This latest title in the award-winning Buildings, Landscapes, and Societies series does not disappoint. Seeking "to uncover the relationships between the constructed world and expressions of social, political, and cultural identity," works in this series have broad inter-disciplinary appeal. Elegantely designed with a double column layout that is easy on the eye, this book is profusely illustrated with eight color plates, five maps, and 152 black and white photographs, plans, or other drawings to scale.

Çiğdem Kafescioğlu’s book focuses on the first three decades following Istanbul’s capture by the Ottomans in 1453. Three themes underlie this study: monumentalization, representation, and inhabitation. The author, Associate Professor of history of art and architecture at Boğaziçi University, explores the spatial and visual aspects of early Ottoman Istanbul and aims to reveal the processes at work in the ordering of its environment. Physical spaces, buildings, and extensive primary sources are examined, revealing interventions on the city’s urban space and architectural forms, shifts in residential and patronage patterns, the formation of new neighborhood centers, and the social and political contexts of the city’s urban structure. These interventions are explained as components of the process of creating a new imperial capital through interpretation and appropriation of the former Byzantine capital, and as a product of encounters between the Ottomans, Byzantium, and the West.

Perhaps one of this study’s most significant contributions is the analysis of representations of the city in fifteenth and sixteenth century manuscripts, maps, drawings, and texts. The author discusses the intent of these representations, the context of their production and use, and situates them in relation to transformations in the city’s cultural identity and changes in modes of representation. This is a time when the city’s cultural meaning was a concern for both Europeans and Ottomans and when that meaning was in the process of being redefined. This study benefits from the author’s examination of numerous primary documents housed in Turkish collections.

Profuse citations, an extensive bibliography and index, and insightful discussions of sources facilitate further exploration of this topic. The use of specialized terminology without inclusion of a glossary renders this work difficult for casual readers or beginning students. This book is highly recommended for academic and research libraries supporting historical research, including studies in architectural, art, cultural, political, social, and urban history, Byzantine, Islamic, and Renaissance Studies, as well as history of cartography and topography.

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