

Visions of Constantinople/Istanbul from the 19th Century Guidebooks

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The first guidebooks to central Europe were released in the 1830s by two chief, rival publishing houses: John Murray of London and Karl Baedeker of Leipzig. Some years later, in 1841, Adolphe Joanne and Hachette began the Guides Joanne series (renamed Guides Bleus in 1916).

The guidebooks for the Levant appeared around 1840, providing information to gentlemen who, after visiting Rome, wished to extend their journey to Greece, Turkey, Palestine or Egypt. Constantinople/Istanbul, endowed with the glamour of the reigning city for two empires for more than 1,500 years, was the highlight of those trips.

In the mean time two parallel developments were at play, catching the general public's eye and feeding a thriving travel literature for the Near East. On the one hand, there was the current of Orientalism in Western Europe, which embraced art and architecture, racial theories, religious programmes, commercial and political enterprises. International Exhibitions, since 1851, dioramas and panoramas "brought" to the centres of the West the "fascinating, distant and unknown Oriental city", offering people an escape from their daily routine. On the other hand, 1839 marked the beginning of an effort by the Ottoman Empire to implement administrative reforms, "open up" to Europe, and halt the downturn.

The first steamer reached Istanbul in 1840, signalling a crucial change in traditional forms of travel by either coach or sail; shipping companies started regular lines conveying not only specialists - diplomats, politicians, businessmen etc. -, but mainly an increasing number of Western travellers who set off with a Murray or a Baedeker in hand for the exotic places of the Levant.

In 1839, Frédéric Lacroix published the first French guidebook, *Guide du voyageur à Constantinople et dans ses environs*, while relevant editions were printed for British and German travellers by Murray (*Turkey*, 1854), Baedeker in 1852 and in the Guide Joanne series in 1860. In those early years, the journey overland was made by coach and crossing the Balkans to the "wild and lawless countries" between the Adriatic and Black Seas (Bradshaw 1874) was quite a venture.

The route became easier and safer when, gradually after 1870, railways connected Western Europe with the Balkans and Asia Minor. The journey to the Levant, notes 1894's Baedeker, "no longer ranks with those exceptional favours of fortune which fall to the lot of but few individuals". Since organised voyages in the Mediterranean became fashionable around 1880, Murray wrote his handbook *Mediterranean: its cities, coasts, and islands*, in 1881; and when at last the Orient Express connected London with Constantinople - covering 3,500 km in 60 hours - Murray published his fully-updated 1907 guidebook and Hachette the commemorative edition, *De Paris à Constantinople*, in 1912.

Until the Great War, a large range of travel books appeared by publishers such as Bradshaw, Macmillan and Cook in Britain, Meyers in Germany, etc. In the early 20th century they were addressed to a large current of tourists, since Istanbul gathered 40-65,000 visitors per year, with a considerable part of its economy centred around them.

This paper will discuss the way in which Constantinople is presented through a series of English, French and German 19th century guidebooks before the arrival of massive tourism, and before the city itself undergone radical transformation under the influence of the major political and war developments in the early 20th century. Moreover, before the name Constantinople was replaced in the titles of guidebooks, by Istanbul, which was gradually consolidated, together with the establishment of the modern Turkish state.

1. THE GUIDEBOOKS, A NOVEL FORM OF TRAVEL LITERATURE

The 19th century guidebooks made their appearance at the phase between romantic journeys and mass tourism, written for the rich and cultured travellers, since a journey to the Levant greatly exceeded the budget of an average household.

Compared to the narratives of scholars such as Th. Gautier and W. Thackeray, J. Ph. Fallmerayer or P. Loti, guidebooks were undoubtedly much more practical. Yet, they reproduced the scholars' course and, frequently, large captions of their descriptions, preparing the "eye" of the Occidental traveller for the unfamiliar landscape of the Oriental city. Guide Joanne (1912:208) conveys Loti's picturesque description

"... Lying at the feet of this city is the sea, a sea crossed by thousands of ships and boats in a continual bustle of coming and going that takes place in all of the Levant's languages ... Down there, over the haze and coal dust, this vastness of a city appears in suspension, as it were..."

Guidebooks differed considerably from the 18th century travel literature. Their accounts were meant to meet the cultural interests and comfort demands of a select public eager for exoticism, whose curiosity had been already aroused at home. Guidebooks instructed potential travellers on how to perceive and how to behave in the exotic land they would visit, appeased their uneasiness vis-a-vis the unknown and reassured them of the superiority of their own civilisation.

With time, their language became less scholarly and their accounts more codified, quotations being kept as few as possible. For instance, Baedeker guides, especially their English editions after 1880, appealed more to the tourist of modest means. Besides individual differences

relating to the respective national readership, guidebooks had a standardised and systematised thematic content that has been structured in the same familiar way ever since. In general, they included:

- practical instructions concerning the journey, the necessary preparations, itineraries, calendar and times, money and the overall tourist topography that visitors had to abide by.
- the presentation of the Capital – the sites of the city, its districts, the monuments, religious and administrative buildings, bazaars, khans, hammams, graveyards, countryside, etc.
- information about the population, history, art, manners and customs, or about everyday life, displacements, dealings, entertainment, shows, etc.

Successive editions registered recent developments and updated their information, concerning tourist accommodation or changes in city life at large. Information was tested on the spot for its topographical exactitude and honest assessment by the editors themselves or with the contribution of experts: The 1900 Murray edition mentions the assistance of the American Consul at the Dardanelle and the British Consul in Bursa, while the 1911 Baedeker edition underscores the contribution of professor John Kirkpatrick, of Edinburg university. A. van Millingen, of Robert College, wrote the description of Byzantine antiquities for Murray and Macmillan, and Dr Remlinger revised the chapter on Constantinople and its environs for the 1912 Guide Joanne.

Yet, of major importance in this novel kind of travel literature was the fact that it established for the first time, in an easy and methodical way, a connection of the cultural, ethnic and political identity of Constantinople with the shape of its urban space. In other words, urban space came into view as a crystallisation of the distinctive features of the “Oriental” society, consecrated by the mythology of romanticism into images, easily perceptible for the traveller.

The guidebooks’ descriptions of the tourist topography were not restricted to the sights and places that travellers would doubtless come across. The presentation of the city of Constantinople, celebrated as the showcase of the Empire, offered an excuse for the display of an alien, multiethnic society, within its singularities, its races, its customs. Next to the “uninhabited world of monuments” (a favourite topic of guidebooks, according to R. Barthes), a densely populated space emerged, shaped by a society whose otherness was interpreted through a biased anthropology; a space which was defined in contrast to the familiar one and perceived as picturesque.

Guide Joanne (1912:207) eloquently rendered the ambivalence of the urban scenery: “a graceful aspect that rouses two completely different sensations; ... excessively ideal in the first impression, extremely down to earth in the second one”.

For guidebooks, therefore, Istanbul appeared to be a twofold entity: on the one hand the Capital, with its atemporal, emblematic image; on the other hand the expanding Metropolis, with its trivial, alarming aspects. Both are unfolded by means of secure clichés and infallible dichotomies: the contrast between the splendour of the capital and the harshness of the metropolis, between the Oriental and the Europeanised face of the city, between the excitement caused by the exotic and the comforting feeling offered by the civilised element. Guidebooks presented the transformation and the westernisation of the city, the crucial changes occurring to its social and political life, through their spatial manifestations, such as fires and through alterations in the physical image of the city.

In this sense, cartography took on special importance not only for obvious practical reasons but, also, because it constituted the most condensed expression of the identity of the city, a “portrait” easy for lay persons to understand. Maps were scanty and their drawing up required hard work, since stations, hotels, banks, etc., together with monuments and sights had to be properly marked on them. Army and naval maps,

such as Kiepert’s or Von der Goltz’s maps for the Bosphorus, were used in Baedeker’s or Meyers’ guidebooks. Istanbul street plans came from reliable sources, such as Kauffert. Plans for archaeological sites and monuments are credited to A. van Milligen, (in Murray’s 1900 and Macmillan’s 1901 editions), to Fossati and Salzenberg for Saint Sophia, to Labarte for the Byzantine palace (in the 1871 Guide Joanne), etc.

2. THE TOURIST TOPOGRAPHY

Long journeys made it necessary for travellers to prepare themselves, practically and culturally, for the new world they would encounter. In the Orient, points out the Guide Joanne (1873:XXXV), “frivolous tourist becomes serious traveller, as its glorious memories, the beauty of its nature, the novelty and variety of its people demand.” Thus, the intellectual luggage of the traveller should include some information on the history, nature, architecture and art, together with some superficial knowledge of Oriental languages. All guidebooks devoted an introductory chapter on history, manners and customs, geography, architecture, and detailed information on practical matters - ship and train timetables, custom formalities, the differences in the calendar, the unstable money system, local transport means, consulates, banks and post offices, hotels, restaurants, etc.

Travellers reached the city by sea and landed at the Galata shore. Train whistles were first heard in Istanbul in 1871; however, European passengers debarked at the station of Sirkedji only after 1890, when the European network link became a reality. Consequently, Golden Horn was the traveller’s first point of contact with the city and the starting point of his ascent to Galata and Pera.

“There is no scene in the world like that... Huge ironclads lie at anchor within a cable-length of the Sultan’s palace; passenger steamers from every country in Europe are ranged in double rows opposite the quays of Tophane...; corn-ships from Odessa or the Danube lie side by side with graceful Greek feluccas and Turkish coasters; while hundreds of caiques flit here and there with loads of gold-bedizened Beys, or veiled women” (Murray 1881:87).

A small universe revolved around travellers, based in Galata and Pera. Transport was a priority issue. Kaïks were hired like hackney coaches in European capitals for passengers with baggage or for expeditions in the environs, but “they are not suited for ladies, they have no seat ... or steadiness on the water.” (Murray 1881:88). Small, comfortable steamers plied many times a day to the Bosphorus shores, Prince Islands, Eyüp and Kagithane (the Sweet Waters of Europe).

For conveying baggage from the quay to the hotels, a variety of means were available: carriages (arabas), horses and, of course, the porters (hammals), whose description appeared in all the guides. Their picturesque outfit and leather back pillow made them a true curiosity; they would lift any weight with extraordinary sturdiness and skill and just hurry along, shouting “guarda” for passers-by to step aside. (Baedeker 1905: 537).

A rudimentary knowledge of Turkish or, at least, Greek was a sine qua non for the traveller, even if he could afford an interpreter. Guides, *dragomans*, *ciceroni* or *valets de place*, were necessary components of the traveller’s world. “Greeks and Armenians belong mostly to the International Couriers and Guides Office... while their Jews colleagues tout in the streets... With a smattering of many languages, ... are unable to appreciate the Western modes of thought.” (Murray 1900:160, Guide Joanne 1881:1054) Yet, even if they did not speak local languages, visitors were never cut off. The press of Constantinople was exceptionally numerous; in 1881 Meyers (1892:201) registered 40 newspapers in 5 local and 3 foreign languages.

The accommodation available to travellers was located on the north bank of Golden Horn. Galata had majority of banks, as well as the *sarrâfs* (money changers) who were to be found up until the Grande

Rue of Pera. Telegraph and Post offices were also located there, together with numerous navigation agencies. However, travellers stayed in Pera. All hotels, *"the only ones with all the amenities of Europe"*, were to be found along the Grande Rue of Pera or near the Petits Champs des Morts. In Stamboul, they were gathered around At-meïdan (Hippodrome), but these were actually rearranged houses. (Baedeker 1914:123)

The Grande Rue of Pera and the district up to the Tunnel attracted restaurants and cafés. Here, the traveller could also find booksellers, hairdressers, physicians, chemists and many more for an international clientele. In Stamboul, he could taste Turkish coffee in the shady coffee-shops opposite Saint Sophia, or lunch at the Railway Restaurant or at Tokatlian's in Kapali Çarsı.

Guidebooks prepared the European traveller for this erratic world surrounding him. Instructions and recommendations as to transaction difficulties conveyed a markedly biased view of the local population. Baedeker (1911:XXV-XXVI) dedicated a special chapter to the intercourse with Orientals:

"The object and pleasures of travel are so unintelligible to most Orientals that they are apt to regard the European traveller as a lunatic, or at all events as a Croesus, and therefor to be exploited on every possible occasion. Hence their constant demand for 'bakshish' ... Exaggerated professions of friendship should be distrusted, loyalty towards strangers being still rarer in the East than elsewhere ..."

3. THE CAPITAL - THE SHOWCASE OF THE EMPIRE

The Capital is the guidebooks' main subject, which they treat from a variety of aspects. Their descriptions "create" a landscape condensing the more static, immovable features of the city, conveying a clear, easy to understand and calculated representation of the ideal Capital of the Levant. This emblematic city, the monument of history and seat of power of the empire, is disclosed to the Western eye in all its grandeur through a selected hierarchy of sights - Byzantine churches and walls, seraglios, mosques, but also khans, hammams, fountains, and bazaars, religious and mundane edifices, countryside landscapes etc.

Eventually, it is precisely the eye of the "stranger", that - keeping a safe distance from the trivial aspects of everyday life and work, from the misery of the crowded neighbourhoods, in a word, from the gloomy aspects of the metropolis - was apt to "read" the picturesque image "depicted" by guidebooks, to recompose the fragmentary reflections of the reigning city into a "real" space.

The guidebooks emphasised the uniqueness of Istanbul, in comparison with other crowded and motley cities in the Levant, like Cairo or Damascus.

"There is no lovelier scene on earth than that open up before the traveller as he approaches Constantinople from the Sea of Marmara: at once so bright, so varied in outline, so rich in colour, so gorgeous in architecture. On the left, washed by the waves, the quaint old battlements extend from the Seraglio point to the Seven Towers; and over them rise in picturesque confusion the terraced roofs, domes, and minarets of Stamboul. To the right the white mansions, cemeteries, and cypress-groves of Skoutari run away along the Asiatic shore... In the centre Bosphorus, revealing a vista of matchless beauty". (Murray, 1881:87)

This is not an informative account of city's geography, addressed to a pragmatist British traveller, but a picture meant to rouse his emotions, to mould his perception. Much more evocative is the description of Fallmerayer that Meyers (1892:201) used to initiate his German travellers to the magnificent spectacle of the Orient: *"Stamboul is a world in itself, an Atlantis of happiness, an outpost of worldly ecstasy, a place of opposites bursting with motion and loneliness.... He who rules here with a firm hand is the one that people obey"*.

A true city of the world, Constantinople was described through an abundance of references to its multiethnic and multi-religious society, and to the mix of languages, habits, clothing and gastronomic varieties. All guidebooks outlined the multiethnic pattern in terms that resounded the ethnological theories of climate, well known since Montesquieu.

"Constantinople is a city not of one nation but of many, and hardly more of one than of another. ... there is no people who can be described as being par excellence the people of the city, with a common character or habits or language... Among the 943.575 inhabitants there are representatives of nearly every nation of the globe".

Avoiding the hot issues of a society undergoing uncontrollable population growth and mutation, shortly before the Young Turks revolution in 1908, Murray (1900:6) proffered a fresco of human types.

"Moslems are mostly poor people and very lazy ... Greeks, Armenians and Bulgarians have little in common, for each cherishes its own form of faith, and they hate one another as they all hate the Turks. Many of their members are wealthy, highly educated and admirable men ... There is a motley crowd of strangers from the rest of Europe. Eight or nine languages are constantly spoken in the streets ... These races have nothing to unite them; no relations, except those of trade, with one another; everybody lives in a perpetual vague dread of everybody else; there is no common civic feeling and no common patriotism."

Given its unique location at the meeting point of two continents, the urban geography of Istanbul makes symbolisms more eloquent by breathing a true life into the clichéd East-West dichotomy. Its growth on the three banks of the Bosphorus - the three cities or *"bilâd-i selese"* - is not merely function of its exceptional natural topography, with the peculiar intertwining of land and sea, but also of the geographical pattern of ethnic, cultural and architectural antitheses making up its physiognomy.

There was a plethora of descriptions of Istanbul, but the most representative was, perhaps, that of Guide Joanne (1912:204):

"Constantinople is made up of three cities. North of Golden Horn lies the European city, with its two suburbs of Galata and Pera playing host to ambassadors, bankers, and European merchants. It is the outpost of the West, its ideas, activities and culture. In the south, facing both as a go-between, Stamboul is slowly and sadly losing out to the continual penetration of European ideas and innovations... The third city, Skoutari, on the Asian side, is the Turkish city par excellence, inhabited by old Muslims".

This generalisation points to the ethnic residential mosaic as an element of the Capital's identity. None of the three cities was ethnicity-specific; they were all made up of several ethnic-religious quarters. However, ethnic geography seemed to be of interest mostly as a picturesque backdrop setting off the major monuments on tourist routes.

Monuments were central to the Constantinople of guidebooks, and most of their pages were dedicated to them. No traveller could say he had seen Constantinople unless he has previously been on at least three sightseeing tours, one on each side of the city. Those tours, more or less standardised in all guidebooks, were drawn up on the basis of the spatial proximity of the monuments, for travellers to be able to tour them within one day; while the number of tours depended on the visitors' overall stay.

The choice of monuments, the first being the Byzantine monuments, followed by the Ottoman ones, composed a hierarchical series of objects - tangible proofs of the mundane or religious authority of the capital. The imposing Byzantine walls, Hippodrome, seraglios, mosques etc., were discussed in detail regarding their history and architecture. Guidebooks set out maps of the Byzantine topography, and plans for the principal religious monuments (the first being Saint Sophia), analysed the Byzantine origins in the architecture of mosques, described khans, fountains, kiosks and hammams, evoking their ambience. Nevertheless,

the setting of those monuments was either ignored completely or, at best, reduced to mere scenery that was risky or disappointing to penetrate. Monuments were presented as chains of sites broken by unnamed voids - the anonymous city fabric; moreover, their sequence denoted the frontier between interesting or indifferent, between permissible or unsafe urban space.

This was the picture of a world outside present time, eventually outside history, in which none of the places of the city's economic life took part, except for those connected with curiosities or shopping intentions. Missir and chiefly Büyük Çarşı was the most popular sight in this category; extensive descriptions and a plan made it easy for strangers to walk in the labyrinth of its 92 streets and 3,248 shops, workshops etc.

As all medieval towns, Moslem Constantinople did not offer spectacles other than its own urban space, its markets, streets, religious monuments or political edifices. The theatres and music halls of Pera helped travellers kill their time at evening but were not regarded as city sights. "Turkey has only one spectacle of its own, Karagöz". Religious feasts, like Ramazan and particularly Selamlık (the sultan's solemn procession to Friday prayer), were the most popular event to watch, together with the ceremonies of the Dervishes, Mevlevi in Galata and Rufai in Skoutari, less majestic yet no doubt sufficiently mystical for the Europeans.

Another category of places was put forward as appropriate for observing ways of life in the capital. In addition to the enchanting grounds of Eyüp, Kagithane, or the Bosphorus, the few "green spots" of the city constituted another curiosity for the traveller accustomed to sophisticated Occidental urban parks. Even before being transformed into public grounds after 1868, the Grands Champs des Morts, near Findikli, and the Petits Champs des Morts, near Kasim-Pasha, were the favourite promenade for the residents of Pera. Guidebooks underlined the Oriental concept of the cemetery:

"...The thought of being in a cemetery at night would, probably, give any Frenchman the creeps...; locals, though, can jolly well sit on grave marbles to indulge in chatting, coffee drinking and pipe smoking without the slightest thought of desecration ever crossing their mind." (Guide Joanne 1871:480).

4. THE METROPOLIS - CONTRASTS AND CHANGES

Behind the emblematic aspect of the Capital, the spectacle of the Orient that travellers consumed avidly, Istanbul was mainly a metropolis, a city in motion, constantly changing, alarming and unhealthy, disorderly and dangerous, with an uncontrollable population increase, with continuous epidemics and innumerable fires. Successive refugee waves from the Balkan and Asian provinces, within the fluid political context of the end of the 19th century, augment its size and raise its population to 1,125,000 souls.

The significance of those facts did not enter the narration of guidebooks that could not but fall prey to the prejudice of their time; yet, the reader was surprised by the references devoted to the gloomy and dynamic aspects of metropolis. In the light of a whitewashing romanticism, fragmentary descriptions either centred on the practicalities of the trip or juxtaposed themselves to the bright aspects of the capital. Once again, those aspects were mainly exposed in their spatial dimension, through the images of urban space that inevitably entered into the perception of travellers. Certainly, the simplification of money system, the reorganisation of the post, the adoption of European time, etc., were all mentioned. However, it was the renewal "à la franque" of old quarters, streets and architecture that became more obvious to the traveller, compared to other social events that he was not going to engage in at all.

In guidebooks, the term "modernisation" did not have the positive connotation it acquired for Western metropolises, with the re-planning of Paris by Haussmann, for instance. It was assessed according to the implications that it would have for the traveller, and it was presented as something ambivalent, at one time to applaud the benefits for travellers' accommodation, at another to deplore the alteration of the Oriental identity of the city or to mock its "Occidental gloss".

The modernised parts of the city did not rank among sights, just like the introverted Oriental quarters. "New roads have been made in several directions, so that one can visit the chief points of interest in a carriage", notes Murray (1881:88), stressing that Europeanised Pera, the pride of every progressive Constantinopolitan, where "late great improvements rendered hotels easy of access even for ladies", lost its charms together with its crooked streets, and for Guide Joanne (1881:588): "it has no Oriental character nor beauty". The new quay of Galata was celebrated for its landing facilities, yet Macmillan (1901:199) for instance, chose to evoke the aspect of the shore during the Byzantine era, and Baedeker (1911:555) to praise "the picturesque appearance of the crowded Oriental quarters rising from the banks of Golden Horn".

The Europeanisation of the city was symbolised par excellence with the changes in transport; an issue that the Occidental planning theory of the time largely identified with "modernity".

"A crisis more important perhaps than that of the Crimea is approaching Turkey, the arrival of the railway. The European network link is soon to be a reality and the Turkish race will show to what extent it is able to modernise itself. It shall have to either change or perish, because from now on it is not going to be European culture that will back off".

The suggestion of Guide Joanne (1873:524) alludes to an approach towards the metropolis, shared by all guidebooks.

In 1875, the Tunnel, a short line of 550m, came into operation, saving travellers the "exceedingly disagreeable approach to Pera through the narrow, steep, and filthy lanes" of Galata (Macmillan 1901:167). The tramway was another innovation for the city. From 1872, two lines traversed the narrow lanes, one in Stamboul and another in Galata "both dirty and without comforts" (Murray 1881:88) and a bus line was installed from Galata to Pangalti. By 1912 there were five tramway lines: three in Stamboul and two in Galata (Guide Joanne, 1912:192 and Baedeker 1905:106), as well as three bus lines.

Despite all those changes, Constantinople remained a medieval city. At each step of the way, the "Western varnish could wear away" to uncover the dark face of a menacing metropolis.

Slave markets were a feature of the medieval city that was gradually swept away by modernisation. Yesir pazar existed no more; yet, despite the official abolition of the slave trade in 1855, the activity was still taking place illegally in the early 20th century, since the trade of white women survived in the 1910s, in a spot near Tophane (Baedeker 1914:XLV).

Before being finally deported (in 1910) to an isle in the sea of Marmara, the 45,000 dogs that thronged the streets of Constantinople was another astonishing object of both curiosity and fear for the traveller: "There are two popular errors concerning dogs ... the one that they are ferocious; the other that they are scavengers, and thus instruments of cleanliness". (Bradshaw 1874:211)

Guidebooks applauded the achievements of a thriving bourgeoisie, which regained central spots in the city, yet they always judged Istanbul as unsafe outside the bounds of busy points and tourist itineraries. Though they lamented the vanishing picturesqueness of the old neighbourhoods, supplanted by large and straight streets and new 'kargit' buildings, they hardly described the architecture of the traditional houses. Instead, they dissuaded travellers from strolling into Oriental quarters: "It is not desirable for European travellers to pass through the streets of Stamboul during the night, but in daylight is perfectly safe." (Murray 1881:91) Twenty

years later, Oriental neighbourhoods were still presented as terra incognita, an introverted and mystical universe, depressing and frightful, even to audacious travellers (Baedeker 1911:XXVI).

In any case, none would want to be caught in such an area, after reading about fires, which were portrayed with dark colours: another macabre and horrifying scene that this city offered with heart-rending frequency, since "everything seems to assist their breakout and spreading". The sight of small fire engines carried by hand by firemen with bare feet and uncovered heads, was an incredible surprise for the European traveller, even in 1912, decades after the modernisation of fire brigade, in 1875.

Apart from their terrifying aspect, fires constituted a major penetration point for modernity, in the inert, worn-out fabric of Istanbul. Guidebooks gave reports of the numerous fires: One in Pera, in 1831, that ravaged the British embassy, Galata Sarai and more than 20,000 houses; another in 1853, in the quarter of Mevlevi Dervishes' Tekke, reconstructed with the assistance of the French army. In the last terrible fire of Pera, in 1870, 3,000 houses were destroyed, together with two theatres, many churches, the US consulate, the British embassy, and 1000 people perished. In 1860 and 1883 it was the turn of Kadıköy, rebuilt afterwards along European lines.

Guide Joanne (1912:208) gives a unique chronicle:

"Until the mid-19th century, the municipality of Constantinople showed no interest in matters of urban infrastructure and road construction that restructured the great European capitals. Fires ... would, sometimes, take it upon themselves to clean up the filthy neighbourhoods. After the great fire of 22 August 1856 that consumed the neighbourhoods between Vizir Iskelesi, Sublime Porte, Nuri Osmanie and Cemberli-tas, At-meidan and the two Greek and Armenian quarters in Kum-kapu, Abdul-Aziz decided to open for the future large and straight streets on the burned out grounds. The large asphalted street leading from Vizir Iskelesi to Mahmoud's Turbe, ... and the nicest part of Divan-Yol, from Agia Sophia's square to the place of Sultan Beyazid, dates back to that time. After the great fire of 5 June 1870 that devastated more than one third of its district, Pera altered its face as well; its Grand Rue can rival the beautiful avenues of European cities".

The series of fires continued even in the 20th century, with the fire of Saraçhane in 1908, or of the Çiragan palace in 1910. On the night of 23 July 1911, a huge fire spread over the hills of Stamboul, desolating the neighbourhoods of Vençeçiler, Curukçeşme, Aksaray, Balat and Ayvansaray.

Certainly, in the years that followed, the renewal of urban space would be attempted in a more systematic way, and master plans would endeavour to rationalise its development. Yet, in the 19th century, the transformation of urban space was closely linked to disastrous fires, deliberate or accidental, a result of the metropolitan disorder as well as an opportunity for shaping the modern physiognomy of Istanbul.

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Guidebook discourse forges a special kind of narrative on the city, permeated with value judgements and stereotypes of the time. Their narration offers views and practices of the famous but unknown Constantinople, dictates ways of understanding this "exotic" urban space

and comporting within it, and imposes their own standpoint as regards the Oriental landscape, together with rules prescribing the attitudes and mindset of the visitor.

The guidebook approach ushers in a methodical connection between topography, urban forms, and architecture on one hand and the cultural, ethnic and political identity of Istanbul on the other. It sanctions the strong points of its physiognomy, and the hierarchy of monuments and sights involved in the predominant city image but, at the same time, it delimits the metropolitan landscape in a reverse manner.

What today's readers might consider as picturesque and schematic narration must not be underestimated, because it initiated a special city literature to be standardised and perfected by the 20th century tourist industry and, mainly, because it was so easy to read by an increasingly broader readership, exercising a more general influence on the concept of urban space. Moreover, guidebooks are an early, informal kind of urban historiography for Constantinople. The most exciting thing about them is the representation of the identity of the city, the surrounding ambience of everyday life, and the practical details providing us with invaluable information on 19th century Istanbul.

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