gate can be translated thus: 'He who builds a gate in gold governs a Golden Age'.³³ The inscription is believed to have been placed there in the reign of Theodosius II, when the gate received gilded decoration, as noted later. The 'Golden Age' of Men described in Hesiod is typified as an era of peace and prosperity.³⁴ At Rome, periods of universal peace throughout the empire could be ceremonially marked with the closing of the gates of the Temple of Janus, the god of gates and doors, by decree of the Senate. In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus records that this had happened only twice in the entire history of the Roman Republic, but occurred three times during

³⁰ O. Seeck, ed., *Notitia dignitatum: accedunt notitia urbis Constantinopolitanae et Laterculi provinciarum*, (Berlin, 1876), 239, l. 8 and 243, l. 56.

³¹ Bardill, 'Golden Gate', 676; S. Malmberg, 'Triumphal arches and gates of piety at Constantinople, Ravenna and Rome', in S. Birk, T.M. Kristensen and B. Poulsen, eds, *Using Images in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford, 2014), 150–89 at 158–59, proposes that the walls were not completed until 416.

³² A distance of 14,075 Roman feet, just over 4 km, is given for the length of the city from the *Porta Aurea* to the end of the promontory, which corresponds with the line of the Constantinian fortifications. See *Notitia*, 243, l. 56.

³³ The inscriptions were noted by Sirmond in 1652: Sidonius Apollinaris Episcopus, 'Vita operaque (a Sirmondo Adornata)', *PL* 58, coll. 435–748 at 669a, and by C. Pertusier, *Promenades pittoresques dans Constantinople*, (Paris, 1815), 135, and confirmed in 1889, when the letters were reconstructed from a study of the dowel holes over the archways into which they had been fixed (see J. Strzygowski, 'Das goldene Thor in Konstantinopel', *Jahrbuch des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, 8 (1893), 1–39 at 5–9). Cf. C. Mango, 'The Byzantine inscriptions of Constantinople: A Bibliographical Survey', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 55 (1951), 52–66 at 54, n. 4.

³⁴ For the inscription, see below. F. Solmsen, ed., *Hesiodi Theogonia, Opera et dies, Scutum*, 3rd ed., (Oxford, 1990), ll. 109–21. The Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron Gates, at the cardinal points of entry into Diocletian's Palace at Split (c. 305), provide a clear reference to Hesiod's Ages of Man, but their designation as such is of uncertain date, possibly dating to the period of Venetian rule. It is also related that Constantinople's Great Palace possessed a Silver Gate, through which Leo VI welcomed Patriarch Euthymius (see P. Karlin-Hayter, ed. and trans., *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP. Text, Translation, Introduction and Commentary*, Bibliothèque de Byzantion, 3 (Brussels, 1970), 21.20–23), and a Bronze Gate (the Chalke), which was rebuilt in 538 and is recorded in descriptions of events before 494–95: see H. Thurn, ed., *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, (Berlin, 2000), 16.4, 18.85; C. Mango, *The Brazen House. A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople. With an Appendix by Ernest Mamboury*, (Copenhagen, 1959).

his reign.³⁵ It is therefore possible that the creation of the Golden Gate as a triumphal entrance in the walls of Theodosius was influenced by at least two separate traditions, one celebrating peace, the other, victory. Could this have also been true of the triumphal gate in the walls of Constantine?

In the Roman Republic values such as Peace, Concord and Victory were revered as divine figures in their own right.³⁶ Following Augustus's victory in Rome's civil wars, these 'Roman Virtues' were developed as part of the imperial cult, and became hallmarks of a so-called Roman 'Golden Age' of victory against external threats and of relative internal peace and stability that was to last over 200 years (27 BC – AD 180).³⁷ Numismatic evidence shows that these 'virtues' remained popular throughout the crisis of the third century and during the Tetrarchic period, and as the concepts they evoked became more aspirational than actual, their canon was regularly reinterpreted and expanded.³⁸

Could such a notion have prompted the construction of a *Porta Aurea* under Constantine? Constantine would not have been the first ruler of Rome to claim to have replicated the achievements of its first emperor, Augustus Caesar. However, in reuniting and restoring the empire to its former glory, he would have been more justified than many of his predecessors to be acclaimed as the founder of a Golden Age.³⁹ In the dedications of major Christian churches at Constantinople and Antioch, he enshrined Golden Age virtues such as Peace (*Eirene*), Concord (*Homonoia*) and Wisdom (*Sophia*).⁴⁰ Nevertheless, there is little clear evidence that Constantine was widely and directly lauded as the founder of a Golden Age. A well-known letter of Sidonius Appollinaris refers to a satirical barb allegedly posted by Constantine's praetorian prefect in secret upon the doors of the palace after Constantine had ordered the death of his own son and wife: 'Saturni aurea saeculi quis requirat? Sunt haec gemmea, sed Neroniana'.⁴¹ This letter, however, was composed about 150 years after the events described, by an author who lived during Constantinople's Theodosian era, when concepts such as a Golden Age and Golden Gate formed a regular part of imperial

³⁵ A. Cooley, *Res Gestae divi Augusti: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (Cambridge, 2009), XIII.

³⁶ See H. Mattingly, 'The Roman "Virtues"', *Harvard Theological Review*, 30 (1937), 103–17.

³⁷ Juvenal describes the cult of *Pax*, *Fides*, *Victoria*, *Virtus* and *Concordia*: see S. M. Braund, ed. and tr., *Juvenal and Persius*, Loeb Classical Library, 91 (Cambridge Mass., 2004), 140 (I, l. 115). The Augustan poet Ovid recounted the Ages of Men in Latin (F. J. Miller and G. P. Goold, eds and trans., *Ovid, Metamorphoses*, 2 vols, Loeb Classical Library, 42–43 (Cambridge Mass., 1916, repr. 2004), vol. I: Books 1–8, 8–10 (I, ll. 89–112). Official reverence for these 'virtues' grew, alongside Rome's imperial cults as *Pax Romana* or *Pax Augusta*, and *Augusta Concordia*, and subsequently became watchwords of Constantine's regime, especially at Constantinople, with *Sapientia* (Wisdom) also prominent in this period. See S. W. Stevenson and F. W. Madden, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins, Republican and Imperial*, (London, 1889), 716; D. L. Vagi, *Coinage and History of the Roman Empire, c. 82 BC-AD 480*, 2 vols, (Sydney, 1999), vol. I: *History*, 524–25, 530.

³⁸ J. R. Fears, 'The cult of virtues and Roman imperial ideology', in W. Haase, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung, Pars II: Principat, 17.2 (Religion)*, (Berlin, 1982), 827–948.

³⁹ 'Bringer of a Golden Age' was not an uncommon accolade following the accession of Augustus. A. Bowman, P. Garnsey and A. Cameron, eds, *The Cambridge Ancient History XII (The Crisis of Empire, AD 193–337)*, (Cambridge, 2005), 67. Cf. J. Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age*, (Cambridge, 2012).

⁴⁰ N. Lenski, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, (Cambridge, 2006), 292–93.

⁴¹ See W.B. Anderson, ed. and trans., *Sidonius: Poems and Letters*, 2 vols, Loeb Classical Library, 296, 420 (Cambridge Mass., 1965), vol. II: *Letters*, 196 (*Epistula* 5.8.2).

propaganda. Contemporary descriptions of Constantine's reign, meanwhile, refer to gold mainly for its solar associations: a panegyric of the contemporary poet Porphyrius hails Constantine as 'lux aurea mundi' and 'lux aurea saeculi'.⁴²

Whether or not Constantine officially encouraged perceptions of his reign as a Golden Age, contemporary sources frequently associated and compared the emperor with *Sol Invictus*, the Victorious Sun.⁴³ The Roman cult of the Sun as *Sol Invictus*, favoured by the emperor Constantine, combined solar and chronological elements with aspects of military victory.⁴⁴ *Sol* was personified in Roman art as a male figure with a radiate crown, often depicted driving across the heavens in a four-horse *quadriga* chariot. Roman emperors would usually take part in triumphal processions in similar attire, as portrayed in the commemorative statues set upon their triumphal arches (e.g. on Rome's Arch of Augustus).⁴⁵ As a pedestal for imperial statuary, situated on the city's main triumphal route, the gate in the Constantinian Walls would have served a similar function to a triumphal Roman arch or *arcus*.⁴⁶ It may therefore have resembled triumphal arches such as those erected in Rome, and the statue of Constantine that stood upon it may have depicted the emperor in the guise of the triumphant Sun, driving a gilded *quadriga*.

Another potential connection exists between the cult of the Sun and ceremonial city gates. Like Rome and Alexandria, Constantinople followed in a tradition of cities that bore the name of their heroic or deified founder. In Antiquity, an international capital city of such high standing could be represented as a reflection of the universe in microcosm: a *cosmopolis*.⁴⁷ It has been argued that Alexandria was cosmically arranged along a longitudinal axis to commemorate the life of its founder and reflect monumentally the passage of the heavenly spheres and of time itself.⁴⁸ The city's eastern gate was dedicated to the Sun and the city's western gate to the Moon.⁴⁹ This

⁴² See J. Polara, ed., *Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius Carmina* (Turin, 1973), 35, 74 (*Carmina* 8.1 and 19.2).

⁴³ See F. Winkelmann, C. Pietri, L. Pietri and M.-J. Rondeau, eds and trans., *Eusèbe de Césarée, Vie de Constantin*, Sources Chrétiennes, 559 (Paris, 2013), I.43 (comparison of Constantine to the Sun) and III.26 (comparison of Christ to the Sun). See also n. 44.

⁴⁴ For connections between the Sun, the Golden Age and Constantine, see Bardill, *Constantine*, esp. 12 (Constantine's use of a royal diadem from 330), 28–30 (his statue atop the Column of Constantine and sunburst diadem), 44–46 ('Golden Age' of imperial Rome).

⁴⁵ The *quadriga* could be considered sacred to the Sun, and the two-horse *biga* to the Moon, as can be seen from their representation in the eastern (Sun) and western (Moon) roundels of the Arch of Constantine in Rome. See J. H. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses: Arenas for Chariot Racing*, (London, 1986), 94.

⁴⁶ These marked a development from the ordinary column or pedestal base used for honorific statues and were ideally suited to triumphal use, marking and monumentalising the processional route. See S. B. Platner and T. Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (London, 1929), 33.

⁴⁷ See H. Halim, *Alexandrian Cosmopolitanism: An Archive*, (New York, 2013); J. P. Anton, 'Alexandria: the history and legend of a city', in *Conspectus of History: Annual Publication of the Department of History, Ball State University*, 4.1 (1977), 13–23; C. Edwards and G. Woolf, *Rome the Cosmopolis*, (Cambridge, 2003); C. Rapp, 'A medieval *Cosmopolis*: Constantinople and its foreign inhabitants', in J. M. Asgeirsson, N. van Deusen, eds, *Alexander's Revenge: Hellenistic Culture Through the Centuries*, (Reykjavik, 2002), 153–71.

⁴⁸ It has been argued that this arrangement pointed to the rising sun on Alexander's birthday: see G. Magli and L. Ferro, 'The astronomical orientation of the urban plan of Alexandria', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 31.4 (2012), 381–89. No such study has yet, to my knowledge, been conducted for Constantinople.

⁴⁹ T. Vrettos, *Alexandria: City of the Western Mind*, (New York, 2001), 8. Antioch's Cherubim Gate also bore a bronze statue in honour of the Moon: see G. Downey, 'The Wall of Theodosius at

concept may have originated in local traditions, since Egyptian religious texts describe the passage of the Sun god, Ra, through the cosmos via a series of gates.⁵⁰ The triumphal procession of a victor through the gates of a *cosmopolis* might thus be seen to mirror the Sun's passage through the cosmos.⁵¹

It seems more plausible that these traditions, rather than the later notion of a Golden Gate (which is first recorded only in the fifth century), would have influenced the decoration or designation of a triumphal entrance in Constantinople's walls of Constantine, providing an appropriate backdrop for the arrival (*adventus*) and departure (*profectio*) of an emperor who was often depicted in close association with his patron figure, *Sol Invictus*.⁵² Such a gate may have been intended as a Gate of the Sun, as in Alexandria, rather than as a *Porta Aurea*. Like a number of Constantine's major buildings, such as his mausoleum in Constantinople, such a gate would probably have featured gilded decoration, allowing it to shine like the Sun, which may have later earned it its name of *Porta Aurea* in the *Notitia*.⁵³ If a bronze statue of the defeated Priscus Attalus was added in c. 416, this would have formed part of a Theodosian project of works that, as we shall see, included the application or restoration of gilding and resulted in the gate's identification as a *Porta Aurea* in the *Notitia* by 427.

Picturing Constantine's Lost Gate

As described above, it seems that a triumphal gate existed in the walls of Constantine, apparently bearing a statue of Constantine driving a four-horse *quadriga*, and featuring gilded decoration. In order to further explore the probable form that such a gate would have taken, one should set the monument within the context of both triumphal gates and triumphal arches. It has been suggested that the gate could have been the tetrapylon with a chamber upon columns that the *Patria* situates in this region of the city.⁵⁴ This could be compared with Constantine's Arch of Malborghetto (a tetrapylon on the Via Flaminia near the site of his victory at the Milvian Bridge) or the triumphal *Arcus Divi*

Antioch', *American Journal of Philology*, 62 (1941), 207–13; G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars AD 363–628, Part 2 (AD 363–630)*, (London, 1991), 250, n. 60.

⁵⁰ See E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Heaven and Hell*, 3 vols, (London, 1905), vol. II: *The Book of Gates*.

⁵¹ See Beard, *Roman Triumph*, 234–38. The chariot races in Rome's Circus and Constantinople's Hippodrome, where triumphs often culminated, were considered to replicate the orbit of the heavenly spheres: see Å. J. Fridh, ed., *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori Senatoris Opera*, 2 vols, (Turnhout, 1958–1973), vol. I: *Variae*, 3.41.9 (King Theoderic to Gemellus, c. 510). See Bardill, *Constantine*, 154. The theme of the victor as a triumphal charioteer exalted to divine status can also be found in the so-called 'Ascension of Alexander' relief, a twelfth-century carved marble panel set in the north façade of the Basilica of San Marco in Venice, generally considered to be a *spolium* from Constantinople.

⁵² For the imperial *profectio* and *adventus* at Constantinople, see B. Croke, 'Justinian's Constantinople', in M. Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, (Cambridge, 2005), 60–86 at 76.

⁵³ For the central role of the Sun as *Sol Invictus* in Constantine's triumphal building programme in Rome, see E. Marlowe, 'Framing the sun. The Arch of Constantine and the Roman cityscape', *Art Bulletin*, 88 (2006), 223–42. Eusebius's contemporary account records the liberal use of gold, reflecting the sun's rays, on Constantine's mausoleum (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, IV.58), and at Christ's tomb at the Holy Sepulchre Church, also described as reflecting the sunlight (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, III.36).

⁵⁴ *Patria*, 2.55; Mango, 'Triumphal Way', 175.

Constantini in Rome's Forum Boarium, dedicated in 356 by Constantius II.⁵⁵ However, it seems that the structure in the walls of Constantine was intended from the outset to serve as a gate, rather than as a freestanding monument such as a tetrapylon, since, according to Chrysoloras, it also incorporated defensive towers, and was presumably part of the city walls planned by Constantine before his death in 337, serving as the city's main entrance upon the new route created by the diversion of the Via Egnatia by 333. One should therefore look elsewhere for a more suitable parallel.

The Arch of Constantine (c. 315) in Rome would have presented an important precedent for any ceremonial arch or triumphal gate at Constantinople. The monument follows the same design as Rome's triple Arch of Augustus (20 BC) and Arch of Septimius Severus (AD 193–211), consisting of a great central arch flanked by a pair of lesser side arches, bearing a statue ensemble of a victorious figure driving a four-horse chariot.⁵⁶ Furthermore, this monument was intended to make important references, both in its decoration and by its location, to the cult of *Sol Invictus*.⁵⁷ In its general design, it also resembles the Golden Gate in the Theodosian Walls of Constantinople (Fig. 3), connecting this architecture with the concepts of a triumphal gate and *Porta Aurea* in the Byzantine capital. This potential influence on the design of a triumphal gate in the walls of Constantine is supported by the survival elsewhere of a monument that permits an even closer comparison.

In the reign of Augustus, the entire length of the Via Flaminia was repaired from Rome to Ariminum (Rimini) at the emperor's personal expense.⁵⁸ This road crossed the Tiber at the Milvian Bridge and entered Rome via the Campus Martius, where it formed a major triumphal route into the city for armies returning from campaign.⁵⁹ Augustus also set up two commemorative arches at either end of the Via Flaminia, at Ariminum on the Adriatic and at the Milvian Bridge (now lost). Ariminum's Arch of Augustus has survived: a broad marble archway, decorated with carved reliefs, once bearing a bronze statue of the emperor driving a *quadriga*.⁶⁰ The Milvian Bridge, at the other end of the route, was also the scene of Constantine's greatest triumph. For this reason, Augustus' commemorative arch at the Milvian Bridge, at the end of his restored Via Flaminia may have been influential on the architecture chosen by Constantine for freestanding victory monuments such as the Arch of Malborghetto. However, such a monument was not primarily intended to serve as a gateway within a city's defensive

⁵⁵ This monument, which came to be known as the Arch of Janus Quadrifrons, was a square tetrapylon, clad in marble, its four faces decorated with two rows of six semi-circular niches, intended for statues, each flanked by colonnettes. Diocletian's Golden Gate at Split (see n. 34), while not a tetrapylon, similarly incorporates statue niches within its façade.

⁵⁶ The Arch of Augustus commemorated the emperor's triumph over the Parthians in 20 BC (replacing an earlier Arch of Octavian in honour of the same emperor's final victory in the civil wars at Actium in 29 BC). It has been argued that the Arch of Constantine was in fact originally erected in honour of Domitian (AD 81–96): see A.L. Frothingham, 'Who built the Arch of Constantine? Its history from Domitian to Constantine', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 16.3 (1912), 368–86. Domitian's name would have been erased from this and any other monument he had commissioned following his death and *damnatio memoriae*: see R. A. Kaster, ed., *Macrobius: Saturnalia*, 3 vols, Loeb Classical Library, 510–12 (Cambridge Mass., 2011), vol. I, 155 (1.12.36–37).

⁵⁷ See Marlowe, 'Framing the Sun'.

⁵⁸ *Res Gestae*, XX; J. C. Rolfe, ed. and tr., *Suetonius*, 2 vols, Loeb Classical Library, 31, 38 (Cambridge Mass., 1913–1914, repr. 1997–1998), vol. I, 194–96 (*Life of Augustus*, XXX).

⁵⁹ Beard, *Roman Triumph*, 52–53.

⁶⁰ It would eventually be included within the city walls, serving as the south gate, and in medieval times become known as Ariminum's Golden Gate.

walls. A potential parallel for the triumphal gate in Constantinople's Walls of Constantine must be sought elsewhere.

Constantine also followed Augustus' example in becoming the patron of the Via Flaminia, with several of the towns and monuments along it being rededicated in his honour.⁶¹ Of these, Fanum Fortunae (Fano), situated where the Via Flaminia first reaches the Adriatic Sea, provides an important example. Like Constantinople, it was renamed in the emperor's honour, in this case as Flavia Fanestri, after Constantine's family, the *Gens Flavia*.⁶² The town's gates and walls, built by Augustus, were rededicated in honour of the deified Constantine in 337, within a few months of his death.⁶³ As such, their re-dedication would have been contemporary with the construction of the walls of Constantine at Constantinople and, presumably, with their triumphal gate. Furthermore, Fanum's western gateway, the *Porta Augustea*, was faced with large, polished stone blocks, crowned with a colonnaded portico and flanked by a pair of towers (Figs 4–5): this matches precisely the surviving descriptions of the triumphal gate in Constantinople's walls of Constantine.⁶⁴ The arrangement of arches is identical to that of the arches of Augustus, Septimius and Constantine in Rome, and to that used for Constantinople's Theodosian Golden Gate, which may have been influenced by the design of the triumphal gate in the Constantinian Walls, which may thus have also shared the same design.

It is tempting to speculate upon where such a design may have originated, as it is difficult to explain why Augustan gates such as those of Fanum should be chosen as an inspiration for the triumphal gate in the Constantinian Walls. Could these Augustan gates have been imitating a well-known ceremonial gate in a major city? Indeed, other towns along the route of the Via Flaminia, such as Hispellum (modern Spello), rededicated under Constantine as Flavia Constans), possess similar gates and share a mixed heritage of both Augustan and Constantinian building programmes.⁶⁵ These similarities direct one's attention down the route of the Via Flaminia towards Rome.

Constantine's New Rome not only assumed the authority of the Eternal City in the East, but also replicated a number of well-known Roman buildings and institutions, including a new senate, fourteen administrative regions (an innovation made by Augustus), and the *annona* grain dole.⁶⁶ Furthermore, it even imported objects such as Rome's precious talisman, the Palladium. By constructing a triumphal gate at the end of the most direct land route to Rome, Constantine may thus have been aiming to emulate an influential gate in the Eternal City.

At Rome, the *expatiantia tecta* was an extramural belt of land enshrined in Roman law that ensured civil rights enjoyed within the city also covered the city's

⁶¹ R. van Dam, *Remembering Constantine at the Milvian Bridge*, (Cambridge, 2011), 188–90.

⁶² Van Dam, *Remembering Constantine*, 189.

⁶³ The *Porta Augustea*'s original dedication in bronze letters by 'Deified Augustus' was left in place, and juxtaposed with a new inscription honouring 'Deified Constantine': H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 3 vols, (Berlin, 1892–1916), vol. I, 159, no. 706.

⁶⁴ See V. Purcaro, 'Osservazioni sulla "Porta Augustea" di Fano', *Rendiconti Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Series 8, 37.5–6 (Rome, 1982), 141–58; S. De Maria, *Gli archi di Roma e dell'Italia romana*, (Rome, 1988), 242–43 and tav. 23.

⁶⁵ For Hispellum (*Porta Consolare* and *Porta Venere*), see A. L. Frothingham, *Roman Cities in Northern Italy and Dalmatia*, (London, 1910), 188–96. For *Carsulae* (north gate), see G. Becatti, *Regio VII. Umbria I, Tuder-Carsulae. Forma Italiae*, Topografia Antica, 4 (Rome, 1938), 89–104.

⁶⁶ W. Bright and R. Hussey, *Socrates' Ecclesiastical History*, (Oxford, 1878), 2.13. See also B. Ward-Perkins, 'Old and New Rome compared: the rise of Constantinople', in L. Grig and G. Kelly, eds, *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford, 2012), 53–78.

suburban population.⁶⁷ Its outer edge corresponded with a customs boundary for duties, beyond which military law held sway. The transition from military to civil jurisdiction was an important part of the Roman triumph, which granted the victor exceptional powers to carry their military office into Rome's urban environment.⁶⁸ The final stretch of the Via Flaminia, which crossed the *expatiantia tecta*, entered the Campus Martius and approached the Porta Fontinalis in the city's old Servian Walls, was known as the Via Lata. It was a popular triumphal route, as attested by the three triumphal arches along its course.⁶⁹ As such, the point where the Via Flaminia crossed the boundary of the *expatiantia tecta*, marking the customary end of *imperium*, a general's military authority, and the commencement of civil jurisdiction, would have been an ideal location for a *Porta Triumphalis*.⁷⁰ Such a monument would have presumably been integrated into the city's Aurelian Walls in the third century as the Porta Flaminia. This no longer survives in its original form, although it may have influenced the design of its fourteenth-century replacement, the present Porta del Popolo, which is intriguingly reminiscent of a Roman triumphal triple-arch, such as the Arch of Constantine. Like the other major gates in Rome's Aurelian Walls (Porta Appia, Porta Ostiensis and Porta Portuensis), the Porta Flaminia possessed at least two portals, with a semi-circular brick tower to either side.⁷¹ As such, it is comparable with the *Porta Augustea* at Fanum and with the triumphal entrance in the Constantinian Walls of Constantinople, based on its description in the written sources. Subsequently, however, both the Porta Flaminia and Porta Appia, lying on opposite sides of the Roman Forum, were reduced to a single entrance, with their rounded towers encased in rectangular bastions and faced in white marble and crowned with a simple moulding. This work has been attributed to the western emperor Honorius in 401–03, and statues of the emperors of East and West in this period, Arcadius and Honorius, are said to have been set up over the gates.⁷² This would have given the Porta Flaminia an almost identical appearance to the Golden Gate in the Theodosian Walls at Constantinople, and it is tempting to consider whether similar work (i.e. marble facing and square encasement of the towers) may have been carried out during this period on the Constantinian Gate in Constantinople. Regardless of whether it was recognised as Rome's only or official *Porta Triumphalis*, a monument such as the Porta Flaminia may have provided an important precedent not only for the ceremonial entrances to towns such as Fanum, built by Augustus along the length of his renovated Via Flaminia, but also for the Golden Gate in Constantinople's

⁶⁷ A. L. Frothingham, 'The Roman Territorial Arch', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 19.2 (1915), 155–74 at 158–59, with reference to the *Lex Acilia* of 123 BC, the *Lex Cornelia* of c. 80–81 BC and the *Lex Iulia Municipalis* of 45 BC.

⁶⁸ The requirement for an *imperator* and his army to surrender their arms and authority upon crossing the *pomoerium* did not apply on the day of a triumph, affording victorious generals with their only opportunity to march into the city without relinquishing their roles: see Beard, *Roman Triumph*, 202.

⁶⁹ These were the Arch of Claudius (AD 51/2), the Arco di Portogallo (probably Aurelianic) and the Arcus Novus of Diocletian (303/4). At least one of these existed as an extramural monument before the area was enclosed by the Aurelian Walls (271/5).

⁷⁰ See n. 5.

⁷¹ L. Richardson Jr, *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, (Baltimore, 1992), 303.

⁷² The Aurelian Walls were restored in 403 under Honorius and Arcadius, with statues of the emperors set over a number of the gates, for example the Porta Portuensis, Porta Praenestina, and Porta Tiburtina: see G. Hensen and E. Bormann, *Inscriptiones urbis Romae Latinae, Pars I*, (Berlin, 1876), 218, nos. 1188, 1189, 1190. The works at the Porta Flaminia and Porta Appia may have been intended to receive Honorius' triumphal entrance into Rome in 404.

Theodosian walls, and quite possibly also for the lost, earlier triumphal gate in that city's walls of Constantine.

The *Porta Aurea*: A Theodosian Concept?

While it is possible that the triumphal gate in the walls of Constantine was designated from the outset as a *Porta Aurea*, it appears that it only acquired this title in the Theodosian period. As noted already, the Constantinian gate's mention as a *Porta Aurea* in the *Notitia*, compiled by c. 427, is the first and only time it is recorded as such. The monument may have been renovated as a Theodosian *Porta Aurea* to commemorate the defeat of Priscus Attalus in 416, a victory won in the West but celebrated at Constantinople to mark the year in which Theodosius II formally took over government of the empire in the East, and it is possible that some gilded decoration was also added at that time.⁷³ A recent archaeological discovery also supports the possibility that the triumphal arch in the walls of Constantine received ornamentation under the Theodosian dynasty. In 2008, a small obelisk of pink granite, about 3 m tall, was discovered under the paving of the Isakapı church, believed to mark the location of the Constantinian gate and rebuilt as a mosque and medrese under the Ottomans.⁷⁴ This obelisk may have stood either on the Constantinian gate itself or, more probably, in the open area in front of it, where it could have served as the gnomon of a monumental sundial.⁷⁵

In ancient Egypt, obelisks were dedicated to the Egyptian Sun god, Ra. This connection was preserved into the Greco-Roman era.⁷⁶ Obelisks ceased to be imported to Constantinople after the fourth century. The obelisk acquired by Theodosius for the Hippodrome was a spoil from the Temple of Karnak, where it had been dedicated by the Pharaoh Thutmose III (1479–25 BC). It was a splendid choice for a victory monument for an emperor who, like Constantine, publicly associated himself with the cult of Sol Invictus, the victorious Sun.⁷⁷ Rather than serving to designate the monument specifically as a Golden Gate, the erection of an obelisk at the Exokionion would primarily have reinforced the triumphal associations of the gate through its connection with the cult of Sol Invictus favoured by Constantine and Theodosius I.

A small obelisk, reminiscent of that found at the Exokionion, once stood at the city's Strategion forum (the agora of ancient Byzantium) and was allegedly part of the

⁷³ Malmberg, 'Triumphal Arches and Gates', 159–61.

⁷⁴ Sav, *Kazıları*, 107.

⁷⁵ See W. M. Flinders Petrie, *A History of Egypt*, 2 vols, (London, 1894–1896), vol. II, 131–33. The practice was initiated in Rome by Augustus at the Circus Maximus and the Campus Martius, and probably by Theodosius at the Hippodrome in Constantinople. L. Safran, 'Points of view: The Theodosian obelisk base in context', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 34.4 (1993), 409–35 at 427. E. Buchner, 'L'orologio solare di Augusto', *Rendiconti Pontificia Accademia*, 53–54 (1980–1982), 331–45. The *Meta Sudans* monument, which stood directly in front of the Arch of Constantine in Rome, may also have provided an inspiration.

⁷⁶ For Cassiodorus' explanation of the solar and lunar symbolism of obelisks, see n. 51.

⁷⁷ The inscription on Theodosius I's equestrian statue in the Forum Tauri acclaimed the emperor as a 'second Sun': see W. R. Paton, ed. and trans., *Greek Anthology*, 5 vols, Loeb Classical Library, 67, 68, 84, 85, 86 (London, 1916–1918), vol. V, 194 (*Planudean Anthology*, 16.65). Thutmose III was renowned as Egypt's greatest military conqueror, and his exploits are similarly recounted on the obelisk's dedicatory inscription to the Sun, to whom the Pharaoh is compared.

missing 10 m section broken from the Obelisk of Theodosius.⁷⁸ The Strategion Obelisk was presumably erected when a *Forum Theodosiacum* was constructed there, complete with a triumphal arch bearing a statue of Victory.⁷⁹ The Strategion was situated by the Proosphorion and Neorion harbours. It is recorded as a place for imperial arrivals and departures, and as a starting point for triumphal processions, with emperors arriving by sea from the East and leading the procession directly onwards to the Milion and Hippodrome, as an alternative to the western land route from the Hebdomon that passed through the Theodosian Golden Gate and Exokionion.⁸⁰ The Theodosian works at the Strategion appear to acknowledge that this practice was already in existence during this period.

Constantinople's other Theodosian Forum, on the Mese, is thought to have been constructed in 393 to celebrate the accession of Honorius as emperor in the West, and it is possible that the Strategion forum was constructed at around the same time.⁸¹ If the obelisk excavated at Isakapı shares the reported origin of the obelisk in the Strategion, and presuming the main source concerning the latter is correct, it cannot have arrived in the city before 363, when the Obelisk of Theodosius still lay in Alexandria awaiting transport.⁸² Its installation at Isakapı would thus have taken place in or after 390, when the main fragment of the Obelisk was erected in the Hippodrome (presumably resulting in its split from its missing lower section), with the erection of an obelisk at Isakapı possibly coinciding with that of the Strategion Obelisk. While it is possible that the Isakapı obelisk could also have been raised under Theodosius II, as part of the preparations for the celebration in 416 of Theodosius II's accession and the victory over Priscus Attalus, the erection of obelisks at Constantinople was more commonly associated with Theodosius I, suggesting a date in the 390s.

These obelisks, one at the Exokionion with its triumphal gate, the other at the Strategion with its triumphal arch, would thus have marked the starting points of the two major triumphal routes that entered the city. The two markers could be interpreted as pointing towards the Hippodrome, where Constantinople's triumphal processions usually culminated, with both routes meeting at the site of the masonry obelisk of Constantine and the great Egyptian obelisk of Theodosius, from which at least one of the lesser obelisks is said to have originated, as described earlier. Cassiodorus describes the association of obelisks with the Sun and Moon in Roman times within the symbolism of the ancient Circus games, and describes the lesser obelisk of the Roman Circus as sacred to the Moon.⁸³ This may possibly explain the erection of obelisks at Constantinople's Exokionion and Strategion, marking the major triumphal entrances from the East and from the West, which within the Alexandrian tradition, might also have been associated with the Sun and the Moon, serving to designate Constantinople, like Rome, as a *cosmopolis*.

⁷⁸ See *Patria*, 2.60; E. Iversen, *Obelisks in Exile*, 2 vols, (Copenhagen, 1968–1972), vol. II, 9–33 (Obelisk of Theodosius), 34–35 (Strategion Obelisk). The Strategion Obelisk has been identified by some with the so-called Priuli and Graves Obelisks: see Iversen (1972), 35–38, 38–39.

⁷⁹ For the arch, see Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, PL 51, coll. 913–48 at 937 (a.510).

⁸⁰ Mango, 'Triumphal Way', 177. Under the Komnenoi, imperial entrances into the city were principally made from the east by sea at the Strategion harbour. Mango, 'Triumphal Way', 174, 179, 186, remarks upon this change of route.

⁸¹ See *Notitia*, 233, ll. 11–12, Mango, 'Triumphal Way', 177–78 and n. 79.

⁸² Sav, *Kazıları*, 107; Julian, *Works*, vol. I, 94–100 (*Epistula* 28); W. C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian III*, Loeb Classical Library, 157 (Cambridge Mass., 1923, repr. 1980), 152–54 (Letter 48: To the Alexandrians: AD 363).

⁸³ See n. 51.

If an Egyptian obelisk was indeed erected to mark the triumphal entrance in the Constantinian Walls, rather than at the Theodosian Golden Gate, it might suggest that the former gate still marked the main western entrance for triumphal processions into Constantinople, and that the Theodosian Golden Gate either did not exist or had not yet acquired the elevated status it would later enjoy as Constantinople's ceremonial entrance *par excellence*. The construction of the Theodosian Walls began in 404/5, although, as Bardill has argued, the Theodosian Golden Gate may predate these if it was built as a freestanding triumphal gate, flanked by towers, for the triumph over Maximus in 391.⁸⁴ It seems probable that its designation as a Golden Gate came only after its gilding by Theodosius II, which appears to have taken place in or after 427.⁸⁵ This may either explain its absence from the *Notitia*, or the confused first mention of such a gate, conflated with the earlier triumphal gate in the walls of Constantine. Meanwhile, the gate in the Constantinian Walls may have received gilding as part of its original decoration, probably intended to evoke the victorious Sun, or this was added during the Theodosian period, during which at least two major programmes of monumental decoration appear to have taken place.

In conclusion, based on the available evidence, it would appear that a triumphal entrance in the walls of Constantine at Constantinople was planned by that emperor and completed either during his reign or soon after his death in 337, when the rest of the walls were completed under his son and successor, Constantius II. This gate was decorated with statues, including at least one of Constantine, probably in triumphant pose, driving a *quadriga* chariot, accompanied by Victory (a statue of which also stood atop the triumphal arch at the Strategion). It bore the appearance of a triumphal *arcus* but was also flanked by towers, resembling Fanum's *Porta Augustea*, perhaps in imitation of a *Porta Triumphalis* on the Via Flaminia, which by Constantine's time had been incorporated within Rome's Aurelian Walls as the city's *Porta Flaminia*. Constantine's triumphal gate at Constantinople could have been decorated in gold to reflect the Sun's rays, a feature of other major monuments built by the emperor, such as his mausoleum rotunda. As part of a Theodosian renovation of the site, a small obelisk appears to have been erected near the gate, probably in the 390s, perhaps to emphasise its continued importance at a time when it has been suggested that another major triumphal gate was being built about a mile to the west, marking the future line of the Theodosian Walls. The erection of an obelisk, a monument with cosmic associations, beside the gate in the Constantinian Walls may also have served to boost Constantinople's credentials as a cosmopolis, a major world centre, a worthy equal of Rome, Antioch or Alexandria, while the erection of an obelisk on the Hippodrome's central barrier, the *Spina*, by Theodosius I increased the total number on display there to two, marking Constantinople as Rome's only equal in this respect. In 416, it also seems likely that a bronze statue of the defeated Priscus Attalus was set up on the gate, possibly with the application or restoration of gilded decoration that earned it the name given to it by the *Notitia* by c. 427: the *Porta Aurea*.

In planning a triumphal gate at the entrance to his New Rome, it seems that Constantine was inspired by monuments in Rome and by the cult of the Victorious Sun, as he was for other aspects of the city's development. Nevertheless, the emulation of Rome's triumphal architecture by Constantinople's emperors became notably more marked from c. 390 onwards, beginning with the preparations to celebrate

⁸⁴ Bardill, 'Golden Gate', 686, 690.

⁸⁵ Malalas, *Chronographia*, 14.13; G. Downey, 'The Cherubim Gate at Antioch', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 29.2 (1938–1939), 167–77.

Theodosius I's triumph over the Western usurper, Maximus, in 388. Theodosius' reunification of the empire may thus have provided the major inspiration for the concept of the Golden Gate at Constantinople. It set the standard of imperial triumph for his successors to follow and provided a basis for claims that a Golden Age of Roman peace and prosperity had been restored, a feat proclaimed in gold letters above the central arch of the Theodosian Golden Gate, the most significant surviving triumphal gate of the Byzantine era.⁸⁶

Georges Kazan
Turku Institute of Advanced Studies (Archaeology), University of Turku
and School of Archaeology, University of Oxford

⁸⁶ For the inscription, see n. 33.

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Fig. 1. Sketch plan showing the location of the Golden Gate in relation to the Hebdomon and the southern branch of the Mese. From Bardill, 'Golden Gate', 693, Fig.17 (© Jonathan Bardill).

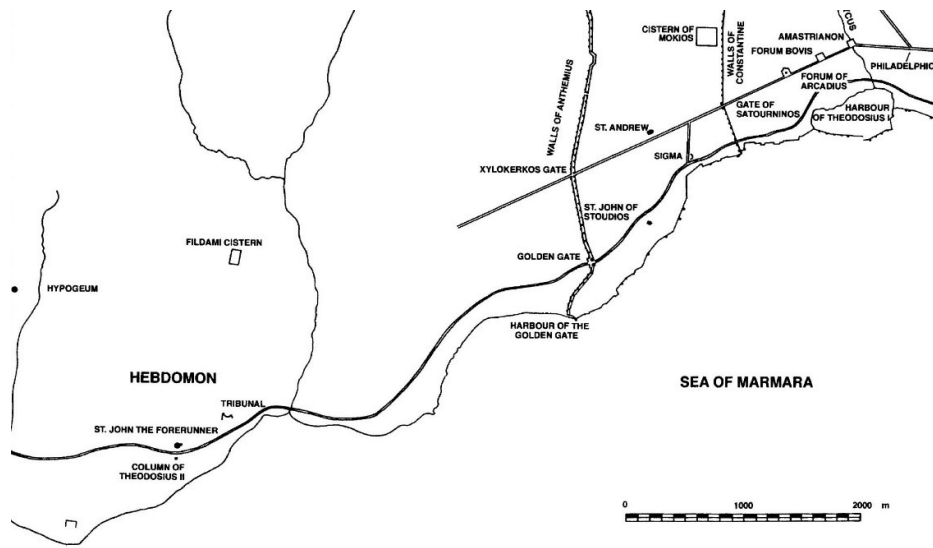


Fig. 2. East Wall, Isakapi Mescidi. Photo: Nicholas Artamonoff, PH.BZ.010-ICFA.NA.0085, Nicholas V. Artamonoff Photographs of Istanbul and Turkey, 1935-1945, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 3: The Golden Gate, Theodosian Walls, Constantinople. Photo credit: Dr. Tara Andrews.



Fig. 4: Porta Augustea at Fanum. Plan and elevation (reconstruction). From P. Taus, 'La cinta augustea di Fano: forma e funzionalità militare' in P. Mignali, R. Pozzi, eds., *Murum dedit: bimillenario delle mura augustee di Fanum Fortunae: Atti del Convegno. I Quaderni del Museo 3* (2012).

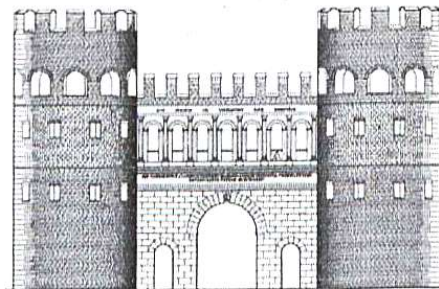
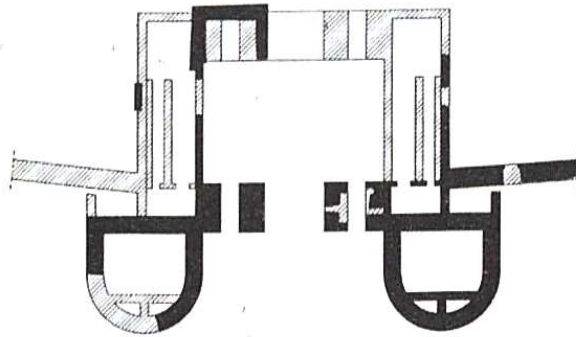


Fig.5: Porta Augustea, Fano (carved representation from the adjacent church of S. Michele, Fano). Photo credit: Sailko, Chiesa San Michele, 2011 (Creative Commons).

