

Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline in Türkiye: Academic Lineages, Institutional Dynamics, and a Multi- Method Analysis of Field Formation

by

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**Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline in Türkiye:
Academic Lineages, Institutional Dynamics, and a Multi-Method Analysis of Field
Formation**

Koç University

Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities

This is to certify that I have examined this copy of a doctoral dissertation by

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*To Uğur,
my dearest and most precious,
without whose encouragement and endless support this work would have never
been completed.*



ABSTRACT

Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline in Türkiye: Academic Lineages, Institutional Dynamics, and a Multi-Method Analysis of Field Formation

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This dissertation investigates the historical emergence, institutional development, and current challenges of Byzantine studies as an academic discipline in Türkiye. Despite Türkiye's centrality to Byzantine history and its rich cultural heritage, the field has long remained marginal within the country's academic landscape. This research addresses the question: How has Byzantine studies developed in Türkiye, and how can it overcome the institutional and ideological obstacles that have hindered its growth?

Employing a multi-method approach, the study integrates oral history interviews with 35 scholars, quantitative analysis of nearly 1,500 graduate theses, and social network analysis of academic mentorship and institutional affiliations. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from the sociology of scientific knowledge and institutional theory—including Nicholas Mullins' Four-Stage Model of scholarly development and the concept of institutional entrepreneurship—the dissertation traces the formation of the field from its origins to its current fragmented state. It examines the roles of pioneering intellectual figures, organizational leaders, evolving academic lineages, and the structural constraints that have shaped—and often obstructed—the institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

The study demonstrates that while early contributions by foreign scholars and pioneering Turkish academics were foundational, systemic bottlenecks—such as the absence of dedicated departments and programs (particularly in Byzantine history and archaeology), inadequacies in field-specific graduate education, deficiencies in knowledge of modern and source languages that limit the cultivation of researchers, and ideological resistance to Byzantine cultural heritage—have constrained the field's development and its institutionalization. Nonetheless, important bridges have emerged: research centers and symposia have fostered collaboration, visibility, and renewed generational interest in the discipline.

The dissertation concludes by offering actionable strategies for strengthening Byzantine studies in Türkiye, including curricular reform, mentorship structures, cross-disciplinary networks, and participatory academic communities. It argues for a reframing of Byzantine studies not only as a field of historical inquiry but as a site of intellectual, institutional, and cultural negotiation—one whose future depends on inclusive, reflexive, and sustainable academic practices.

As a participatory action research component, the dissertation culminates in the development of Bizantolog.org, a virtual community platform designed to address institutional fragmentation and foster peer-based academic solidarity. This platform serves as an intervention aimed at creating sustainable scholarly networks, encouraging inclusive engagement, and offering a replicable model for digital humanities-driven community building.

Keywords: Byzantine studies, Byzantine art history, Byzantine history, academic discipline, oral history, social network analysis, content analysis, participatory action research, sociology of scientific knowledge, institutional theory, digital humanities, communities of practice, virtual community, Bizantolog.



ÖZETÇE

Türkiye’de Bir Akademik Disiplin Olarak Bizans Çalışmaları: Akademik Soyağaçları, Kurumsal Dinamikler ve Alan Oluşumu Üzerine Çok

Yöntemli Bir İnceleme

Şebnem Dönbekci

Arkeoloji ve Sanat Tarihi, Doktora

1 Ağustos 2025

Bu doktora tezi, Bizans çalışmalarının Türkiye’de akademik bir disiplin olarak ortaya çıkışını, kurumsallaşma sürecini ve günümüzde karşı karşıya olduğu zorlukları incelemektedir. Türkiye Bizans tarihi açısından merkezi bir konuma ve zengin bir kültürel mirasa sahip olmasına rağmen, bu alan uzun süre akademik çevrelerde marjinal konumda kalmıştır. Araştırma şu temel soruya odaklanmaktadır: Türkiye’de Bizans çalışmaları nasıl bir gelişim süreci geçirmiştir ve bu alanın önündeki kurumsal ve ideolojik engeller nasıl aşılabılır?

Bu çalışma, 35 akademisyenle yapılan sözlü tarih görüşmeleri, yaklaşık 1.500 lisansüstü tezin nicel analizi ve akademik danışmanlık ile kurumsal ilişkileri temel alan sosyal ağ analizini içeren çok yöntemli bir yaklaşım benimsemektedir. Bilimsel bilginin sosyolojisi ve kurumsal teori çerçevelerinden yararlanan çalışma—özellikle Nicholas Mullins’in Dört Aşamalı Modeli ve kurumsal girişimcilik kavramı aracılığıyla—alanın ilk oluşumundan günümüzdeki parçalı yapısına kadar geçirdiği evrimi izlemektedir. Bu çerçevede, öncü entelektüel figürlerin, organizasyonel liderlerin, gelişen akademik soyağaçlarının ve Bizans çalışmalarının kurumsallaşmasını şekillendiren ve çoğu zaman engelleyen yapısal kısıtların rolleri incelenmektedir.

Çalışma, erken dönem yabancı akademisyenlerin ve öncü Türk araştırmacıların katkılarının önemli bir temel oluşturduğunu, ancak özellikle Bizans tarihi ve Bizans arkeolojisi gibi alanlarda alana özel anabilim dallarının eksikliği, disipline özgü lisansüstü eğitimdeki yetersizlikler, modern ve kaynak dil bilgisi eksikliklerinin araştırmacıların yetişmesini engellemesi ve Bizans kültürel mirasına yönelik ideolojik yaklaşımlar gibi darboğazların alanın gelişimini ve kurumsallaşmasını sınırladığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bununla birlikte, araştırma merkezleri ve sempozyumlar gibi çeşitli “köprüler” aracılığıyla iş birliği, görünürlük ve yeni kuşaklar arasında ilgi artmıştır.

Tez, Türkiye’de Bizans çalışmalarının güçlendirilmesi için uygulanabilir stratejiler önermektedir: ders planlarının yeniden yapılandırılması, mentorluk mekanizmalarının kurulması, disiplinlerarası ağların teşvik edilmesi ve katılımcı akademik toplulukların desteklenmesi bu stratejiler arasında yer almaktadır. Bizans çalışmalarının yalnızca tarihsel bir inceleme alanı olarak değil, aynı zamanda entelektüel, kurumsal ve kültürel müzakerenin yapıldığı bir zemin olarak yeniden çerçevelenmesi gerektiği savunulmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, alanın geleceği kapsayıcı, yansıtıcı ve sürdürülebilir akademik pratiklere bağlıdır.

Katılımcı eylem araştırması yaklaşımı çerçevesinde, tez aynı zamanda Bizantolog.org adlı sanal bir topluluk platformunun kurulmasıyla sonuçlanmıştır. Bu platform, akademik dayanışmayı güçlendirmeyi, kapsayıcı katılımı teşvik etmeyi ve dijital beşeri bilimlere odaklı topluluk inşası için yeniden üretilebilir bir model sunmayı amaçlayan bir müdahale niteliği taşımaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Bizans çalışmaları, Bizans sanat tarihi, Bizans tarihi, akademik disiplin, sözlü tarih, sosyal ağ analizi, içerik analizi, katılımcı eylem araştırması, bilimsel bilginin sosyolojisi, kurumsal teori, dijital beşeri bilimler, uygulama toplulukları, sanal topluluk, Bizantolog.



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This dissertation is the outcome of a long journey, made possible by the guidance, generosity, and encouragement of many people and institutions to whom I am deeply indebted.

My earliest interest in the humanities was shaped by my family and formative educational encounters. My mother, Gülşen Cenan, a classical archaeologist trained at the Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography, introduced me to antiquity—taking me to her classes and guiding me through archaeological sites, museums, and collections that first sparked my fascination with the past. My father, Şükrü Cenan, an architect, joined us on countless expeditions to remote archaeological sites, following yellow road signs into landscapes where only shepherds and their flocks could be found. Although I initially pursued studies in the natural sciences, engineering, and finance, my exchange year in Italy revealed another path. I remain profoundly grateful to my late host parents, Professor Ettore Lepore, a distinguished historian of the ancient world, and Enrichetta Epifania Lepore, who welcomed me into a home filled with books, conversation, and excursions into antiquity; to Padre Luigi Dini, my professor of Italian and Latin; and to my friends in Naples and beyond, who opened to me the breadth and richness of the arts and humanities. My dear friend Sabahat Yalçın encouraged me to attend courses at the Sabancı Museum—especially Professor Uşun Tükel’s intensive four-week seminar *History of Art: Canon and Chaos*, which proved transformative and set me firmly on the path to graduate studies.

If these were the early inspirations, the true enablers of this dissertation have been Koç University and my supervisor, Professor Engin Akyürek. I am grateful to the faculty of Art History and Archaeology at Koç University, who welcomed me as a “mature” student without a formal background in the field and entrusted me with the opportunity to pursue graduate study. Professor Akyürek’s mentorship has been one of the great fortunes of my academic life. His guidance opened doors that fundamentally shaped my

research, and without his encouragement this work would not have been possible. Witnessing his leadership as the founding director of the first research center for Byzantine studies in Türkiye at Koç University—and its flourishing over the past decade—has been a profound source of inspiration. His support, generosity, and intellectual leadership have shaped both my academic path and this dissertation in immeasurable ways.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEMB	Association des �tudiants du monde byzantin (Association of Students of the Byzantine World)
AIEB	Association internationale des �tudes byzantines (International Association of Byzantine Studies)
AKMED	Ko� �niversitesi Suna and İnan Kır�� Akdeniz Medeniyetleri Ara�tırma Merkezi (Ko� University Suna and İnan Kır�� Research Centre for Mediterranean Civilizations)
ANAMED	Ko� �niversitesi Anadolu Medeniyetleri Ara�tırma Merkezi (Ko� University Anatolian Civilizations Research Center)
ARHA	Archaeology and History of Art
ARIT	American Research Institute in T�rkiye
BIAA	British Institute at Ankara (Formerly British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara)
BSANA	Byzantine Studies Association of North America
BSC	Byzantine Studies Conference
CoP	Communities of Practice
DAI	Deutschen Arch�ologischen Instituts (German Archaeological Institute)
DH	Digital Humanities
DO	Dumbarton Oaks
DTCF	Ankara �niversitesi Dil ve Tarih–Co�rafya Fak�ltesi (Ankara University Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography)
GABAM	Ko� �niversitesi Sevgi G�n�l Bizans Ara�tırmaları Merkezi (Ko� University Sevgi G�n�l Research Center for Byzantine Studies) Ko� �niversitesi – Stavros Niarchos Vakfı Ge� Antik �a� ve Bizans Ara�tırmaları Merkezi (Ko� University – Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Research Center for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies) (until 2023)
HTS	Historical and Textual Studies
IAE	�stanbul Ara�tırmaları Enstit�s� (Istanbul Research Institute)

ICBS	International Congress of Byzantine Studies
ICMA	International Center of Medieval Art
IFEA	Institut français d'études anatoliennes (French Institute of Anatolian Studies)
ISGBS	International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium
ITU	İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi (Istanbul Technical University)
KUDAR	Koç Üniversitesi Mustafa V. Koç Deniz Arkeolojisi Araştırma Merkezi (Koç University Mustafa V. Koç Maritime Archaeology Research Center)
MVCS	Material and Visual Culture Studies
NIT	Nederlands Instituut in Turkije (Netherlands Institute in Türkiye)
ODTU	Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi (Middle East Technical University)
OUBS	Oxford University Byzantine Society
ÖYP	Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programı (Faculty Training Program)
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SPBS	Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies
SSK	Sociology of Scientific Knowledge
VEKAM	Koç Üniversitesi Vehbi Koç Ankara Araştırmaları Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi (Koç University Vehbi Koç Ankara Studies Research Center)
YLSY	Yurt Dışı Lisansüstü Eğitim Bursu (Overseas Graduate Education Scholarship)
YÖK	Yükseköğretim Kurulu (Council of Higher Education)

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND FOUNDATIONS

Chapter 1– Framing the Study: Approaches to a Peripheral Discipline

The origins of this research trace back to the Twenty-Third International Congress of Byzantine Studies (ICBS) in Belgrade in August 2016, where pivotal experiences directly shaped the central research questions of this dissertation. I was among the few participants from Türkiye able to attend, as the July 15 coup attempt had severely restricted travel, leaving our delegation underrepresented. Attending this global quinquennial gathering was a pivotal moment in my academic journey. It not only provided the thrill of presenting my master's thesis research on the St. Francis fresco cycle at the Kalenderhane Mosque but also exposed me to the stark challenges faced by Turkish Byzantinists.

Three key moments at the congress profoundly shaped the focus of this dissertation, each directly influencing its research objectives. These moments highlighted the challenges of preserving Byzantine heritage, the institutional opportunities within the discipline, and the symbolic milestones signaling its global recognition, all of which form the foundation of the study's central questions. First, Professor Zeynep Ahunbay's paper on the conversion of churches into mosques, delivered during a session on Byzantine monuments' preservation, highlighted the fragile status of Byzantine heritage in Türkiye.¹ Second, Professor Nevra Necipoğlu's presentation on the establishment of Boğaziçi University's Byzantine Studies Research Center underscored the institutional gaps and opportunities in the discipline. Finally, the unexpected announcement of Istanbul as the host city for the Twenty-Fourth ICBS in 2021 marked a symbolic milestone, offering hope for greater recognition of Byzantine studies in Türkiye and abroad. Late Professor Melek Delilbaşı's address at the closing session as the host of the next congress was an unforgettable moment for the few Turkish Byzantinists present at the Twenty-Third ICBS in Belgrade (Figure 1.1).²

¹ Due to her absence in person at the congress, Professor Zeynep Ahunbay's paper was read by Professor Valentino Pace, who chaired the special session titled "Preservation, Destruction, and Restoration of Byzantine Monuments."

² Melek Delilbaşı served as the president of the Turkish National Committee of Eastern Roman/Byzantine Studies from 2006 until her passing in 2022.



Figure 1.1: Turkish scholars at the Twenty-Third ICBS (27 August 2016).

Upon returning from Belgrade, I began developing an oral history project for a graduate course at Koç University, aiming to document the personal narratives of pioneering Turkish Byzantinists.³ Supported by Koç University Sevgi Gönül Research Center for Byzantine Studies (then the Koç University Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies), this project evolved into a broader investigation of the historiography and institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. This dissertation builds on those early efforts, seeking to address critical questions about the discipline's development, current state, and future potential.

The relocation of the Twenty-Fourth ICBS from Istanbul to Venice and Padua in 2020, shortly after the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque, epitomized the challenges faced by Byzantine studies in Türkiye. This event highlighted not only the fragility of institutional support for the discipline but also its vulnerability to shifting socio-political dynamics and heritage politics, themes that are central to this dissertation. This decision, prompted by international scholarly protests and the absence of

³ ARHA 505 Cultural Heritage Management course taught by Professor Lucienne Thys-Şenocak.

institutional support, symbolized the contested nature of Byzantine legacy within national and academic narratives. These circumstances highlight the central question of this study: How has Byzantine studies developed as an academic discipline in Türkiye, and how can it navigate the socio-political and institutional barriers to reach its full potential?

By examining the historical trajectory, institutional dynamics, and scholarly contributions of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, this dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive account of its emergence and evolution. Through oral history interviews, social network analysis, and participatory action research, the study explores not only the discipline's past and present but also proposes actionable strategies for its future advancement. This research ultimately aspires to bridge gaps between scholarly inquiry and practical efforts, fostering a deeper understanding of the role of Byzantine studies in Türkiye's academic and cultural landscapes.

1.1 Significance, Research Questions and Objectives

Modern-day Türkiye is home to the remains of some of the most influential ancient civilizations, a richness that uniquely shapes both the study and perception of Byzantine studies in the country. This historical wealth situates Byzantine studies at the crossroads of diverse cultural narratives, making it a crucial field for understanding Türkiye's multifaceted heritage and its relationship with the past. In the early years of the republic, the newly formed nation-state—seeking a secular narrative of nationhood—focused on the Hittites as the foundational civilization of Anatolia, bypassing the Seljuk and Ottoman pasts.⁴ This identity debate shaped the academic landscape, resulting in less attention to the Byzantine, Seljuk, and Ottoman heritage compared to previous civilizations.

Only in the second half of the twentieth century did Byzantine studies begin to take root as an academic subject in Türkiye, influenced by foreign scholars who fled the Nazi regime or were invited to Turkish universities. A pivotal moment was the Tenth ICBS

⁴ Çiğdem Atakuman, "Cradle or Crucible: Anatolia and Archaeology in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic (1923—1938)," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 8, no. 2 (2008); Murat Ergin, "Archaeology and the Perception of Greek, Roman and Byzantine Eras in Early Republican Turkey," in *Perceptions of the Past in the Turkish Republic: Classical and Byzantine Periods*, ed. Scott Redford and Nina Ergin (Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA.: Peeters, 2010); Scott Redford and Nina Ergin, "Introduction," in *Perceptions of the Past in the Turkish Republic: Classical and Byzantine Periods*, ed. Scott Redford and Nina Ergin (Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA.: Peeters, 2010); David Shankland, "Afterword: Heritage, Nationalism and Archaeology in the Republic of Turkey," in *Perceptions of the Past in the Turkish Republic: Classical and Byzantine Periods*, ed. Scott Redford and Nina Ergin (Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA.: Peeters, 2010).

held in Istanbul in 1955, only days after the catastrophic pogrom of September 6–7, 1955. This event highlighted both the potential and the challenges of establishing Byzantine studies as a recognized discipline in Türkiye.

The planned return of the ICBS to Istanbul in 2021 after 66 years was set to mark a milestone. However, the combination of governmental silence—despite attempts by the organizing committee to obtain formal approval from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Presidency—and growing international protest over the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque led to the congress’ relocation to Venice and Padua.⁵ This decision underscored the ongoing challenges for Byzantine studies in Türkiye, where the discipline is often overlooked and lacks official support. The missed opportunity to host congress in Istanbul symbolizes the complex relationship between Byzantine heritage and Turkish national identity, raising the central question: What trajectory has Byzantine studies followed as an academic discipline under these challenging circumstances?

Recent scholarship, reviewed in detail later, has significantly advanced understanding of the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, emphasizing the discipline’s multifaceted nature and its intersections with cultural heritage, national identity, and socio-political dynamics. Most recently and extensively, Byzantine studies in Türkiye was the theme of the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium (ISGBS) organized in June 2023. The ISGBS titled as A Century of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye aimed to examine the historical development process of Byzantine studies and discuss its current state.⁶ Building on these studies, this dissertation introduces original research, including oral history interviews and social network analysis, while employing an interdisciplinary methodology that integrates qualitative and quantitative techniques. Grounded theory and abductive analysis, coupled with theoretical frameworks from the

⁵ John Haldon, the president of the International Association of Byzantine Studies, replied to the open letter penned by a group of graduate students of Byzantine studies in Türkiye and explained the reasons behind the decision of venue change. See “24. Uluslararası Bizans Araştırmaları Kongresi hakkındaki gelişmeler,” <https://bizantolog.org/24-uluslararasi-bizans-arastirmalari-kongresi/>. for the announcement of the relocation of the congress and the open letters circulated on this matter. Also, see Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, ““24. Uluslararası Bizans Çalışmaları Kongresi, 23-28 Ağustos 2021, İstanbul (ICBS 2021), neden olmadı, olamadı?” Melek Delilbaşı ile söyleşi,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 2022, no. 348 (2022).

⁶ I was privileged to contribute to the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium by delivering a paper about the pioneering Turkish scholars of Byzantine studies titled “Sailing in Uncharted Waters: Pioneering Turkish Scholars of Byzantine Studies.” See Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç, eds., *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, 22-24 June 2023*, Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK), organizational theory, and institutional theory, represent a pioneering approach in the Turkish humanities landscape. This combination is uniquely suited to address the complexity of the research questions, allowing for a multifaceted exploration of both individual narratives and institutional trajectories, bridging personal experiences with broader historical and social contexts. By integrating diverse methodologies, this thesis not only examines the historical depth and institutional dynamics of Byzantine studies but also establishes a foundation for addressing its current challenges and identifying pathways for its future growth.

Employing a theoretical framework grounded in SSK, this study draws on personal testimonies of Byzantinists and conducts a systematic review of Byzantine studies in Turkish universities. Through the analysis of academic works, bibliographies, institutional records, and oral history interviews, it maps the historiography and evolution of the discipline. By synthesizing these sources, it connects individual accounts with broader historical and institutional narratives, offering a comprehensive understanding of the field's emergence and evolution. It seeks to answer the following research questions: How has Byzantine studies developed as an academic discipline in Türkiye, and what role have intellectual and organizational actors played in its institutionalization? What strategies were used to carve out a space for Byzantine studies in Türkiye's academic landscape? How has the perception and management of Byzantine cultural heritage influenced the discipline? What are the prevailing attitudes toward Byzantine studies today? Lastly, what are the discipline's current shortcomings, and how might they be addressed to unlock its full potential?

To answer these research questions comprehensively, this thesis sets out two primary objectives that guide its structure and methodology. Firstly, it aims to establish comprehensive historical account of the emergence and development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, connecting individual narratives with broader institutional and historical contexts. Secondly, it proposes actionable pathways for advancing the discipline, drawing on insights from oral history, social network analysis, and participatory action research.

The study highlights the unique dimensions of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, situating it within the broader context of contested heritage and addressing the intersections of

heritage, identity, and academic discipline-building.⁷ Through this approach, it aims to contribute to the future growth and institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

1.2 Research Framework, Setting, and Data Collection Strategy

Addressing the research questions about the development of Byzantine studies as an academic discipline in Türkiye requires a comprehensive research framework (Figure 1.2). This framework combines insights from past and present scholars with analyses of academic works such as theses and publications. While the scope is necessarily broad, the research setting must also possess a sense of boundedness, offering interconnected and rich data while remaining manageable and accessible for in-depth analysis.⁸

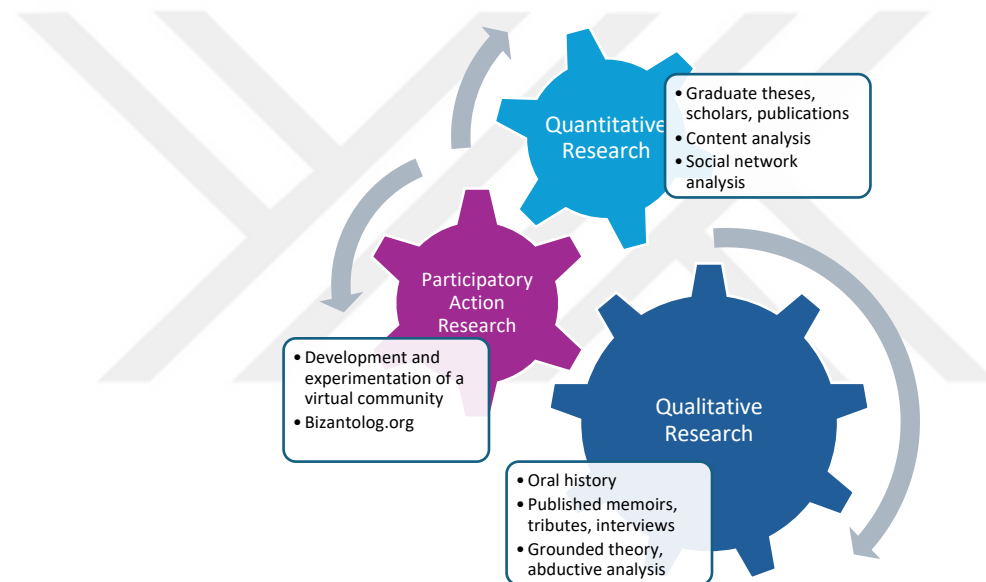


Figure 1.2: Components of the research framework.

The core research setting of this study is the oral history project titled *Being a Byzantinist in Türkiye: The Past, Present, and Future of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye*. This project involved interviews with 35 scholars from 23 universities across 12 cities, representing diverse disciplines such as history, art history, archaeology, architectural history, and conservation. These interviews gathered data spanning from the mid-

⁷ Yang Liu, Karine Dupre, and Xin Jin, “A Systematic Review of Literature on Contested Heritage,” *Current Issues in Tourism* 24, no. 4 (2021). While the existing literature on contested heritage primarily examines the interpretation, utilization, and preservation of heritage, emphasizing its connections to memory and identity, it often overlooks the academic and disciplinary aspects of contested heritage, which this study seeks to explore.

⁸ Adrian Holliday, *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research*, 2 ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 34.

twentieth century to the present, providing a rich source of information about participants' social backgrounds, educational journeys, academic careers, research activities, and personal perspectives on the state of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

To analyze the qualitative data, the study employs grounded theory and abductive analysis. Grounded theory generates themes and patterns from the data, while abductive analysis iteratively interprets data and theory to build explanations. Additional data from published interviews, memoirs, and tributes further enrich the core setting, incorporating perspectives from those unavailable for direct interviews.

Peripheral data plays a crucial role in bridging the core setting with broader contexts of society, community, and history.⁹ Quantitative analyses enhance the qualitative insights from the oral history project. Three datasets are particularly significant: dissertations in Byzantine studies from Türkiye, registered in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK); publications compiled in the project titled *Byzantine Studies in Türkiye: A Bibliography (19th Century–2020)*; and academic profile data accessed via the YÖK Academic search engine. These datasets have been supplemented with additional information from external sources to address gaps in the original databases, ensuring comprehensive analyses. They are utilized for descriptive purposes, such as providing an overview of the data, as well as for analytical objectives, including examining topics, periods, and other attributes of the theses. Furthermore, these datasets inform social network analysis (SNA), which maps relationships and interactions within the scholarly community.

Participatory action research (PAR) further complements this research framework through the development and experimentation of a social network, Bizantolog (Bizantolog.org), dedicated to scholars and students of Byzantine studies. PAR is a collaborative methodology that involves participants in the research process to address practical challenges while generating actionable knowledge. By engaging the Byzantinist community directly, Bizantolog fosters active participation and collaboration, bridging theoretical research with practical applications.¹⁰ This approach enriches the research framework and provides a model for connecting academic inquiry with community building.

⁹ Holliday, *Qualitative Research*, 36-38.

¹⁰ My objective was to apply findings from this dissertation and insights from my experiences in Byzantine studies, research, and consulting to implement practical improvements in real-world contexts.

The construction of a research setting reflects the researcher's selection of a specific portion within a complex and multifaceted reality.¹¹ While adhering to essential criteria such as boundedness and richness, its composition is largely determined by practical considerations, including logistical constraints and the need to effectively address the research questions. By focusing on a core setting enriched with peripheral data, this framework offers both depth and interconnectedness, enabling a comprehensive and meaningful exploration of Byzantine studies as an academic discipline in Türkiye using a variety of research methodologies.

1.3 Organization of the Thesis

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters, grouped under four thematic parts. Each chapter contributes to a comprehensive exploration of Byzantine studies as an academic discipline in Türkiye, addressing the central research questions concerning its emergence, institutionalization, and prospects for transformation. The structure is designed to reflect the methodological and analytical depth of the study, which combines oral histories, dissertation data, social network analysis, and institutional critique.

Part I, Introduction and Foundations, lays the groundwork for this investigation. Chapter 1, Framing the Study: Approaches to a Peripheral Discipline, introduces the research focus and theoretical direction, situating the study within discussions on disciplinary formation, institutional dynamics, and methodological considerations. Chapter 2, Mapping the Terrain: Literature, Concepts, and Methods, is divided into three sections. The first outlines the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that inform the study, particularly neo-Kuhnian models of scholarly knowledge and the relevance of institutional theory, with an emphasis on the concept of institutional entrepreneurship. The second provides a literature review on the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, situating the present study within existing scholarship and highlighting historiographical gaps. The final section presents the research methods, explaining the multi-scalar strategy used for data collection and analysis, the formulation of analytical categories, and the framework for interpreting the data.

Part II, Mapping a Fragmented Field, presents the core empirical and interpretive analysis. Chapter 3, Sailing in Uncharted Waters, explores the formative struggles of

¹¹ Holliday, *Qualitative Research*, 40.

Byzantine studies in Turkish universities, focusing on the initial efforts to establish the field and the pioneering contributions of key Turkish scholars. Chapter 4, *Charting the Field: Dissertations as Cognitive, Social, and Institutional Artifacts*, interprets the thesis corpus as a primary data source to track academic lineages, thematic trends, and institutional affiliations. It highlights the cognitive and social dimensions of the field's evolution through research topics, disciplinary affiliations, mentorship structures, and university-based dynamics. Chapter 5, *Social Network Analysis of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye*, builds on this data by analyzing mentorship and collaboration networks. Using SNA, it identifies central figures, emergent academic clusters, and structurally isolated actors, revealing how academic genealogies and institutional relationships shape the field's consolidation or fragmentation. Chapter 6, *Bottlenecks and Bridges: Institutional Pathways in Byzantine Studies*, shifts the focus to the structural conditions that shape the field's reproduction over time. It identifies bottlenecks and bridges, showing how institutional fragility and creative infrastructures coexist—simultaneously constraining and sustaining the field.

Part III, *Synthesis and Conclusion*, draws together the interpretive threads of the preceding chapters. Chapter 7, *Contemporary Challenges and Future Pathways*, serves as the conclusion. It synthesizes the empirical findings, reflects on current generational and institutional dynamics, and evaluates the discipline's trajectory in light of broader academic and structural transformations. The chapter also considers possible directions for the future development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, emphasizing the need for sustainable mentorship, cross-disciplinary engagement, and institutional reform.

Part IV, *Epilogue*, extends the scope of the dissertation through a case study of participatory digital scholarship. Chapter 8, *Bizantolog.org: A Virtual Community for Byzantine Studies*, examines the formation and evolution of a collaborative online platform that emerged from this research. The chapter discusses the platform's potential to address institutional gaps, foster scholarly networks, and promote knowledge sharing across generations and disciplines. As both a product and legacy of this dissertation, Bizantolog represents a living extension of the field's community-building potential.

Lastly, all editorial and citation conventions in this thesis follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, with additional notes on terminology and formatting as outlined in Appendix 1.

Chapter 2 – Mapping the Terrain: Literature, Concepts, and Methods

This chapter establishes the foundation of the study in four sections. 2.1 outlines the theoretical framework, drawing on the sociology of scientific knowledge, institutional theory, and disciplinary development models. 2.2 examines the emergence and evolution of Byzantine studies in the West. 2.3 reviews the literature on Byzantine studies in Türkiye. 2.4 presents the research methodology, detailing the qualitative and quantitative strategies used in data collection and analysis.

2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study draws on the sociology of scientific knowledge and institutional theory to examine how academic disciplines emerge, evolve, and institutionalize—framing Byzantine studies in Türkiye within these broader academic dynamics.

2.1.1 Conceptualizing Academic Disciplines

Academic disciplines are structured systems of knowledge production, shaped by theories, methods, and institutional settings.¹² Michel Foucault famously described them as “systems of control in the production of discourse,” combining cognitive structures and organizational mechanisms.¹³ Similarly, Martin Lawn and Edwin Keiner highlight their self-regulating nature, supported by scholarly communication networks.¹⁴

Multidimensional frameworks help explain the evolution of disciplines. Anthony Biglan proposed three axes: (1) paradigmatic vs. non-paradigmatic (e.g., physics vs. humanities), (2) theoretical vs. applied orientation, and (3) focus on life systems vs.

¹² Bryan S. Turner, “Discipline,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2-3 (2006): 183.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Second Vintage Books Edition ed. (New York, 1995). Foucault situates “discipline” within broader systems of power, knowledge, and institutional control. Unlike juridical power, disciplinary power operates through spatial organization, surveillance, and routine to produce compliant bodies and minds. Drawing on Bentham’s Panopticon, he shows how such techniques are applied across domains like education, labor, and healthcare, Foucault, *Discipline*, 205. Discipline functions as a “technology” of hierarchical control, using ranks, procedures, and spatial arrangements to enforce obedience and efficiency, Foucault, *Discipline*, 146-48, 215. This process shapes discourse, which Foucault sees as both a mechanism of power and a site of resistance, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (Pantheon Books, 1978), 101. Disciplinary training also forms internalized norms, producing scholars “disciplined by their discipline.” See, Armin Krishnan, *What Are Academic Disciplines? Some Observations on the Disciplinarity vs. Interdisciplinarity Debate*, ESRC National Centre for Research Methods, NCRM Working Paper Series, (2009), 8.

¹⁴ Martin Lawn and Edwin Keiner, “Editorial,” *European Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2006): 158-59.

inanimate subjects.¹⁵ Janet G. Donald and Tony Becher expanded on this by categorizing disciplines as structured (sciences), semi-structured (social sciences), or interpretive (humanities), and introducing contrasts such as “hard/soft,” “pure/applied,” and “urban/rural.”¹⁶ While “hard” fields have stricter methodologies, “soft” fields allow greater interpretive flexibility. Convergent disciplines (e.g., molecular biology) maintain strong consensus, while divergent ones (e.g., history or cultural studies) tolerate diverse perspectives and internal fragmentation.

Becher's distinction between disciplinary “communities” and smaller “networks” underscores how disciplines form layered social structures, with varying degrees of cohesion.¹⁷ Though these models are analytically helpful, they must be treated flexibly. Knowledge fields are dynamic rather than territorially fixed—they expand, adapt, and shift in response to historical and institutional change.¹⁸

Interdisciplinarity challenges traditional disciplinary boundaries, fostering collaboration and critical self-examination. Reflexivity—disciplines' capacity to question their assumptions and societal roles—is essential in this process.¹⁹ Drawing on Geoffrey Squires and Sue Wilkinson, reflexivity can be personal, functional, or disciplinary.²⁰ While personal reflexivity addresses researcher bias, disciplinary reflexivity examines the

¹⁵ Anthony Biglan, “The Characteristics of Subject Matter in Different Academic Areas,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 57, no. 3 (1973): 201-02. Biglan performed a multidimensional scaling analysis on scholars' judgements about the subject matter of different academic areas in this study. Biglan argues that his empirical findings support Thomas Kuhn's concept of the paradigm. By paradigm, Kuhn refers to “a set of recurrent and quasi-standard illustrations of various theories” studied and practiced by a scientific community and used in their “conceptual, observational, and instrumental applications.” See Thomas S. Kuhn and Ian Hacking, “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 50th Anniversary Edition,” *Chicago: University of Chicago Press* (2012): 43.

¹⁶ Janet G. Donald, “Knowledge and the University Curriculum,” *Higher Education* 15, no. 3 (1986): 270, 79-81; Tony Becher and Paul R. Trowler, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines* (Buckingham, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 2001), 186. The 12 disciplines included in Becher's study are biology (botany and zoology), chemistry, economics, geography, history, law, mathematics, mechanical engineering, modern languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian), pharmacy, physics, and sociology.

¹⁷ Becher and Trowler, *Academic Tribes*, 182-83. Becher illustrates this complexity through the analogy of nationhood: a discipline, like a nation, embodies a collective identity while encompassing internally diverse yet interconnected communities.

¹⁸ Krishnan, *Academic Disciplines*, 12.

¹⁹ Reflexivity, first raised in science by Karl Popper, became a central theme in late twentieth-century social theory, especially in the works of Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu. For an overview, see Ray Holland, “Reflexivity,” *Human Relations* 52, no. 4 (1999). For a review of epistemic reflexivity and Bourdieu's stance vis-à-vis other social theorists, see Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 36-46.

²⁰ Geoffrey Squires, “Interdisciplinarity in Higher Education in the United Kingdom,” *European Journal of Education* 27, no. 3 (1992); Sue Wilkinson, “The Role of Reflexivity in Feminist Psychology,” *Women's Studies International Forum* 11, no. 5 (1988).

broader sociopolitical forces that shape research practices.²¹ Such awareness strengthens a discipline's relevance and adaptability.

The institutionalization of a discipline marks its transformation from a subject area into an organized, legitimized domain of scholarly inquiry. Foucault's emphasis on discourse control aligns with this view.²² From this perspective, disciplines are both cognitive and organizational structures, rooted in institutional frameworks that enable their generation and regulation.²³ In this study, the term “discipline” refers to the organizational and cognitive structure of academic knowledge, necessitating institutional mechanisms for its emergence and development. Armin Krishnan identifies key features of a discipline: a defined object of study, specialized knowledge, technical language, research methods, and institutional markers (e.g., departments, journals, associations).²⁴ Disciplines thrive when these elements are supported by coherent professional frameworks.

Universities and professional societies have historically provided this structure.²⁵ The rise of research universities in the nineteenth century, following early models such as the Royal Society (1660) and the Académie des Sciences (1666), enabled disciplines to stabilize through departments, peer-reviewed journals, and academic training.²⁶ Roger L. Geiger describes a discipline as “a community based on inquiry and centered on competent investigators,” emphasizing its collective nature.²⁷ Beyond universities, professional associations, journals, funding agencies, and peer reviewers form a robust ecosystem sustaining academic disciplines.²⁸ Over time, journals became both gatekeepers and legitimizers, controlling what counted as valid knowledge.

²¹ Disciplinary reflexivity aligns with Foucault's “discursive” reflexivity, emphasizing the broader societal and institutional contexts that influence disciplines, see Leah Tomkins and Virginia Eatough, “Towards an Integrative Reflexivity in Organisational Research,” *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 5 (August 2010): 164.

²² Michel Foucault, *Bilginin arkeolojisi*, trans. Veli Urhan, 4th ed. (İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 2019, 2011), 226.

²³ Alan J. Richardson, “Strategies in the Development of Accounting History as an Academic Discipline,” *Accounting History* 13, no. 3 (2008): 267.

²⁴ Krishnan, *Academic Disciplines*, 9-46.

²⁵ David R. Shumway and Ellen Messer-Davidow, “Disciplinarity: An Introduction,” *Poetics Today* 12, no. 2 (1991): 204-12.

²⁶ Roger Hahn, *The Anatomy of a Scientific Institution: The Paris Academy of Sciences, 1666-1803* (University of California Press, 1971), 275.

²⁷ Roger L. Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900-1940* (Routledge, 2017), 29.

²⁸ Shumway and Messer-Davidow, “Disciplinarity,” 208. The authority of the university departments over the disciplines was shared with both the central administration and more importantly with “national and international institutions that embodied the disciplines—professional associations that sponsored

Thomas Gieryn's concept of "boundary-work" captures how disciplines maintain authority by defining intellectual territory.²⁹ These boundaries are shaped by strategic differentiation—methodologies, goals, and epistemologies—and supported by geopolitical metaphors (e.g., fields, frontiers). Becher's metaphor of "academic tribes" further emphasizes the cultural dimensions of disciplines.

In sum, disciplines are both intellectual and institutional ecosystems, shaped by historical forces, internal dynamics, and strategic actors. Reflexivity and institutional support ensure their continued relevance in the face of evolving academic and societal challenges.

2.1.2 Theoretical Studies of Development of Academic Disciplines

This study draws on the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) and institutional theory to understand how academic disciplines emerge and institutionalize. SSK challenges the idea that scientific knowledge is purely cognitive, highlighting the influence of social, political, and institutional factors. Foundational work by Robert Merton framed science as a social institution governed by norms like universalism and disinterestedness, while Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts revealed the non-linear, socially contingent nature of scientific development.³⁰

SSK and the Four-Stage Model

Building on Kuhn's insights, SSK scholars adopted broader approaches to studying scientific communication networks and the social organization of research groups.³¹

disciplinary activities and promulgated disciplinary values, journals that published disciplinary and specialized research, funding agencies that supported disciplinary research and teaching, and peer reviewers who evaluated disciplinary work."

²⁹ Thomas F. Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 6 (1983).

³⁰ Robert K. Merton, "The Ethos of Science (1942)," in *On Social Structure and Science* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 269-76. Merton defines the ethos of science as a set of institutional norms—universalism, communalism, disinterestedness, and organized skepticism—that promote the production of reliable knowledge. He emphasizes the cultural (social) dimensions over the technical and argues that science depends on specific social structures for its emergence and legitimacy. See also Robert K. Merton, "The Normative Structure of Science," *The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations* (1979): 267-68. Kuhn defines scientific disciplines by their collective adherence to a paradigm—a set of standard theories and practices that guide research within a scientific community. He introduces the term "disciplinary matrix" to describe the shared beliefs, values, and exemplars that unify the field, encompassing symbolic generalizations, models, norms, and key examples, see Kuhn and Hacking, "Scientific Revolutions," 43 and 181-86.

³¹ Vivien Beattie and Elizabeth Davie, "Theoretical Studies of the Historical Development of the Accounting Discipline: A Review and Evidence," *Accounting, Business & Financial History* 16, no. 1 (2006): 5.

Empirical studies examined the stratification of science, particularly through the analysis of publication and citation practices, demonstrating how networks of communication and collaboration shape the production of knowledge. These studies have led to the development of various models of scholarly knowledge development, each offering unique insights into how academic disciplines emerge and evolve.³²

Among the key contributions to Neo-Kuhnian approaches, Nicholas C. Mullins' Four-Stage Model offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how research groups evolve into institutionalized academic disciplines.³³ Central to this model are four types of social relationships—trusted assessors, teacher-student dynamics, colleague relations, and co-authorships—that align closely with the objectives of this dissertation. Mullins integrates both social and cognitive dimensions, providing a robust framework for analyzing how intellectual breakthroughs, formal structures, and disciplinary identities emerge.³⁴

The model identifies these key social relationships as follows:

- i. **Trusted Assessors:** Informal exchanges where peers evaluate work prior to publication, fostering intellectual trust.
- ii. **Teacher-Student Relationships:** Apprenticeship-based knowledge transfer, where students later contribute original research.
- iii. **Colleague Relationships:** Institutional collaborations that support mentoring, idea exchange, and joint projects.
- iv. **Co-Authorships:** Joint publications that strengthen professional bonds and demonstrate group cohesion.

³² Alternative Neo-Kuhnian models offer useful insights into the social dynamics of scientific development. Michael J. Mulkay, "Three Models of Scientific Development," *The Sociological Review* 23, no. 3 (1975); Michael J. Mulkay, *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge* (Routledge, 1979). Mulkay's Branching Model highlights the role of informal communication, interpretive flexibility, and negotiation in shaping research trajectories. David Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery* (Routledge, 1976); Barry Barnes, *Interests and the Growth of Knowledge* (Routledge, 1977). The Interest Model, associated with Bloor and Barnes, emphasizes how social, political, and cultural factors influence what knowledge is accepted or rejected. Harry Collins, "The Sociology of Scientific Knowledge: Studies of Contemporary Science," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9, no. 1 (1983); Raymond Murphy, *Social Closure: The Theory of Monopolization and Exclusion* (Clarendon Press, 1988). The Closure Model, developed by Collins and expanded by Murphy, explores how scientific communities maintain boundaries and authority through mechanisms of exclusion and monopolization.

³³ Nicholas C. Mullins, "The Development of Specialties in Social Science: The Case of Ethnomethodology," *Science Studies* 3, no. 3 (1973).

³⁴ Mullins, "Development of Specialties."; Randall Collins, "Theories and Theory Groups in Contemporary American Sociology," *Theory and Society* 2, no. 4 (1975): 587-88; Beattie and Davie, "Discipline," 6-7.

Mullins argues that a group of researchers pioneering a new area of study progresses through four developmental stages emphasizing that the evolution of social relationships within the group consistently precedes theoretical advancements.³⁵ Mullins' model describes these four developmental stages, driven by the evolution of these social relationships (Figure 2.1):

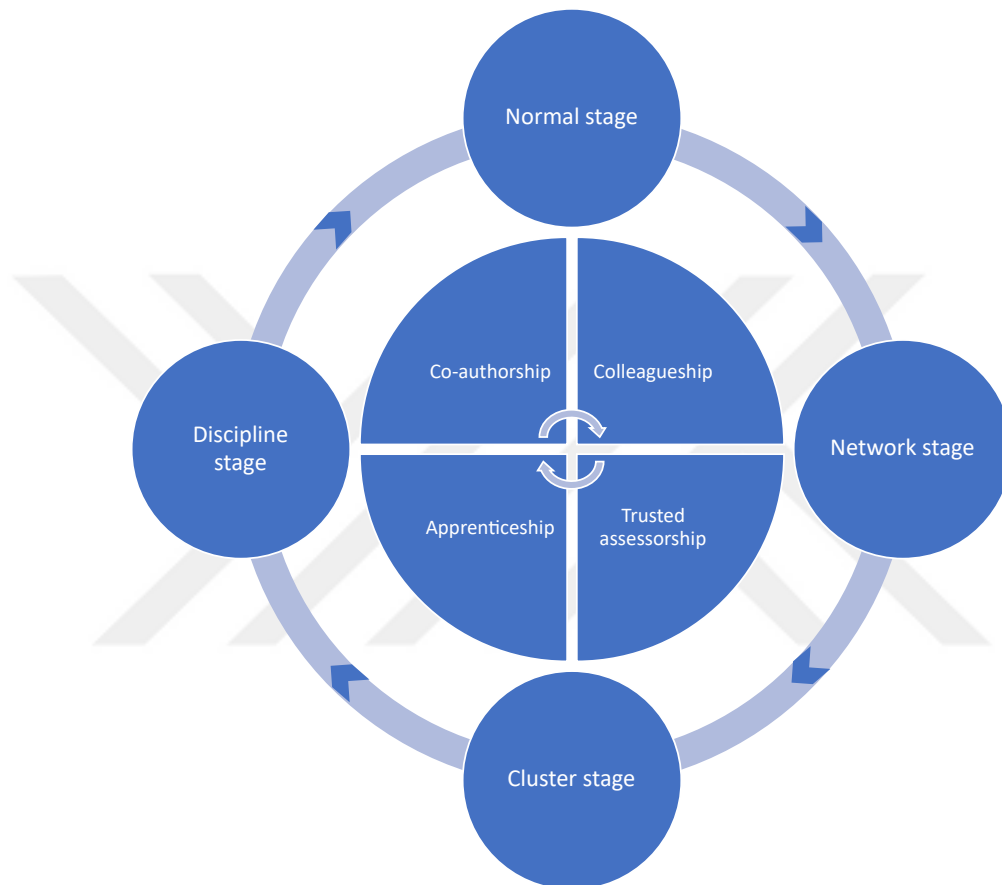


Figure 2.1: Nicholas C. Mullins' Four-Stage Model.

- **Normal Stage:** A few independent researchers explore a loosely defined area within the parent discipline, lacking formal organization or recognition. Intellectual breakthroughs signal the emergence of the field, establishing the founder as its leader.
- **Network Stage:** Intellectual success attracts collaborators, forming relationships among peers and apprentices. Informal communication and recruitment centralize around an organizational leader who unites colleagues and students, often at a specific institution, fostering shared goals and methodologies.

³⁵ Mullins, "Development of Specialties," 246.

- **Cluster Stage:** The group grows across institutions as students of leading figures produce independent work. Organizational leaders expand activities like recruitment, publications, and conferences. Co-authorship increases, and secondary resources emerge, solidifying a research framework. The field's relationship with the parent discipline evolves toward absorption, isolation, or becoming a new specialty.
- **Discipline Stage:** The field becomes institutionalized through the establishment of dedicated departments, positions, journals, and professional organizations. As students become successful and secure positions at other institutions, research expands to new centers, and ties among researchers loosen. Intellectual breakthroughs give way to routine research. Institutionalization ensures the field's long-term viability through structured employment opportunities, training programs, and regular meetings organized by organizational leaders.

Mullins estimates durations of four to fourteen years for the network stage and four to eight years for the cluster stage, while the normal and discipline stages are more variable.³⁶ Progress depends on factors such as intellectual momentum and effective leadership; failure to meet these can result in stagnation.

The model underscores the interplay between social and intellectual factors in the development of academic disciplines. By foregrounding mentorship, collaboration, and communication networks, it emphasizes the significance of cultivating environments conducive to sustained scholarly interaction. Whereas Kuhn's notion of paradigm shifts illuminated the cognitive dimensions of scientific revolutions, Mullins offers a complementary perspective centered on the social dynamics of group formation.

Despite its analytical utility, the model has been critiqued for its linear structure and for insufficiently accounting for the recursive and contingent nature of scholarly development.³⁷ Moreover, it pays limited attention to exogenous factors such as political or economic influences. Nevertheless, Mullins' framework remains a valuable tool for examining the social infrastructure underpinning the institutionalization of academic knowledge.

³⁶ Collins, "Theories," 588.

³⁷ Beattie and Davie, "Discipline," 7.

Organizational and Institutional Perspectives on Discipline Formation

Richard Whitley's *The Intellectual and Social Organization of the Sciences* offers a foundational framework for understanding how scientific fields develop into structured systems of knowledge production.³⁸ Whitley distinguishes between scientific fields and disciplines, defining the latter as institutionalized units of labor control that train individuals in specialized skills and monopolize access to particular intellectual goals.³⁹ Disciplines thus emerge when knowledge fields are formalized as sites of training, employment, and certification.⁴⁰

Whitley emphasizes how reputational systems—such as journals and professional associations—play a central role in shaping research priorities.⁴¹ In academic settings, reputational authority often outweighs administrative control, determining the direction and evaluation of scholarly work.⁴² To compare organizational forms, Whitley introduces two key dimensions: mutual dependence (the extent to which researchers rely on one another's results and recognition) and task uncertainty (the predictability of research outcomes and goals).⁴³ The interaction of these factors explains the diversity of scientific fields: while the natural sciences are characterized by standardization and high mutual dependence, the humanities function as loosely coordinated “fragmented adhocracies,” marked by interpretive plurality and minimal methodological consensus.⁴⁴

While Whitley's framework accounts for structural variation across disciplines, it offers limited insight into how change occurs. Institutional theory expands this view by

³⁸ Richard Whitley, *The Intellectual and Social Organization of Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2000, 1984); Richard Whitley, “The Development of Management Studies as a Fragmented Adhocracy,” *Social Science Information* 23, no. 4-5 (1984).

³⁹ Whitley, *Organization of Sciences*, 5-6. For an overview and critique of Whitley's work, see Randall Collins, “The Intellectual and Social Organization of the Sciences by Richard Whitley,” review of *The Intellectual and Social Organization of the Sciences*, by Richard Whitley, *Theory and Society* 17, no. 2 (1988). Whitley treats “science” as a generic term to include any field of intellectual production and uses the humanities and sociology as critical endpoints in his comparative analyses. Collins, “Richard Whitley,” 291.

⁴⁰ Whitley, *Organization of Sciences*, 113.

⁴¹ Whitley, *Organization of Sciences*, 53-54.

⁴² Whitley, *Organization of Sciences*, 68-74. Whitley distinguishes academic, state, and industrial science based on their alignment with public reputational ideals, adherence to standards set by reputational groups, and reward systems tied to elite field norms. Academic science is most reliant on all three, with journals and professional associations playing a central evaluative role.

⁴³ Whitley, *Organization of Sciences*, 155-58.

⁴⁴ Whitley, “Fragmented Adhocracy,” 786-88. Fragmented adhocracies, characterized by high uncertainty and low dependence, produce loosely coordinated, context-driven research with minimal standardization. Open to public engagement but lacking firm reputational boundaries, they rely on accessible language, broad topics, and shifting leadership rooted in charisma and informal coalitions.

considering how organizational norms, values, and structures stabilize over time.⁴⁵ Early formulations, such as Lynne G. Zucker's, emphasize how norms are either externally imposed (e.g., by the state or professional bodies) or internally reproduced through imitation.⁴⁶ Yet this focus on continuity has drawn criticism for neglecting agency, particularly the role of individuals in initiating transformation.

To address this gap, the concept of institutional entrepreneurship foregrounds the strategic actions of individuals who reshape organizational fields.⁴⁷ Paul Di Maggio introduced the concept of institutional entrepreneurs—actors who leverage their social skills to foster collaboration by creating shared meanings and collective identities.⁴⁸ These individuals craft frameworks and rules that align the interests of otherwise disparate groups, facilitating institutional transformation. Neil Fligstein expanded on this concept, emphasizing that social skills—defined as the ability to understand and relate to others' perspectives—are essential for achieving institutional change.⁴⁹ He critiques the conventional view that social action is solely determined by structural factors like access to resources and power or position and instead highlights the role of strategic actors who empathize with others' interests and build collective identities to unify diverse groups.⁵⁰ Emotional, cultural, and strategic competencies are needed to construct new fields of action.

Institutional entrepreneurship thus bridges structure and agency, offering a dynamic lens through which to analyze change in academic and organizational contexts. It is particularly valuable for studying the development of disciplines in marginal or under-institutionalized settings, such as Byzantine studies in Türkiye, where strategic actors

⁴⁵ Yuzhuo Cai and Yohannes Mehari, "The Use of Institutional Theory in Higher Education Research," in *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research*, ed. Jeroen Huisman and Malcolm Tight (Bingley: Emerald 2015). Organization studies and higher education research have mutually shaped one another: while organizational theories have enriched analyses of higher education, many foundational concepts in modern organizational and institutional theory originated from the study of academic institutions.

⁴⁶ Lynne G. Zucker, "Institutional Theories of Organization," *Annual Review of Sociology* 13 (1987): 444-47. Zucker identifies institutionalization in organizations as involving rule-like actions embedded in formal structures, persisting beyond individual actors. She outlines two models: environment as institution, where norms are externally imposed and may reduce efficiency, and organization as institution, where institutional elements emerge internally, fostering stability but potentially limiting adaptability.

⁴⁷ Cai and Mehari, "Higher Education Research," 3.

⁴⁸ Paul Di Maggio, "Interest and Agency in Institutional Theory," in *Institutional Patterns and Organizations: Culture and Environment*, ed. Lynne G. Zucker (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1988), 3-22.

⁴⁹ Neil Fligstein, "Social Skill and Institutional Theory," *American Behavioral Scientist* 40, no. 4 (1997).

⁵⁰ Fligstein, "Social Skill and Institutional Theory," 398.

have played a crucial role in creating visibility, forging networks, and establishing legitimacy within broader academic systems.

2.1.3 Conclusion to the Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

This section outlines the theoretical foundations guiding this study's analysis of academic discipline formation, with a particular focus on Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Drawing from the sociology of scientific knowledge and institutional theory, it conceptualizes disciplines as both cognitive structures and organizational entities, shaped by historical forces, internal social networks, and strategic action.

Mullins' Four-Stage Model offers a valuable lens for understanding how research groups evolve into institutionalized disciplines through evolving social relationships—such as mentorship, co-authorship, and collaboration—that precede formal academic structures. Complementing this internalist view, Whitley's organizational theory emphasizes how reputational systems shape disciplinary diversity, particularly in the humanities, where fields often operate as loosely structured “fragmented adhocracies.”

To account for institutional change, the framework integrates the concept of institutional entrepreneurship, which highlights the agency of individuals in navigating and reshaping academic environments. The contributions of DiMaggio and Fligstein underscore how social skill and strategic coalition-building can drive the institutionalization of emerging fields, especially under conditions of limited formal support.

Together, these theoretical tools offer a robust foundation for analyzing how Byzantine studies has developed within the broader academic landscape, illuminating the interplay between social dynamics, organizational structures, and individual agency in the evolution of scholarly disciplines.

2.2 Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline: Emergence and Evolution in the West

Byzantine studies is an academic field dedicated to the history and culture of the Byzantine Empire; the continuation of the Eastern Roman Empire centered in Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul). Founded by Emperor Constantine in 324 CE and inaugurated as the capital in 330 CE, Constantinople remained the heart of the Byzantine Empire until its fall to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. The term “Byzantine,” however, is

considered a modern construct, first used in sixteenth-century Europe and derived from Byzantium—the ancient Greek city that preceded Constantinople—and emerged with the institutionalization of the discipline in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵¹ As such, the use of “Byzantium” and “Byzantine” as labels for the Eastern Roman Empire and its culture reflects later historiographical developments. However, recent scholarship refutes this notion, pointing out that Latinate writers had referred to Constantinople as Byzantium long before Hieronymus Wolf, often as a conscious archaism.⁵²

As discussed in *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, the concept of Byzantium has been subject to reinterpretation and negotiation across centuries.⁵³ Yet, as Anthony Kaldellis argues, the rebranding of Byzantium in the nineteenth century marked a pivotal moment.⁵⁴ This intellectual shift, deeply tied to the geopolitical dynamics of the Great Powers, severed Byzantium from its Roman heritage and its connections to modern Greece, positioning it as a distinct and autonomous civilization. This redefinition served not only ideological purposes but also practical ones, as it allowed for the creation of clear boundaries that framed Byzantium as a discrete subject of scholarly inquiry. By distancing Byzantium from broader civilizational narratives, this conceptual “walling off” facilitated the emergence of Byzantine studies as a formal academic discipline, while reflecting the broader political and cultural tensions of its time.

⁵¹ Sixteenth-century German historian and humanist Hieronymus Wolf (1516-80) published a collection of Byzantine sources in 1557 under the title *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae*. His reference to “Byzantinae” to denote medieval Greek-speaking literature of the Eastern Roman Empire has gradually replaced the name Roman as used in the Eastern Roman Empire by the term Byzantine. In the seventeenth century, King Louis XIV of France called several renowned scholars from around the world to assemble all Roman works, building on Hieronymus' Corpus. This effort yielded to the immense *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae* in 34 volumes with Greek text and Latin translation. This work is considered instrumental in the popularization of the term “Byzantine Empire.”

⁵² Anthony Kaldellis, “From “Empire of the Greeks” to “Byzantium”: The Politics of a Modern Paradigm Shift,” in *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Nathanael Aschenbrenner and Jake Ransohoff, Extravagantes (Dumbarton Oaks) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

⁵³ Nathanael Aschenbrenner and Jake Ransohoff, “*Byzance Avant Byzance*: Toward a New History of Byzantine Scholarship,” in *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Nathanael Aschenbrenner and Jake Ransohoff, Extravagantes (Dumbarton Oaks) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 369-71.

⁵⁴ Kaldellis, “Empire of Greeks,” 367. Kaldellis argues that the nineteenth century’s rebranding of Byzantium was characterized by its deliberate isolation as a distinct historical entity, separate from both its Roman antecedents and its modern Greek successors. Unlike the medieval shift that redefined Byzantium as Greek rather than Roman, this nineteenth-century reconceptualization severed Byzantium from preexisting civilizational frameworks, establishing it as an autonomous historical construct. This process not only aligned with Western geopolitical narratives but also facilitated the institutionalization of Byzantine studies as an independent academic discipline, highlighting the complex interplay of intellectual, political, and cultural forces in shaping historiographical traditions.

2.2.1 A Brief Overview

Traditionally, the chronological framework of the Byzantine Empire—and by extension, Byzantine studies—has been delineated from 324/330 CE to 1453 CE. Yet, these boundaries are the subject of ongoing debate among scholars. Some propose a distinct break in the seventh century with the Arab conquests, redefining the Byzantine Empire as a medieval entity. Others emphasize the continuity of late antique structures, such as law, administration, and urbanism, into the Byzantine period.⁵⁵ Similarly, the geographical scope of Byzantine studies transcends the empire's fluctuating borders, encompassing areas influenced by its culture, religion, and political structures, such as Syria, Egypt, Bulgaria, Serbia, and medieval Rus.⁵⁶

The field of Byzantine studies is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on philology, history, art history, archaeology, theology, numismatics, and paleography, among other disciplines. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon, and Robin Cormack categorize the field into two broad areas: instrumental disciplines, which focus on the preparation and analysis of primary source material, and interpretative disciplines, which aim to construct broader narratives based on such evidence.⁵⁷ They argue that instrumental skills, deeply rooted in the scientific positivism of the nineteenth century, have historically dominated the field. This methodological focus has significantly shaped the training of Byzantinists, fostering specialized expertise in analyzing textual, archaeological, and artistic evidence. This emphasis on technical and methodological skills—necessitated by the rigorous assessment of diverse evidence—has long characterized the discipline. According to Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, the dominance of these specialist skills with “proven scientific value” largely precluded theoretical abstraction and reflection within Byzantine studies until the late twentieth century.

The mid-1980s marked the beginning of a shift, as scholars began to explore the relationship between empirical research and theoretical frameworks.⁵⁸ Since then, postmodernist and post-structuralist theories have gradually permeated the discipline,

⁵⁵ Alice-Mary Talbot, “Byzantine Studies at the Beginning of the Twenty-first Century,” *The Journal of English and German Philology* 105, no. 1 (2006): 25-26.

⁵⁶ Talbot, “Byzantine Studies,” 26.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Jeffreys, John F. Haldon, and Robin Cormack, “Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Robin Cormack, John F. Haldon, and Elizabeth Jeffreys (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9.

⁵⁸ John Haldon, “‘Jargon’ vs. ‘the Facts’? Byzantine History-Writing and Contemporary Debates,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 9 (1985).

particularly in the study of Byzantine literature and visual culture. This theoretical turn introduced concepts such as intertextuality, authorial intention, reception, and cultural relativism, enriching scholarly discourse and expanding the field's interpretative dimensions. As Haldon notes, "... this shift also facilitated a much greater degree of cross-disciplinary reading, comparative thinking, and in respect of historical context and setting, a generally more open approach to the medieval West and the Islamic world in terms of both material and method."⁵⁹ Despite these advancements, however, the traditionalist emphasis on empirical methodologies continues to exert a strong influence on "how Byzantinists understand their purchase on 'the past,' and the ways in which knowledge of the past is constructed or generated."⁶⁰ This enduring legacy underscores the need to historically contextualize the field's methodological evolution.

Byzantium has historically occupied an enigmatic and marginal position in Western Europe, a status rooted in linguistic and cultural differences stemming from the religious and political divisions of late antiquity and the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the increasing number of major exhibitions of Byzantine art—and the significant public interest they attract—reflect a growing awareness and appreciation of Byzantium's cultural heritage.⁶¹ Additionally, increased tourism to Byzantine monuments in Türkiye and Greece further underscores the heightened popular and scholarly engagement with Byzantium, particularly its artistic legacy. These trends point to a broader cultural shift, one that acknowledges the historical and artistic significance of Byzantium within both academic and public spheres.

2.2.2 Early Developments in Byzantine Studies

The emergence of Byzantine studies as a scholarly field can be traced back to the Renaissance, when Western European scholars first encountered Byzantine texts and artifacts. This engagement was driven by political and cultural concerns, particularly the Ottoman advance into Europe, which prompted scholars to examine Byzantine accounts of the Turks and their history. These initial inquiries naturally led to an interest in linguistics and philology to decipher the primary sources.⁶² An early record of Byzantine

⁵⁹ John Haldon, "Res Publica Byzantina? State Formation and Issues of Identity in Medieval East Rome," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 40, no. 1 (2016): 4-5.

⁶⁰ Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, "Byzantine Studies," 9.

⁶¹ Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, "Byzantine Studies," 4.

⁶² Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, "Byzantine Studies," 7.

art also originates from this period: Giorgio Vasari, the Renaissance artist and historian, assessed Byzantine art in his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1568), grouping it with Gothic art as a style “lacking in qualities of art.”⁶³ This dismissive perspective, part of the broader Vasarian tradition, shaped Western views of Byzantine art for centuries.⁶⁴ The Enlightenment did little to improve Byzantium’s reputation, as writers like Edward Gibbon reinforced its marginalization. In *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–89), Edward Gibbon framed Byzantium as a degenerate successor to Rome, perpetuating the notion of Byzantium as a period of decline.⁶⁵ These attitudes reflected broader cultural biases rooted in the religious and political divisions between Eastern and Western Europe during late antiquity and the Middle Ages.

The formal establishment of Byzantine studies as an academic discipline, however, began in the late nineteenth century. Karl Krumbacher’s pioneering work in Munich marked a turning point. In 1892, he founded the journal *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* and established an institute for Byzantine studies at the University of Munich, creating a framework for the field’s institutionalization. These developments inspired the formation of Byzantine research centers across Europe, including in Greece and Russia, and later in the United States after World War II.⁶⁶ Significant milestones in the twentieth century included the establishment of the International Congress of Byzantine Studies (ICBS) in 1924, which provided a global platform for scholarly exchange, and the foundation of the Association Internationale des Études Byzantines (AIEB) in 1948. Emerging from the Byzantine congresses of that time, the AIEB became a central coordinating body, with its International Bureau—composed of representatives from all members’ national committees—serving as its permanent executive organ.⁶⁷

⁶³ Eric Fernie, *Art History and Its Methods: A Critical Anthology* (Phaidon London, 1995), 28.

⁶⁴ Liz James, “Byzantium: A Very, Very Short Introduction,” in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

⁶⁵ Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, “Byzantine Studies,” 7; Fiona K. Haarer, “Writing Histories of Byzantium: The Historiography of Byzantine History,” in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 10–13.

⁶⁶ Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, “Byzantine Studies,” 6; Haarer, “Writing Histories,” 13–15.

⁶⁷ AIEB has 39-member National Committees: Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United States of America, and Vatican.

Research centers also played a vital role in advancing the field, with the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection becoming a prominent hub after its founding in 1940. The historic Georgetown estate, donated by Robert Woods Bliss and Mildred Barnes Bliss to Harvard University, provided a home for Byzantine studies and fostered international collaboration. Academic journals further contributed to the discipline's institutionalization: *Byzantinoslavica*, first published in 1929, emphasized Byzantine-Slavic connections; *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, launched in 1941, became a key venue for disseminating Byzantine scholarship; and *Revue des Études Byzantines*, the only French journal devoted exclusively to the Byzantine world, succeeded *Échos d'Orient* in 1943 and is continued by the Institut Français d'Etudes Byzantines. Alongside these newer outlets, the longstanding *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* and *Vizantiyskiy Vremennik*—established in 1894 as the press organ of Russian Byzantinists—continued to maintain their prominence, solidifying their roles as vital platforms for international scholarship. Together, these developments laid the foundation for Byzantine studies as a formal academic discipline.

2.2.3 Institutional Growth and Expanding Interest

Byzantine studies has gained greater prominence in Western academia in the second half of the twentieth century, driven by several factors. Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack identify four root causes for this expansion: (1) growing interest in the post-classical antecedents of Western culture, (2) recognition of Byzantium's influence on Orthodox Christian traditions, (3) heritage interest among diasporic communities, particularly in the United States, Canada, and Australia, and (4) heightened geopolitical attention to the Byzantine legacy in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean.⁶⁸ These factors have not only increased public and scholarly interest but also encouraged interdisciplinary approaches within the field.

This growing scholarly engagement is evident in the increasing establishment of research centers, publications, and academic events such as conferences, symposia, and colloquia, including the quinquennial ICBS organized by the AIEB.⁶⁹ Notably, research

⁶⁸ Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, "Byzantine Studies," 6-7.

⁶⁹ The ICBS has been held every five years since the twelfth congress in Ohrid in 1961, except for the rescheduling of the Twenty-Fourth ICBS to 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Before 1961, the congresses were held irregularly, with intervals of 2 to 4 years, but were interrupted by World War II, resulting in a 12-year hiatus between 1936 and 1948.

centers have played a pivotal role in advancing the field by fostering interdisciplinary approaches that integrate history, art history, archaeology, theology, and related disciplines. The Institute for Byzantine Studies at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, founded in 1948 by George Ostrogorsky, is among the earliest research institutions. In Greece, the Section of Byzantine Research (originally the Centre for Byzantine Research) was established in 1960 to promote Byzantine history and civilization and publishes the prominent journal *Byzantina Symmeikta*.⁷⁰

Other key centers emerged in the 1960s. The Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at the University of Vienna, established in 1962, emphasizes interdisciplinary methodologies, incorporating linguistics, literary studies, art history, and prosopography. Its collaboration with the Austrian Academy of Sciences supports long-term research projects in areas such as historical geography and lexicography, as well as the publication of the *Journal of Byzantine Studies / Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*. The Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman, and Modern Greek Studies at the University of Birmingham, founded in 1965, has significantly contributed to research on transitions between the Byzantine and Ottoman periods and their modern implications. The center's journal, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, serves as an important platform for scholarship bridging these interconnected areas. The Center for Byzantine Research at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, founded in 1966, advances the study of Byzantine history, literature, theology, archaeology, art, and law through its research programs, seminars, and publications, including the journal *Byzantina*.

In the United Kingdom, several other research centers have also established themselves as hubs for Byzantine studies. Institutions such as the Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research, the Centre for Late Antique, Islamic and Byzantine Studies at the University of Edinburgh, and the Centre for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies at the University of Nottingham foster interdisciplinary approaches. Additionally, the Sussex Centre for Byzantine Cultural History continues to contribute to the study of Byzantine culture. In other parts of Europe, institutions such as the Institute for Early Christian and Byzantine Studies at Leuven University, Bulgaria's Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies

⁷⁰ *Byzantina Symmeikta*, successor to *Symmeikta* (1966–2005), has been the primary journal of the Section of Byzantine Research at the National Hellenic Research Foundation since its renaming in 2007, focusing on Byzantine history, literature, and archives.

“Prof. Ivan Dujčev” at Sofia University, and France’s Centre de Recherche d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance at the Collège de France, which is now part of the broader research institute Orient & Méditerranée, further strengthen the field’s reach. In Southern Europe, Spain’s Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas and Italy’s Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia in Italy are prominent centers of Byzantine scholarship.

In North America, as noted, the Dumbarton Oaks (DO) remains a premier institution for Byzantine studies, offering fellowships, symposia, and access to extensive collections of art and manuscripts. Recent initiatives, such as the Mary Jaharis Center for Byzantine Art and Culture at Hellenic College Holy Cross, established in 2010, promote Byzantine heritage through public and academic programs. Other notable centers include the Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies program at Queens College, the Medieval and Byzantine Studies Department at the Catholic University of America, the Medieval Institute at the University of Notre Dame, and the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton University. The International Center of Medieval Art (ICMA), based in New York, also plays an active role in promoting Byzantine studies and research, with its programs and initiatives facilitating scholarly exchange.⁷¹

Byzantine studies have also expanded into geographically distant regions, reflecting the global reach of the discipline. In South America, the Centro Argentino de Estudios Bizantinos organizes the Coloquios Bizantinos at the University of Buenos Aires, fostering academic dialogue on Byzantine history and culture. In Japan, the Japan Association for Byzantine Studies, established in 2003, has created a structured platform for collaboration. In Australia, the Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, established in 1978, fosters academic research and engagement through conferences, seminars, and its publication series, *Byzantina Australiensia*. The association also supports connections among scholars, students, and enthusiasts across Australia and New Zealand, contributing significantly to regional scholarship in Byzantine studies. These developments demonstrate the global expansion of Byzantine studies, even in regions far removed from the historical centers of the Byzantine Empire.

⁷¹ *Gesta*, the journal of the International Center of Medieval Art, publishes research on medieval art and architecture (ca. 300–1500 C.E.), including Byzantine art, with a focus on interdisciplinary studies.

In addition to research centers, associations and societies have played a vital role in supporting the growth of Byzantine studies. The Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies in the United Kingdom organizes the annual Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, a major event fostering academic dialogue and engagement, and publishes the *Bulletin of British Byzantine Studies*, which features scholarly articles, research updates, and developments in the field. On the continent, several national associations actively promote Byzantine studies. The Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini in Italy, the Comité Français des Études Byzantines in France, and the Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Förderung Byzantinischer Studien in Germany facilitate scholarly collaboration through conferences, publications, and academic partnerships.

Graduate student organizations have also made significant contributions to the discipline, fostering a new generation of Byzantinists through conferences, workshops, and research colloquia. The Oxford University Byzantine Society, a graduate student-run organization, provides an important platform for early-career scholars through its annual International Graduate Conference, encouraging interdisciplinary exchanges and networking. Similarly, the Association des Étudiants du Monde Byzantin organizes the annual Rencontres Internationales des Jeunes Chercheurs en Études Byzantines, which brings together young researchers from diverse disciplines to share their work and build academic networks. The Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies at the University of Birmingham also supports emerging scholars by hosting an annual Postgraduate Research Colloquium and a seminar series, ensuring the professional development of early-career researchers. A more recent addition is the Late Antique and Byzantine Studies Graduate Student Colloquium, launched in 2022 as a collaboration between Central European University and the University of Vienna, which facilitates joint workshops, reading sessions, and international graduate conferences.

These institutional and organizational developments have been accompanied by the emergence of new publications that further expand the discipline's reach. For instance, the *Journal of Late Antique, Islamic and Byzantine Studies*, launched in 2022, provides a platform for high-quality interdisciplinary research spanning the fourth to the fifteenth century. Together, these advancements underscore the dynamic and evolving nature of Byzantine studies, reflecting its continued adaptation to contemporary academic and public interests while fostering global collaboration.

2.2.4 Theoretical Shifts and Contemporary Challenges

As previously noted, Byzantine studies has long emphasized empirical methodologies, deeply rooted in the scientific positivism of the nineteenth century. This focus on instrumental disciplines—such as philology, numismatics, and paleography—shaped the training of Byzantinists and established a tradition of rigorous source-based analysis. However, by the late twentieth century, scholars began to challenge this methodological dominance, introducing theoretical frameworks from postmodernism and post-structuralism.⁷² Concepts such as intertextuality, reception theory, and cultural relativism have since enriched the field, fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration and expanding Byzantine studies' interpretative dimensions.⁷³ This paradigm shift, reflecting Thomas Kuhn's notion of a scientific revolution, marked a departure from narrowly empirical methodologies to broader, more theoretical approaches that address questions of historical narrative construction and cultural interpretation.⁷⁴ As Haldon observes, this shift has encouraged more comparative approaches, including explorations of Byzantium's interactions with medieval Western Europe and the Islamic world, broadening the field's intellectual horizons.⁷⁵

A prominent example of this methodological reorientation was Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable's *People and Power in Byzantium*.⁷⁶ Reviewed by Michael Angold as a landmark intervention, it reframed Byzantine studies around *Homo Byzantinus*—the lived experience of individuals negotiating autocracy—rather than through the lens of impersonal institutions.⁷⁷ Drawing on Marc Bloch's historical sociology, Kazhdan sought to highlight creativity and adaptability within Byzantine art, literature, and social life. This attempt to move beyond “sterile” institutional history toward cultural and sociological interpretation exemplified the late twentieth-century broadening of the field.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist. Averil Cameron highlights the marginalization of Byzantine studies within Western historiography, attributing it to

⁷² Haldon, “‘Jargon’ vs. ‘the Facts’? Byzantine History-Writing and Contemporary Debates.”

⁷³ Haldon, “Res Publica Byzantina,” 4-5.

⁷⁴ Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, “Byzantine Studies,” 9.

⁷⁵ Haldon, “Res Publica Byzantina,” 4-5.

⁷⁶ Aleksandr Petrovich Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1982).

⁷⁷ Michael Angold, review of *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies*, Alexander Kazhdan, Giles Constable, *The English Historical Review* 100, no. 394 (1985).

linguistic barriers, religious divisions, and biases within art historical traditions.⁷⁸ She argues that these factors have hindered the field's ability to fully explore Byzantium's role in shaping East-West relations, Christian-Muslim interactions, and broader cultural dynamics. The opening question of her book, *Byzantine Matters*, provocatively asks whether Byzantium should be understood as an empire or an "orthodox society," challenging scholars to reconsider traditional frameworks. This inquiry serves as an invitation for Byzantine studies to engage in more interdisciplinary and theoretical discussions, addressing issues of identity, power, and culture within the Byzantine world. Similarly, Paul Magdalino advocates for a more comparative approach, emphasizing the importance of analyzing Byzantium alongside other civilizations to better understand its unique and complex character.⁷⁹ To address these challenges, scholars stress the need to situate Byzantium within interconnected global frameworks, complementing its traditional focus on textual sources and material culture.

2.2.5 Critical Perspectives and Future Directions

Recent scholarship has also addressed critical historiographical issues, particularly regarding colonial and orientalist influences in Byzantine studies. For example, Nathanael Aschenbrenner and Jake Ransohoff, in *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, explore how early modern European intellectuals constructed Byzantium as a distinct historical entity. Their analysis illustrates how broader geopolitical agendas and cultural power dynamics have shaped scholarly understandings of Byzantium.⁸⁰ Similarly, contributors to *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline?* examine the field's entanglements with Eurocentric narratives and call for greater reflexivity.⁸¹ Cameron, in her contribution to the volume, challenges traditional methodologies and repeats her call for more inclusive and interdisciplinary approach to Byzantium's study.⁸²

Building on these critiques, Benjamin Anderson and Mirela Ivanova emphasize the importance of situating Byzantium within global and regional contexts to better reflect its

⁷⁸ Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 219-20.

⁷⁹ Paul Magdalino, "Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Matters*," *Speculum* 90, no. 1 (2015): 220.

⁸⁰ Aschenbrenner and Ransohoff, "Byzance Avant Byzance."

⁸¹ Benjamin Anderson and Mirela Ivanova, eds., *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline?: Toward a Critical Historiography* (Penn State Press, 2023).

⁸² Averil Cameron, "Byzantine Studies: A Field Ripe for Disruption," in *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline?: Toward a Critical Historiography*, ed. Benjamin Anderson and Mirela Ivanova (Penn State Press, 2023).

diverse historical narratives.⁸³ This reflexivity, they suggest, is essential for addressing lingering biases in the field. Scholars also highlight the potential for innovative methodologies, such as network analysis, to further advance Byzantine studies. Additionally, the integration of digital humanities, collaborative research initiatives, and public engagement efforts offers promising avenues for expanding the discipline's accessibility and relevance. Projects such as exhibitions and interdisciplinary research provide opportunities to connect Byzantium's historical narratives with contemporary cultural and societal concerns.

The field of Byzantine studies, therefore, stands at a crossroads. As it continues to grapple with its historiographical challenges, it also faces the opportunity to evolve through critical perspectives and interdisciplinary methods. By embracing these innovations, Byzantine studies can remain a dynamic and globally relevant discipline, contributing meaningfully to broader discussions about cultural dynamics, East-West relations, and the enduring legacy of Byzantium in global history.

2.3 Literature Review: Byzantine Studies in Türkiye

The literature review is organized chronologically, except for the final section on graduate theses. It begins with twentieth-century accounts, moves through works from the early twenty-first century, and concludes with studies from the past five years that reflect renewed interest and critical reassessment. Drawing on scholarly analyses, tributes, interviews, and opinion pieces, the review traces the evolution of the discipline while highlighting gaps and limitations. This framework establishes the foundation for the thesis and underscores the need for the present research.

2.3.1 Early Accounts

The late scholar of Byzantine art and architecture, Semavi Eyice (1922–2018), widely regarded as the founding father of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, was a pioneer in contributing to the historiography of the field through his extensive writings. His earliest analysis, written for the fiftieth anniversary of the Turkish Republic, is a comprehensive account of the emergence and development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye and serves as

⁸³ Benjamin Anderson and Mirela Ivanova, "Introduction: For a Critical Historiography of Byzantine Studies," in *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline?: Toward a Critical Historiography*, ed. Benjamin Anderson and Mirela Ivanova (Penn State Press, 2023), 26-28.

a foundational reference for literature on the subject.⁸⁴ In this work, Eyice provides an introduction that offers an overview of Byzantine studies, tracing its origins in the West during the nineteenth century and detailing its development during the late Ottoman Empire, prior to the establishment of the Republic.

Eyice's analysis highlights the contributions of various institutions and individuals following the Republic's foundation in 1923. He notes that early archaeological works were primarily conducted by foreigners, with limited Turkish involvement, and identifies Arif Müfid Mansel's (1905–1975) 1930 excavation as the first Turkish-led effort, marking a significant milestone. Additionally, Eyice emphasizes the importance of the excavation at Küçükçekmece, where Aziz Ogan (1888–1956) and Mansel uncovered a Byzantine palace complex dating to the fifth or sixth century between 1940 and 1948. Documenting a wide range of fieldwork and publications by Turkish archaeologists and scholars, Eyice critiques their quality at times while also acknowledging the significant contributions of foreign scholars and institutions conducting research in Türkiye.⁸⁵ Furthermore, he recognizes the support of organizations such as the Turkish Historical Society, the Turkish Touring and Automobile Association, and the Istanbul Conquest Society in advancing Byzantine studies.

In subsequent sections of his article, Eyice turns his attention to Byzantine studies within Turkish universities, particularly their fieldwork and publications related to Byzantine art, archaeology, and architecture. He examines institutions such as Istanbul Technical University (ITU), Ankara University's Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography (DTCF), Middle East Technical University (ODTU), and the Istanbul State Academy of Fine Arts (now Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University). His most detailed discussion, however, focuses on Istanbul University, where he himself served as the head of the Chair of Byzantine Art.⁸⁶ He traces the beginnings of Byzantine studies at Istanbul

⁸⁴ Semavi Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı araştırmaları ve İstanbul Üniversitesi'nde Bizans sanatı," in *Cumhuriyet'in 50. Yılına Armağan* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1973).

⁸⁵ Semavi Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans mimarisi hakkında yabancı araştırmaların kısa tarihçesi (İkinci Dünya Savaşı'na kadar)," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* (1976). In a separate article written three years later, Eyice complements his earlier historiography with a detailed account of foreign scholars' research on Byzantine architecture in Türkiye. While he notes that this study, which covers the history of research up to the Second World War, was intended to be followed by a continuation addressing later periods, no such publication materialized.

⁸⁶ Eyice describes the establishment of the Chair of Byzantine Art at Istanbul University, which followed the earlier creation of the Chair of Turkish Art. This decision was made to enable Turkish researchers to study and contextualize Byzantine works within their historical and geographical settings. Despite the formal establishment of the chair in 1964 and Eyice's appointment as its director, his official

University, highlighting the contributions of foreign scholars as well as his own, including lists of his publications and completed theses in Byzantine art.

Complementing Eyice's contributions, art historian and critic Sezer Tansuğ (1930–1998) also raised significant critiques about the state of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. A former member of Istanbul University's Art History Department and later an expert at Hagia Sophia, Tansuğ wrote extensively about art and art history in publications from the 1950s to the 1980s. In a 1961 article, he criticized the weakness of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, arguing that the work of the Byzantine Institute primarily served the needs of restoration staff rather than advancing the discipline itself.⁸⁷ Drawing comparisons with other countries with Byzantine heritage, Tansuğ asserted that strengthening Byzantine studies was essential for Türkiye's cultural and scholarly progress, describing it as a "genuine measurement of the civilized character of Türkiye." He also condemned political accusations against Turkish scholars, defending their independence from external influences, such as the patriarchate or foreign powers with alleged political motives. He argued that the work of Turkish researchers, rooted in the significance of their own heritage, could counter such accusations.

Two decades later, at a conference at the Istanbul State Academy of Fine Arts in 1981, Tansuğ lamented the absence of a dedicated Turkish school of Byzantine art.⁸⁸ While acknowledging that some scholars and institutions included Byzantine art in their work, he criticized the lack of a distinctly "Turkish perspective" on the field, which he considered essential for advancing both Byzantine and Turkish art studies. He also highlighted the unclear priorities of scholars who treated Byzantine art either as a primary focus or merely as a supplementary topic.⁸⁹ Furthermore, Tansuğ critiqued the meager contributions of Turkish scholars at the Fifteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Vienna, emphasizing the need for greater institutional support to elevate their presence on the global stage.

professorship was delayed until 1972. Only then could Eyice form a team, illustrating the institutional challenges faced in supporting Byzantine heritage research.

⁸⁷ Sezer Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak: Sanat tarihi yazıları* (Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 1983), 36-38. The Byzantine Institute of America, founded in 1930 by Thomas Whittemore, became part of Dumbarton Oaks in 1963.

⁸⁸ Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak*, 228-41.

⁸⁹ Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak*, 241. Although Tansuğ explicitly states multiple times during his talk that he does not recognize any influential scholars in Byzantine art studies, in an addendum to his published talk, he acknowledges Semavi Eyice for his genuine and productive efforts and systematic approach to research.

In a similar vein, Şerif Baştav (1927–2010), a historian specializing in late Byzantine history, provided sharp critiques of the institutional and academic challenges facing Byzantine studies in Türkiye. In his 1989 book, Baştav directly addressed the nationalistic discourse surrounding Byzantine studies, echoing Tansuğ’s defense of scholars against accusations of foreign influence.⁹⁰ He argued that Byzantine studies were critical not only for understanding Turkish history but also for engaging with broader historical narratives shared with neighboring regions. Baştav lamented the absence of a department of Byzantinology at DTCF—an institution founded by Atatürk to house numerous chairs of ancient civilizations. He argued that Byzantinology was more essential for understanding Turkish history than some of the other disciplines represented in the faculty.

Baştav identified several factors contributing to the weak state of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. These included the field’s demanding requirements, such as mastery of multiple classical and modern languages, the limited employment opportunities for graduates, and the lack of access to resources due to the absence of a Byzantine studies research center. Reflecting on these challenges, he characterized the discipline as one requiring “courage, sacrifice, and great risk.”⁹¹ His remarks reveal that, even by the late 1980s, Byzantine studies remained a marginalized and underdeveloped field, lacking full legitimacy and institutional support within Turkish academia.

In 1999, twenty-five years after his earlier analysis, in a paper presented for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Republic, the now retired Eyice revisited these challenges, offering a more critical analysis of the field’s limitations.⁹² He highlighted the ideological barriers that constrained Byzantine studies, recounting how his removal from membership in the Turkish Historical Society in 1982 was tied to his role as the head of the Chair of Byzantine Art. Inspired by Atatürk’s 1933 telegram emphasizing the preservation of Turkish monuments, Eyice reflected on his mission: “Byzantine art taught by a Turk in Türkiye,” while acknowledging the challenges he faced in pursuing it.

Eyice also critiqued systemic issues, including the elimination of graduation theses by the Higher Education Council and the lack of governmental support for Turkish scholars’ participation in international Byzantine congresses. Like Tansuğ and Baştav, he lamented

⁹⁰ Şerif Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu tarihi son devir (1261-1461): Osmanlı Türk - Bizans münasebetleri* (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 1989), 15-18.

⁹¹ Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*, 16.

⁹² Semavi Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans araştırmalarının tarihçesi” (2000).

the absence of a Byzantine studies research center and critiqued the preference for foreign researchers over Turkish scholars in research projects. He concluded with reflections on the shortcomings of the Chair of Byzantine Art he headed, acknowledging its failure to fully replace foreign dominance in the field and expressing disappointment that Atatürk's vision for Byzantine studies remained only partially realized.

The early literature on Byzantine studies in Türkiye highlights foundational contributions alongside persistent challenges. Eyice documented the field's history, emphasizing the dominance of foreign researchers, the gradual involvement of Turkish scholars, and institutional challenges such as lack of systemic support and ideological resistance. Tansuğ criticized the absence of a "Turkish perspective" and dedicated institutions, advocating for stronger international representation and linking Byzantine studies to Türkiye's cultural progress. Similarly, Baştav underscored the field's institutional neglect, lack of a Byzantinology department, and the high demands and limited career prospects of the discipline, while defending its relevance to Turkish history. Common to all these accounts is the identification of institutional, ideological, and academic barriers that hindered the full development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

2.3.2 *Evolving Scholarship*

Building on the foundations laid by early accounts, scholarship from the first two decades of the twenty-first century reflects significant progress in the historiography of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. This subsection organizes key contributions in disciplinary categories, establishing connections to early accounts to highlight continuities and advancements.

Yıldız Ötüken and Engin Akyürek provide critical analyses of the development of Byzantine art history in Türkiye, addressing systemic challenges and tracing the field's trajectory from its early days to its current state. Ötüken builds on earlier critiques, particularly those of Semavi Eyice, by emphasizing the insufficient institutional support for art history education and research in Türkiye.⁹³ She highlights systemic issues such as the limited resources available for preserving Byzantine cultural heritage and the lack of employment opportunities for art history graduates. These challenges, which echo Eyice's earlier concerns, underscore the marginalization of Byzantine art history within Turkish academia and its reliance on external funding and expertise for preservation efforts.

⁹³ S. Yıldız Ötüken, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi* 19, no. 112 (Nisan 2003).

Akyürek, extending and updating the earlier accounts of Eyice, offers a thorough and systematic review of the discipline's development from the late Ottoman period to the modern era.⁹⁴ He identifies Ottoman Empire' utilitarian attitude toward Byzantine heritage, prioritizing use over preservation, and he traces the institutionalization of Byzantine art history in the early Republic. He highlights the critical role played by Western and émigré scholars in shaping the discipline during its formative years while underscoring the increasing contributions of Turkish academics in more recent decades.

Akyürek also delves into structural and practical challenges that continue to hinder the field's growth, including inadequate funding for field studies, limited access to resources, and insufficient training in necessary languages. At the same time, he acknowledges significant advancements, such as the establishment of research centers and the growing presence of Turkish graduate students in international academia.

Both Ötüken and Akyürek advocate for greater institutional support, emphasizing the need for expanded academic programs and increased funding to foster fieldwork and safeguard Byzantine cultural heritage. While Ötüken critiques the ongoing marginalization of the field, Akyürek connects the utilitarian treatment of Byzantine heritage during the Ottoman period to its gradual institutionalization in the Republic, highlighting the evolving role of Turkish scholars in advancing the discipline. Their works provide a comprehensive and critical perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing Byzantine art history in Türkiye.

The historiography of Byzantine historical studies in Türkiye is critically examined by Nevra Necipoğlu and Melek Delilbaşı, both of whom identify persistent challenges and advocate for interdisciplinary approaches to advance the field. Necipoğlu critiques the ideological resistance and dominance of a Turco-centric narrative that has historically marginalized Byzantine history in Türkiye.⁹⁵ She traces the delayed emergence of the discipline, contrasting it with European contexts where Byzantine studies naturally

⁹⁴ Engin Akyürek, "Byzantine Art History in Modern Turkey," in *Perceptions of the Past in the Turkish Republic: Classical and Byzantine Periods*, ed. Scott Redford and Nina Ergin (Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA.: Peeters, 2010); Engin Akyürek, "Byzantine Art History in Turkey from the 1950s to the Present," in *Picturing a Lost Empire: An Italian Lens on Byzantine Art in Anatolia, 1960-2000*, ed. Livia Bevilacqua and Giovanni Gasbarri (2018); Engin Akyürek, "The Study of Byzantine Art History in Turkey up to 1955," in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022).

⁹⁵ Nevra Necipoğlu, "Türkiye'de Bizans tarihçiliğinin dünü, bugünü ve sorunları," *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi* 19, no. 112 (Nisan 2003); Nevra Necipoğlu, "Türkiye'de Bizans tarihi çalışmalarına dair gözlemler," *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi*, no. 229 (Ocak 2013).

evolved from classical philology. Necipoğlu highlights a significant shift in Turkish scholarship toward integrating Byzantine and Ottoman histories, with an increasing focus on social, economic, and cultural aspects in line with contemporary trends.

Key challenges identified by Necipoğlu include inadequate training in ancient and modern languages, limited access to resources, and structural deficiencies such as the lack of dedicated research centers and insufficient academic infrastructure. She critiques gaps in secondary school history education, which contribute to the discipline's marginalization. Despite these barriers, Necipoğlu points to promising developments, such as increased international collaboration and Turkish students pursuing doctoral studies abroad. She emphasizes the potential for innovation through the integration of Ottoman sources into Byzantine studies, provided these efforts are supported by systemic reforms and stronger institutional foundations.

Delilbaşı similarly examines the challenges and potential of Byzantine studies, emphasizing the critical role of interdisciplinary frameworks in bridging Byzantine and Ottoman histories.⁹⁶ She advocates for a holistic approach to Turkish historiography, arguing that integrating these fields can foster a more comprehensive understanding of the past. Delilbaşı underscores the importance of linguistic proficiency in ancient and modern Greek as a foundation for advancing Byzantine studies. Reflecting on her own career, she highlights the transformative impact of international collaborations, particularly her fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks, which broadened her scholarly perspective and facilitated global engagement.

Both scholars stress the importance of international collaboration, interdisciplinary research, and robust language training as essential components for addressing institutional and methodological challenges. Their shared emphasis on reforming academic structures, increasing resource access, and fostering innovation underscores the need for systemic efforts to fully integrate Byzantine studies into Turkish historiography.

Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir's "Archaeology as a Source of National Pride in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic" situates Byzantine archaeology within the broader framework of nationalist archaeology during the early Republican period.⁹⁷ Like Eyice,

⁹⁶ Melek Delilbaşı, "The Present and Future of Byzantine Studies in Turkey," *Κλητόριον in Memory of Nikos Oikonomides* (2005).

⁹⁷ Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, "Archaeology as a Source of National Pride in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 31, no. 4 (2006).

she highlights the role of foreign archaeologists in the early development of the field, but her work also critically examines how Byzantine heritage was often sidelined in favor of narratives emphasizing Anatolian antiquity. Tanyeri-Erdemir's analysis sheds light on the ideological underpinnings of archaeological practices, complementing earlier critiques by scholars like Şerif Baştav regarding the field's marginalization.

Şule Kılıç Yıldız provides a historiographical overview of Byzantine architectural studies, emphasizing the field's intertwined relationship with art.⁹⁸ Her work builds on the critiques of earlier scholars by addressing the neglect of secular Byzantine architecture and the dominance of religious monuments in the field's focus. She urges interdisciplinary, cross-cultural approaches to situate Byzantine architecture within the wider medieval Mediterranean, building on earlier calls for innovation.

Elif Keser Kayaalp's work provides a comprehensive review of literary, archaeological, and academic studies on Byzantine Constantinople, offering a multifaceted perspective on the city's Byzantine heritage.⁹⁹ Keser Kayaalp also examines the public perception of Byzantine studies, incorporating insights from exhibitions and related cultural activities. A key argument in her work is the shift in focus within the field since the 1970s, moving from instrumental studies—focused on documenting surviving structures or reconstructing lost ones through textual analysis—to more interpretive approaches. These newer studies explore the city's transformation into a capital, its diverse inhabitants, governance, and economy. Keser Kayaalp emphasizes that interest in the city's monuments persisted but evolved to include critical analyses and innovative methodologies, such as the study of building techniques and materials.

A recent publication edited by Koray Durak, Necipoğlu, and Tolga Uyar compiles 30 papers presented at a conference organized by Boğaziçi University's Byzantine Studies Research Center on 18–19 March, 2016.¹⁰⁰ The conference Byzantine Studies in Türkiye: New Research, Alternative Trends marked one of the initial activities of the then-newly-founded research center. It aimed to bring together all scholars of Byzantium within Türkiye, facilitate the exchange of new ideas and approaches in a dialogue setting, and

⁹⁸ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, "A Review of Byzantine Studies and Architectural Historiography in Turkey Today," *METU JFA* 2 (2011).

⁹⁹ Elif Keser Kayaalp, "Bizans İstanbulu çalışmaları," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 8, no. 16 (2010).

¹⁰⁰ Koray Durak, Nevra Necipoğlu, and Tolga Uyar, eds., *Türkiye'de Bizans çalışmaları: Yeni araştırmalar, farklı eğilimler* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2022).

encourage the presentation of data alongside its analysis and synthesis. Building on this legacy, the center organized another significant event from 29 November to 1 December 2024 at the Pera Museum in Istanbul, a workshop titled *Rethinking Byzantine Studies in Türkiye: Concepts, Terms, and Methods I*. Supported by the Istanbul Research Institute and the Cultural Heritage Preservation Directorate of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, this workshop addressed critical historiographical and methodological issues, focusing on challenges such as terminology, interdisciplinary approaches, and methodological innovations within Byzantine studies. Notably, the inclusion of “I” in the workshop’s title suggests that this event, while separate from the 2016 conference, represents a broader and more inclusive initiative with a distinct conceptual framework. Furthermore, the organizers plan for this event to evolve into a recurring series, hosted by different institutions and universities, thereby ensuring its sustainability and expanding its reach. If such efforts continue and succeed, they could establish a valuable tradition of convening Byzantinists in Türkiye, fostering a robust academic dialogue, promoting the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaborations essential for advancing Byzantine studies, and contributing significantly to the development of the discipline.

The contributions reviewed in this subsection reflect both continuity and progress in the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Like earlier scholars, these authors emphasize systemic challenges such as limited institutional support, inadequate resources, and ideological resistance. However, their works also illustrate significant advancements, including the increasing institutionalization of the discipline, the growing role of Turkish scholars, and the adoption of interdisciplinary approaches.

2.3.3 Recent Contributions

Recent contributions to the history of Byzantine studies in Türkiye reflect a growing focus on reflective and analytical approaches, which can be categorized into three key groups. The first group examines the Twenty-Fourth ICBS, highlighting its historical and political significance, especially in the context of its relocation from Istanbul to Venice and Padua. The second group focuses on new narratives developed during the centenary celebrations of the Republic of Türkiye, offering fresh perspectives on the evolution of Byzantine studies within the country’s socio-political and cultural frameworks. The third group features analytical works that employ bibliographic and quantitative methodologies to assess historiographical trends and institutional dynamics in Byzantine studies.

The Twenty-Fourth ICBS

Scholarship on the Twenty-Fourth ICBS and its political context offers key insights into how Byzantine studies in Türkiye evolved from marginalization to greater international visibility, while underscoring the challenges of political and ideological contestation.

Buket Kitapçı Bayrı's work offers an important historical perspective on the origins and development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, focusing particularly on the Tenth ICBS held in Istanbul in 1955.¹⁰¹ This congress marked a turning point in Türkiye's engagement with Byzantine heritage, both symbolically and practically. Drawing on archival materials, Kitapçı Bayrı emphasizes how this event was strategically framed as a demonstration of Türkiye's modernity and its stewardship of Byzantine heritage, despite underlying tensions between the political climate and academic objectives. The congress, however, was overshadowed by the Istanbul Riots of September 6-7, 1955, reflecting the broader challenges of situating Byzantine studies within Türkiye's national narrative. This foundational event, as Kitapçı Bayrı shows, set the stage for subsequent scholarly and political debates regarding the country's Byzantine heritage.

Koray Durak's analysis of archival materials related to the Tenth ICBS adds a layer of institutional insight to the broader narrative.¹⁰² Durak examines the organizational efforts behind the congress, revealing the complexities of navigating political, academic, and logistical challenges in hosting such a significant international event. By analyzing previously untapped archives, Durak sheds light on how the congress was both a milestone in the institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Türkiye and a reflection of the broader sociopolitical dynamics of the time. His work underscores the dual role of such events as platforms for scholarly exchange and as sites of national representation.

Barış Altan's contribution in *The Routledge International Handbook of Heritage and Politics* contextualizes these developments within the broader framework of heritage politics in Türkiye.¹⁰³ Altan compares the Tenth ICBS with the intended Twenty-Fourth,

¹⁰¹ Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, "The 10th International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Istanbul, September 15–21, 1955," *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies* 1, no. 1 (2019).

¹⁰² Koray Durak, "The Archive of the Organizing Committee for the Tenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Organizing a Congress in Istanbul and the State of Byzantine Studies in Turkey in 1950s," in *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, 22-24 June 2023*, ed. Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

¹⁰³ Barış Altan, "Changing Approaches to Turkey's Byzantine Heritage: The Contexts of the 10th and the 24th International Congresses of Byzantine Studies," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Heritage and Politics* (Routledge, 2024).

highlighting the shifting attitudes toward Byzantine heritage over time. He notes that while the 1955 congress was held during a period of emerging modernization and secularism, the lead-up to the Twenty-Fourth ICBS was marked by the increasing politicization of heritage, exemplified by the Hagia Sophia controversy. This comparison illustrates how Byzantine heritage has consistently been a site of contestation, reflecting broader ideological and political currents. Altan also critiques the characterization of Byzantine heritage as inherently “contested,” arguing that such a label often obscures the historical continuities in efforts to preserve and study this heritage.

Şebnem Dönbekci, Bahattin Bayram, and Zeynep Olgun focus on the controversies surrounding the relocation of the Twenty-Fourth ICBS from Istanbul to Venice-Padua.¹⁰⁴ The authors examine how the 2020 re-conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque triggered a series of open letters and statements from global scholarly organizations, including the AIEB. These reactions underscored concerns about the politicization of heritage and its implications for academic freedom and cultural preservation. The decision to relocate the congress disrupted Türkiye’s aspirations to host a landmark event in Byzantine studies, symbolizing the tensions between scholarly ambitions and political realities. Dönbekci and colleagues argue that the change of venue not only diminished Türkiye’s visibility in the field but also highlighted broader issues of exclusion and isolation faced both within Turkish academia and the international Byzantine studies community. This dual marginalization is why the authors frame the position of Byzantine studies in Türkiye as being “in double exile.”

While the Twenty-Fourth ICBS was relocated to Venice and Padua, the two exhibitions that were planned to accompany the congress in Istanbul were still held at the Suna and İnan Kırac Foundation Pera Museum between 23 November 2021 and 6 March 2022. Curated by Brigitte Pitarakis, the exhibition titled *From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery, 1800–1955*, originated from the symposium *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800–1955*, held at the same museum between 16–18 November 2017. The symposium aimed to explore the development of Byzantine studies in Istanbul, once the capital of the Byzantine Empire, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to 1955, when the ICBS convened for the

¹⁰⁴ Şebnem Dönbekci, Bahattin Bayram, and Zeynep Olgun, “Byzantium in Exile,” in *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline?: Toward a Critical Historiography*, ed. Benjamin Anderson and Mirela Ivanova (Penn State Press, 2023).

first time in Istanbul. The fifteen papers presented at the symposium are brought together in a volume that emphasizes the plurality of actors and circumstances contributing to the emergence of Byzantium as a scientific discipline.¹⁰⁵ The thirteen essays included in the exhibition catalogue complement the papers presented at the symposium, developing fresh approaches to the subject matter and focusing on novel archival materials.¹⁰⁶ The exhibition curated by Emre Alışık, titled *What Byzantinism Is This in Istanbul!:* Byzantium in Popular Culture, focused on the present day, questioning the interaction between popular culture and Byzantine heritage. The exhibition catalogue also brought together essays by ten researchers who contributed to the discussion on Byzantinism, focusing on individual mediums of popular culture.¹⁰⁷

Besides these exhibitions, a bibliography project that consisted of a digital database and a printed book, initiated by the organizing committee of the Twenty-Fourth ICBS, was completed in 2021.¹⁰⁸ Its publication, *Byzantine Studies in Turkey: A Bibliography (19th Century–2020)*, was originally intended to be distributed to the congress participants as a reference book showcasing the scholarly contributions of Türkiye's scientific community. Şahin Kılıç's article in the book provides a general assessment of Byzantine studies in Türkiye based on the analysis of the comprehensive bibliography compiled in the project.¹⁰⁹

The relocation of the Twenty-Fourth ICBS despite all the preparations made for the congress underscores the fragility of the efforts to position Türkiye as a hub for Byzantine studies in the face of political shifts.¹¹⁰ However, the continued growth of Byzantine studies in Türkiye demonstrates that there is significant potential for scholarly resilience and collaboration in the future. While the case of the Twenty-Fourth ICBS represents a missed opportunity, it highlights the challenges of navigating the intersection of politics and heritage in fostering international academic endeavors.

¹⁰⁵ Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis, eds., *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955* (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022).

¹⁰⁶ Brigitte Pitarakis, ed., *From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery, 1800-1955* (Istanbul: Pera Museum Publication, 2021).

¹⁰⁷ Emre Alışık, ed., *"What Byzantinism Is This in Istanbul!": Byzantium in Popular Culture* (Istanbul: Pera Museum Publication, 2021).

¹⁰⁸ The digital base was not yet accessible to public as of December 2024.

¹⁰⁹ Şahin Kılıç, "Byzantine Studies in Turkey: A Bibliography Project," in *Byzantine Studies in Turkey: A Bibliography (19th Century-2020)*, ed. Şahin Kılıç and Buket Kitapçı Bayrı (Istanbul: Vehbi Koç Foundation, 2021).

¹¹⁰ Kitapçı Bayrı, "Melek Delilbaşı ile söyleşi."

New Narratives

The preparations for the Twenty-Fourth ICBS and the celebration of the centenary of the Republic of Türkiye created a fertile environment for reflecting on the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Several recent contributions have offered fresh narratives on the field's evolution. This literature review highlights *The Odyssey of Byzantine Studies in Turkey* by Durak, alongside important works by Alessandra Ricci, Verda Bingöl and Zeynep Kuban, Ebru Altan, Sedef Çokay Kepçe, and Nevra Necipoğlu.

Durak's *The Odyssey of Byzantine Studies in Turkey*, published in 2023 as the catalogue for the exhibition accompanying the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium (ISGBS), provides a comprehensive analysis of Byzantine studies in Türkiye over three centuries.¹¹¹ Structured into six sections, it traces the field's evolution from the late Ottoman period to the early Republican era, through the incubation period (1955–1994), to significant progress from 1994 to 2023, concluding with reflections on the field's current state and future prospects.

Durak examines continuities and ruptures in the field, situating its origins in the late Ottoman period when a multicultural academic milieu fostered collaborations between local and foreign scholars, with institutions like the Syllogos society laying critical foundations. The early Republican era introduced ideological shifts that selectively integrated Byzantine heritage into national narratives, often highlighting tensions with Turkish-Islamic history. Despite these constraints, the field grew steadily, particularly after the 1990s, supported by international collaborations and research centers.

Durak emphasizes collaboration, highlighting the Assumptionists, the Byzantine Institute of America, and Turkish–international partnerships that advanced research despite scarce resources. He also notes persistent challenges—limited training in Classical Greek and Latin, weak libraries, and cultural biases—while acknowledging new public initiatives, from exhibitions to children's books, that foster a more nuanced understanding of Byzantine heritage. The book aligns with the themes of the Sixth ISGBS held in June 2023. Both the symposium and the accompanying exhibition, curated by Durak, underscore the collaborative and transformative nature of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, reinforcing the dynamic evolution explored in the volume.

¹¹¹ Koray Durak, ed., *The Odyssey of Byzantine Studies in Turkey* (Istanbul: GABAM: Koç University Press, 2023).

Complementing Durak's comprehensive narrative are works that focus on the contributions of foreign scholars to the early institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Ricci's paper presented at the Sixth ISGBS explores the roles of three European scholars—Sir Steven Runciman, Philipp Schweinfurth, and Paolo Verzone—during the early Republican period.¹¹² These scholars were instrumental in shaping the field, bringing diverse methodologies from their respective academic traditions while adapting to the socio-political and cultural milieu of Türkiye. Ricci highlights their reliance on local assistants and translators, which facilitated their integration into Turkish academia but also presented challenges.

Bingöl and Kuban's article focuses on Runciman's tenure as the first holder of the Byzantine Art History Chair at Istanbul University, a position established in 1942 with the support of the British Council and the Turkish Ministry of Education.¹¹³ The authors situate Runciman's appointment within the geopolitical context of World War II, illustrating how academic initiatives were intertwined with diplomatic efforts. Despite language barriers and infrastructural limitations, Runciman's courses and lectures bridged Western and Turkish perspectives on Byzantine history and art, laying the groundwork for future developments.

The role of Istanbul University in the broader narrative of Byzantine studies is further elaborated by Altan.¹¹⁴ Her article highlights Istanbul University's pivotal role in shaping Byzantine studies in Türkiye, from introducing independent courses in 1943 to establishing a dedicated department. She underscores the contributions of pioneering despite challenges like limited resources and cultural biases. Adding a complementary perspective, Çokay-Kepçe examines the contributions of the Antalya Region Archaeological Research Center, affiliated with Istanbul University.¹¹⁵ Founded in 1954,

¹¹² Alessandra Ricci, ““Can we call you hocam?”: Three Foreign Byzantinists Teaching in Istanbul Between the 1940s and 1950s, Steven Runciman, Philipp Schweinfurth and Paolo Verzone,” in *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, 22-24 June 2023*, ed. Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

¹¹³ Verda Bingöl and Zeynep Kuban, “Sir Steven Runciman at Istanbul University: How British Wartime Politics Led to the Establishment of the Byzantine Art History Chair,” *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, no. 31 (June 2022 2022).

¹¹⁴ Ebru Altan, “Cumhuriyetin ilk 100 yılında Türkiye’de Bizans tarihi çalışmalarında İstanbul Üniversitesi’nin yeri ve önemi (1923-2023),” *Turkish Journal of History*, no. 81 (2023).

¹¹⁵ Sedef Çokay-Kepçe, “Istanbul University Faculty of Letters Antalya Region Archaeological Research Center (ABAAM),” in *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, 22-24 June 2023*, ed. Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

the center has played a pivotal role in advancing archaeological research and integrating Byzantine studies into broader archaeological endeavors. Çokay-Kepçe highlights the center's focus on Byzantine-era structures and its role in preserving cultural heritage through rescue excavations and museum initiatives.

Necipoğlu provides the most recent perspective on the institutionalization of Byzantine studies, emphasizing its integration into the global academic community.¹¹⁶ Her work highlights the establishment of the Turkish National Committee of Byzantine/East Roman Studies in 2000, which marked a turning point in the field's development. Affiliated with the AIEB, the committee facilitated Türkiye's participation in international scholarly networks. Necipoğlu also underscores the significance of ISGBS, initiated in 2007, as a vital platform for scholarly exchange and public engagement. These developments reflect the increasing recognition of Byzantine studies as a vital component of Türkiye's academic and cultural landscape, connecting the discipline's historical roots with contemporary global scholarship.

Lastly, an article by Zeynep Mercangöz, published in a proceedings book from a series of conferences on art history at the centenary of the Republic, examines the development of Byzantine art studies in Türkiye.¹¹⁷ It explores the field's institutionalization, the impact of early excavations and state policies, and the evolution of academic approaches, highlighting international collaborations and preservation efforts. A complementary perspective is offered by Mine Esmer, who focuses on how Byzantine architectural heritage in Istanbul has been approached throughout the Republican era.¹¹⁸ She traces this process through key phases—ranging from early documentation and restoration initiatives to shifting preservation policies and major urban transformation projects—demonstrating how political ideologies, urban planning, and global heritage discourse have shaped attitudes toward the Byzantine past.

While two recent contributions, namely, an article by Durak and a chapter by Kitapçı Bayrı, which scrutinize the portrayal and perception of Byzantium in popular culture, may not seem directly linked to Byzantine studies, it is apparent that attitudes towards

¹¹⁶ Nevra Necipoğlu, "The Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies in Turkey," in *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium*, 22-24 June 2023, ed. Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

¹¹⁷ Zeynep Mercangöz, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı araştırmalarının yüzyılı," in *Cumhuriyetin 100. yılında sanat tarihi* (Konya: Necmettin Erbakan University Press, 2023).

¹¹⁸ Mine Esmer, "Cumhuriyet dönemi İstanbul'unda Bizans mimari mirasına bakış" *mimar.ist* 23, no. 78 (2023).

Byzantium significantly shape the reception and study of Byzantine civilization. Thus, these contributions offer valuable insights into the contextual background of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Durak's article explores the varied venues through which the Turkish public encounters Byzantium, from school curricula to popular media.¹¹⁹ He highlights how these sources, ranging from textbooks to films and social media, present Byzantium in conflicting ways—either as a cultural “other” embodying corruption and treachery or as an essential component of Turkish heritage. This duality, shaped by political ideologies and historical narratives, influences both public memory and academic discourse surrounding Byzantium. Similarly, Kitapçı Bayrı's chapter examines how Byzantium has been reimagined in Turkish historical novels, cinema, and comics.¹²⁰ Through case studies such as the Battal Ghazi epic, she reveals how Byzantium is often portrayed as a decadent and morally corrupt foil to heroic Turkish figures. These depictions not only reflect shifting political and ideological contexts in modern Türkiye but also perpetuate stereotypes that continue to inform cultural and academic perceptions of Byzantium. By investigating the intersections of history, politics, and popular culture, both contributions underscore the significance of these narratives in shaping the broader landscape and social context of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

Together, these works provide a multifaceted and richly textured narrative of the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Collectively, they illuminate the complex interplay of intellectual, cultural, and institutional factors that have shaped Byzantine studies, offering valuable insights for understanding its past, present, and future.

Analytical and Quantitative Approaches

The study of Byzantine history in Türkiye has increasingly benefitted from analytical and quantitative approaches, offering deeper insights into the field's historiography, institutional development, and cultural perceptions. This subsection reviews significant contributions that employ data-driven approaches, focusing on bibliographic analyses, dissertation trends, publication patterns, and translation studies. Together, these works present a comprehensive picture of the academic landscape and its transformations.

¹¹⁹ Koray Durak, “The Popular Perception of Byzantium in Contemporary Turkish Culture,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 47, no. 1 (2023).

¹²⁰ Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, “Imagination of Byzantium and the Byzantines in Modern Turkish Popular Literature and Cinema “ in *Byzantium in the Popular Imagination: The Modern Reception of the Byzantine Empire* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023).

Kılıç's 2021 article introduces a bibliographic compilation of approximately 8,000 works on Byzantine studies in Türkiye.¹²¹ Spanning publications from the late Ottoman period to 2020, this dataset provides an analytical foundation for assessing the historiography of Byzantium. The works are categorized into disciplines such as history, archaeology, art history, and museology, alongside thematic divisions like political history, religious history, and material culture. Quantitative analysis reveals a dominance of topics related to Byzantine-Turkish interactions, the conquest of Constantinople, and material culture, while identifying underrepresented areas such as gender studies and everyday life in Byzantium. Kılıç employs both digital archives and physical collections to ensure comprehensive data inclusion and advocates for digitizing Byzantine scholarship to overcome language barriers and improve global collaboration. A significant portion of the works reflects nationalistic narratives and Turkish-centric perspectives, with the bibliography offering a metadata-rich resource that sets a precedent for similar historiographical fields.

In the paper he delivered at the Sixth ISGBS, Kılıç contextualizes the findings of the 2021 bibliography by examining the institutional and sociopolitical dynamics that have shaped Byzantine studies in Türkiye.¹²² This study documents the establishment of key academic institutions and the contributions of specialized research centers, which have facilitated interdisciplinary research and international collaborations. It provides an overview of how Byzantine studies have been integrated into Turkish university curricula, noting their peripheral position within broader historical studies often dominated by Ottoman and Islamic history. Quantitative data tracks the growth of scholarly outputs, including courses and symposia dedicated to Byzantium, particularly after the 1990s, while illustrating disparities in institutional resources, with concentrated activity in a few universities. The article explores how Byzantine studies have navigated political and ideological challenges, particularly during the early Republican period when nationalist historiography dominated and highlights a gradual shift towards depoliticized and academically focused approaches facilitated by globalization and interdisciplinary research. The study underscores the growing international visibility of Turkish Byzantine

¹²¹ Kılıç, "Bibliography Project."

¹²² Şahin Kılıç, "Byzantine Studies in Turkish Universities," in *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, 22-24 June 2023*, ed. Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

studies through symposia and collaborations, while identifying systemic challenges, such as limited funding and the lack of integration with global Byzantine research networks.

Kitapçı Bayrı's study focuses on graduate dissertations on Byzantine studies in Türkiye between 1990 and 2022, employing a comparative framework that includes data from France and Greece.¹²³ Using Türkiye's National Thesis Center alongside French and Greek national databases, the study examines 480 dissertations categorized by discipline, topic, and decade. It identifies a threefold increase in dissertations between 2010 and 2022, with 321 produced in Türkiye during this period, highlighting Türkiye's relative growth compared to France's 282 PhDs and Greece's 324 PhDs. Thematic diversification post-2000 includes topics like Byzantine art history, archaeology, and museology, but systemic barriers such as limited interdisciplinary programs and institutional funding hinder further development. While interest in Byzantium is rising, the study emphasizes the need for addressing these structural challenges to unlock the field's potential.

The analysis of academic and popular publications on Byzantium by Cem Almurat and colleagues examines 2,908 articles from 1923 to 2023, including 2,222 academic journal articles and 686 popular magazine articles.¹²⁴ The dataset categorizes articles by themes, periods, and geography, employing nominal data analysis to identify trends in publication themes. Quantitative findings reveal that academic journals are dominated by material and visual culture topics (63%), whereas popular magazines prioritize historical themes (57%). Across both publication types and thematic focuses, Constantinople–Istanbul consistently emerges as the primary spatial center, followed by the Mediterranean, Marmara, and Western Anatolia regions, in varying order depending on category. Within historical articles, nearly half—across both academic and popular sources—focus on political and military topics, while 25% address Byzantine-Turkish interactions. A qualitative component of the study reveals the existence of two distinct portrayals of Byzantium: one as a subordinate figure within Turkish and Ottoman

¹²³ Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, "Growing Interest in Byzantine Studies Among Youth in Turkey After 1990: A Comparative Analysis of Graduate Dissertations in Turkey, France, and Greece," in *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, 22-24 June 2023*, ed. Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

¹²⁴ Cem Almurat et al., "A Survey of Articles on Byzantium in Academic Journals and Popular Magazines in Turkey (1923-2023)," in *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, 22-24 June 2023*, ed. Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

historiography, and another as a more autonomous subject within material and visual culture studies. The study illustrates the influence of nationalist ideologies in shaping public and academic discourse on Byzantium and highlights the growing interest in popular media, although such representations often lack academic rigor.

Berke Çetinkaya, Tamer Yanık, and Ulaş Deniz Tümkaya evaluate 210 books translated into Turkish over a century, focusing on themes, chronology, and linguistic trends.¹²⁵ The study tracks translations by type, themes, and source languages, employing case studies to explore translators' motivations and cultural adaptations. Quantitative data reveals a surge in translations post-2000, accounting for 159 books (74% of the total). Military-political themes dominate secondary source translations (56%), while cultural and daily life remain underrepresented. The study highlights the lack of institutional oversight in translation practices, leading to methodological inconsistencies, and notes that translators often shape public perceptions of Byzantium through culturally influenced adaptations.

These works collectively illuminate the analytical and quantitative dimensions of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Kılıç's bibliographic and institutional studies provide foundational data and contextual understanding, emphasizing historiographical trends. Kitapçı Bayrı's dissertation analysis highlights rising interest and systemic barriers, while Almurat and colleagues' article analysis showcases ideological influences on Byzantine discourse. Çetinkaya et colleagues' translation study underscores the role of translations in shaping public perceptions of Byzantium but notes thematic and methodological gaps. Together, these studies reveal persistent thematic imbalances, with military-political narratives dominating while interdisciplinary and marginalized themes remain underexplored. The field has grown in scope and visibility, particularly post-1990, but addressing systemic challenges—such as funding, resource allocation, and integration with global networks—is crucial for its continued development.

2.3.4 Graduate Theses

Graduate theses on the historiography of Byzantine studies in Türkiye can be grouped as historiographical studies, research on influential figures, and heritage-focused analyses.

¹²⁵ Berke Çetinkaya, Tamer Yanık, and Ulaş Deniz Tümkaya, "Translated Books on Byzantium in Turkey (1923-2023)," in *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, 22-24 June 2023*, ed. Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

Historiographical theses provide insights into the evolution of Byzantine studies. İlkay Sever's doctoral dissertation, "The Past, Present, and Problems of Medieval Historiography in Türkiye," examines the trajectory and challenges of medieval history in Türkiye, while Tunay Karakök's master's thesis, "The General Condition of Byzantine Historiography in Türkiye and a Bibliography Study," despite issues of plagiarism, aimed to map the field's status and providing a bibliography.¹²⁶ Şule Kılıç Yıldız's doctoral dissertation, "Byzantium Between 'East' and 'West': Perceptions and Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage," explores perceptions of Byzantine heritage and its historiographical treatment.¹²⁷ Verda Bingöl's doctoral dissertation, "The Establishment of Art History as a Discipline in Turkish Universities, 1870s–1960s," examines the institutionalization of art history as an academic field in Türkiye, analyzing its disciplinary developments, key figures, and socio-political influences.¹²⁸ Other contributions include Athanasia Karanika's master's thesis, "The Bibliography of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Periods in Thrace, Greece"; Firuzan Melike Sümertaş's doctoral dissertation, "From Antiquarianism to Urban Archaeology: Transformation of Research on 'Old' Istanbul Throughout the Nineteenth Century"; and İrem Naz Emver

¹²⁶ İlker Sever, "Türkiye'de Ortaçağ tarihçiliği dünü, bugünü ve sorunları" (PhD diss., DEÜ Sosyal Bilimleri Enstitüsü, 2006); Tunay Karakök, "Türkiye'de Bizans tarihçiliğinin genel durumu ve bir bibliyografya denemesi" (Master's thesis, Sakarya University, 2010). Karakök's thesis is organized into three chapters: (1) Byzantine Empire, (2) Byzantine History Studies and Historiography, and (3) Prominent Byzantine Historians. The first chapter provides a brief and generic overview of Byzantine history, while the third chapter catalogs thirteen Byzantine historians and their bibliographies. The thesis' core section, its second chapter (pages 76–102), is, however, marred by extensive plagiarism. Nearly two-thirds of the discussion on Byzantine history studies globally (pages 76–82), the entirety of the section on the emergence of Byzantine history studies in Türkiye (pages 84–88), and the entire part addressing the translation of Byzantine history studies in Türkiye (pages 97–102) are copied verbatim from Sever's thesis, including citations. Despite this, Sever is not acknowledged or cited anywhere in these sections. Moreover, the segment on the development and current state of Byzantine history studies in Türkiye (pages 89–96) is wholly plagiarized from the published Turkish translation of Delilbaşı's article on Byzantine studies. See Melek Delilbaşı, "Türkiye'de Bizans çalışmalarının bugünü ve geleceği," in *Prof. Dr. Yavuz Ercan'a armağan*, ed. Seyit Serçelik, Haldun Eroğlu, and Melek Sarı Güven (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 2008). Even the subjects of the sentences remain unchanged, leading to significant misattributions. For instance, on page 95, Karakök claims that he, along with other prominent Byzantine scholars mentioned in the text, was admitted to the National Committee of Byzantine Studies—when the original text refers to Melek Delilbaşı's acceptance. Similarly, on page 96, Karakök, as a master's student at the time, presents himself as an expert, stating his view on the challenges of teaching Greek and Latin at the university level due to the absence of classical language instruction in secondary education. Furthermore, he takes pride in the competency of students in the Modern Greek program at Ankara University's Faculty of Letters in reading Byzantine texts—a program founded by Delilbaşı, as described in the original article.

¹²⁷ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, "Byzantium Between "East" and "West": Perceptions and Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage" (PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, 2013).

¹²⁸ Verda Bingöl, "The Establishment of Art History as a Discipline in Turkish Universities (1870s–1960s)" (PhD diss., Istanbul Technical University Graduate School, 2023).

Oglou's master's thesis, "The Archaeological Studies of the Greek Philological Society Between 1861–1911 and Biographies of Some Members."¹²⁹

Theses that explore the academic legacies of prominent scholars include Tülay Yalçındağ's master's thesis, "The Life and Works of Prof. Dr. Alfons Maria Schneider," and Zehra Tonbul's doctoral dissertation, "The Art Historiographical Odyssey of Ernst Diez," and Zehra Zeynep Edremit's master's thesis, "Ernest Mamboury and His Contributions to Istanbul's Urban Identity," which explores Mamboury's impact on Istanbul's urban identity and cultural heritage.¹³⁰

Heritage-focused theses emphasize the interpretation, preservation, and presentation of Byzantine cultural heritage. Ümran Keskin's master's thesis, "Afterlives of Hagia Sophia: The Change in the Official Attitudes towards Preserving Antiquities in the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Periods," examines shifts in attitudes toward antiquities in transitional periods.¹³¹ Pinar Üre's doctoral dissertation, "Byzantine Heritage, Archaeology, and Politics Between Russia and the Ottoman Empire: Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople (1894–1914)" delves into international archaeological endeavors.¹³² Additional studies include Ceren Özcan's master's thesis, "Interpretation and Presentation of the Byzantine Cultural Heritage at Sultanahmet in Istanbul"; Merve Aslı Hetemoğlu's master's thesis, "Interpretation and Presentation of the Byzantine Heritage at 'Herakleia ad Latmos'"; and Seda Nehir Gümüşlü's doctoral thesis, "A Long-Neglected Past Between the Roman and Ottoman: A Reassessment, Valorization, and Re-Presentation of Byzantine Cultural Heritage in Turkey."¹³³

¹²⁹ Athanasia Karanika, "Yunanistan Trakya'sı Bizans ve Post Bizans dönemi bibliyografyası" (Master's thesis, Trakya University, 2017); Firuzan Melike Sümertaş, "From Antiquarianism to Urban Archaeology: Transformation of Research on 'Old' Istanbul Throughout the Nineteenth Century" (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2021); İrem Naz Emver Oglou, "Helen Filoloji Derneğinin 1861-1911 yılları arası arkeoloji çalışmaları ve bazı üyelerin biyografileri" (Master's thesis, İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, 2022).

¹³⁰ Tülay Yalçındağ, "Prof. Dr. Alfons Maria Schneider hayatı ve eserleri" (Master's thesis, Trakya Üniversitesi, 1995); Zehra Tonbul, "The Art Historiographical Odyssey of Ernst Diez" (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2018); Zehra Zeynep Edremit, "Ernest Mamboury ve İstanbul kent kimliğine katkıları" (Master's thesis, Kadir Has Üniversitesi, 2019).

¹³¹ Ümran Keskin, "Afterlives of Hagia Sophia: The Change in the Official Attitudes towards Preserving Antiquities in the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Periods" (Master's thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2011).

¹³² Pinar Üre, "Byzantine heritage, archaeology, and politics between Russia and the Ottoman Empire: Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople (1894-1914)" (The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 2014).

¹³³ Ceren Özcan, "Interpretation and Presentation of the Byzantine Cultural Heritage at Sultanahmet in Istanbul" (Master's thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2019); Merve Aslı Hetemoğlu, "Interpretation and Presentation of the Byzantine Heritage at Herakleia ad Latmos" (Master's thesis

2.3.5. Conclusion to the Literature Review

The literature review traces the historiography of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, offering a comprehensive view of its evolution from early foundational accounts to recent analytical and interdisciplinary approaches. By examining a diverse array of sources, it underscores both the field's significant advancements and its persistent challenges, providing the context necessary to situate this dissertation's contributions.

The following key observations summarize the main findings of the literature review, highlighting the major trends, contributions, and unresolved issues in the field:

- **Chronological Framework:** The literature review highlights the evolution of Byzantine studies in Türkiye from foundational accounts in the twentieth century to recent contributions emphasizing analytical and interdisciplinary approaches. This timeline contextualizes significant milestones and continuities in the field.
- **Key Contributions:** Foundational narratives provided by early scholars like Semavi Eyice and critiques by figures like Sezer Tansuğ have shaped the historiographical groundwork. Recent works show notable progress in institutionalization, expanding methodologies, and integrating Turkish scholars into international academia.
- **Current Analytical Trends:** Analytical and bibliometric studies have emerged in the last decade, providing thematic categorizations and insights into publication trends, dissertation data, and translational practices.
- **Interdisciplinary Opportunities:** Despite a historical focus on art, architecture, and archaeology, there are increasing calls for integrating interdisciplinary approaches, particularly connecting Byzantine and Ottoman histories, and applying novel methodologies and techniques.
- **Challenges and Unaddressed Issues:** The review identifies ongoing challenges like resource limitations, insufficient language training, and ideological resistance but also highlights underexplored topics like marginalized narratives and cultural tensions.

This dissertation addresses the gaps identified in the literature through a multi-dimensional and innovative approach, making the following key contributions:

Middle East Technical University, 2019); Seda Nehir Gümüşlü, "A Long-Neglected Past Between the Roman and Ottoman: A Re-Assessment, Valorization and Presentation of Byzantine Cultural Heritage in Turkey" (PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, 2021).

- **Comprehensive Dataset:** It incorporates a significantly larger and more diverse dataset than previous studies, including graduate theses, oral histories, and bibliographic analyses, providing a richer foundation for analysis.
- **Robust Theoretical Frameworks:** The research employs frameworks such as the sociology of scientific knowledge and institutional theory to provide an explanatory, rather than descriptive, account of the field's development. This approach bridges cognitive and social dimensions.
- **Methodological Innovation:** The use of social network analysis offers new insights into scholarly and institutional relationships, fostering a deeper understanding of systemic dynamics.
- **Exploration of Underexplored Issues:** Sensitive topics, such as disciplinary inbreeding, challenges faced by scholars from non-traditional academic backgrounds, and center-periphery tensions, are brought into focus and critically examined.
- **Interdisciplinary and Collaborative Focus:** By establishing Bizantolog (Bizantolog.org), a digital platform fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, the dissertation demonstrates the potential for participatory approaches to address systemic challenges and enhance inclusivity in the field.

In doing so, this dissertation reframes the historiography of Byzantine studies in Türkiye as a dynamic and contested process. It provides actionable insights for addressing systemic issues while setting a precedent for innovative scholarship in the field.

2.4 Research Methodology and Data Collection Strategy

To explore the development and current state of Byzantine studies in Türkiye as an academic discipline, this study adopts an integrative and multi-method approach. The framework combines qualitative and quantitative research methods—including oral history, grounded theory, abductive analysis, content analysis, and social network analysis—alongside participatory action research to provide a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the field. These methodologies are selected to balance depth with breadth, allowing individual scholarly experiences to be contextualized within broader academic and social structures. The research process and its interconnected components are represented in Figure 2.2, providing a flowchart of the research process that outlines its sequential and logical progression.

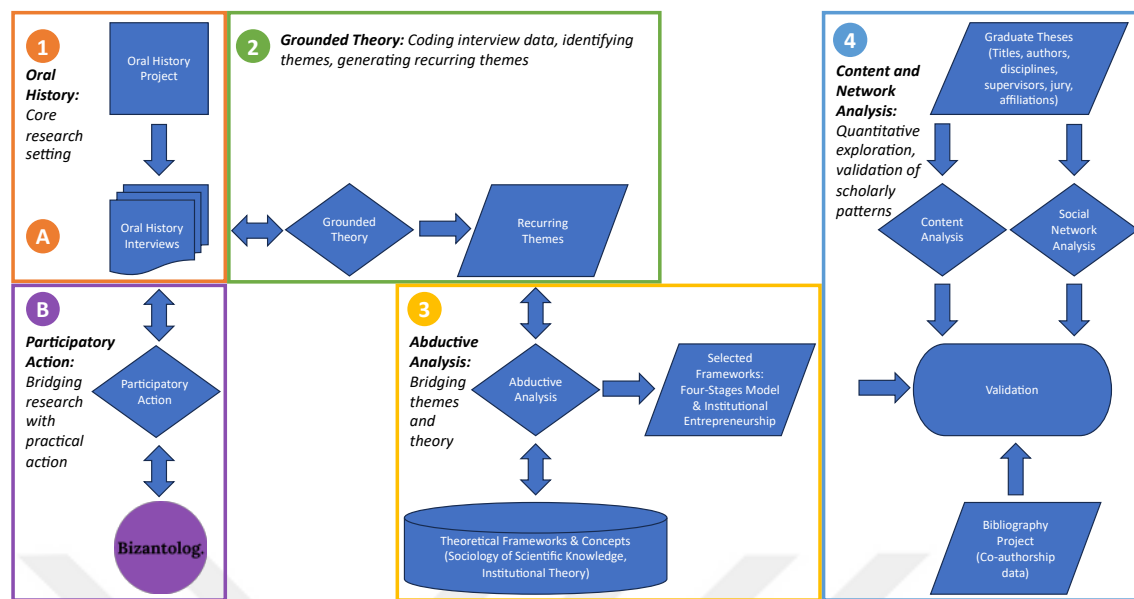


Figure 2.2: Research framework overview. This figure illustrates the sequential and interconnected research processes employed in the study. The framework begins with the Oral History Project (1), which generates qualitative data through in-depth interviews. These narratives are analyzed using Grounded Theory (2) to identify recurring themes, which are then refined and connected to relevant theoretical models through Abductive Analysis (3). This iterative process informs the selection of key conceptual tools, including Mullins' Four-Stage Model and the theory of Institutional Entrepreneurship. Subsequently, the Graduate Theses dataset is analyzed using two complementary methods: Content Analysis, applied to thesis titles to trace thematic patterns over time; and Social Network Analysis (4), which maps mentorship ties and institutional affiliations through a dynamic, time-layered two-mode model. Participatory Action Research (B) supplements the framework through community-based engagement with Bizantolog, reinforcing the study's reflexive and collaborative orientation.

2.4.1 Core Research Setting: Oral History

At the center of this research lies the oral history project, *Being a Byzantinist in Türkiye: The Past, Present, and Future of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye*. This project provides a rich qualitative dataset by engaging with scholars who have contributed to the development and institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Turkish academia. Its primary goal is to illuminate the history of Byzantine studies, tracing its emergence as an academic discipline in Türkiye in the mid-twentieth century and its progression to the present day.

Oral history, as a methodology, is particularly suited for capturing the narratives of individuals who have actively participated in shaping a discipline. It compiles memories that offer subjective yet invaluable insights into the past, filtered through the present. These narratives are shaped by personal, cultural, and historical contexts, reflecting not only the interviewees' unique experiences but also broader trends and challenges within the discipline. The oral history approach, as depicted in Figure 2.2, serves as the foundational qualitative component of the research framework, dynamically interacting with quantitative and participatory methods.

Scope and Participants

The project involved interviews with 35 scholars from 23 universities across 12 cities in Türkiye, encompassing a range of disciplines. These scholars represent diverse career stages ensuring a comprehensive overview of the field. The participants also reflect diversity in specialization topics within Byzantine studies, educational trajectories, and professional roles, such as instructors, excavation team members, independent researchers, curators, research center directors, and symposium coordinators.

The recruitment of interviewees followed a systematic process designed to ensure representation across a range of backgrounds and perspectives:

1. Criteria for Selection:

- **Disciplinary Diversity:** Inclusion of scholars from history, art history, archaeology, architectural history, and conservation.
- **Institutional Representation:** Scholars from 23 universities, capturing regional and institutional diversity.
- **Career Stages:** A balance between early-career, mid-career, seasoned scholars.
- **Specialization Topics:** Representation of a wide range of research focuses within Byzantine studies.
- **Academic Trajectories:** Consideration of varied educational experiences, such as scholars who studied abroad, those who earned all their degrees in a single institution, or those with undergraduate degrees in other fields.
- **Connections to Pioneers:** Scholars affiliated with or mentored by pioneering Byzantinists who could not be interviewed due to health conditions or their passing.

2. Identification of Prospective Interviewees:

- Prospects were identified through consultations with the dissertation supervisor and review of academic networks and bibliographies.
- Additional research into scholars' publications, affiliations, and career milestones informed the selection process.

3. Interview Process:

- A total of 47 invitations were sent to prospective participants.
- 36 interviews were conducted. Of these, 35 interviews were successfully conducted and included in the dissertation. One interview was withdrawn due to the participant's request for special terms and complete confidentiality, which was accepted, and the data was fully excluded from the project and dissertation.
- Nine invitees declined participation, citing reasons such as health issues, unavailability, peer pressure, or other personal hesitations.

The interviews were conducted in two phases, with a hiatus during Covid-19: Phase 1 (July 2017–May 2019), 25 interviews; Phase 2 (November 2022–January 2023), 10 interviews.

The interviews were conducted in the presence of the interviewer, the author, and the filming team. The duration of the interviews changed between 30 minutes and four hours, and nearly two thirds lasted two hours and more. Total recording time of the videos neared 75 hours. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the interviewees' disciplinary distributions, institutional affiliations, career stages, and selection criteria offering insight into the diversity of the participant pool.¹³⁴

Excluding the researcher from the frame during the recording of the oral history interviews was a deliberate choice intended to keep the visual and narrative focus entirely on the interviewee throughout the session and to avoid any potential loss of content or distraction caused by camera movement.

Methodological Approach and Implementation

The project followed a semi-structured oral history methodology, balancing predefined themes with the flexibility to explore emergent narratives. This approach ensured that interviews covered critical topics—academic careers, mentorship, research interests, and contributions—while allowing interviewees to share unique insights and reflections.

¹³⁴ For further details, Appendix 2 includes supplementary information such as interview dates, locations, and duration.

Table 2.1: List of oral history interviewees.

Interviewee	Title (At the time of the interview)	Discipline	Affiliation (At the time of the interview or latest if retired)	Professional Role (At the time of the interview)	Selection Criteria
Ayla Ödekan	Professor	Art history	Istanbul Technical University	Retired faculty member	ISGBS, Semavi Eyice and Doğan Kuban affiliation, MA abroad (USA)
Ayşe Çaylak Türker	Professor	Art history	Onsekiz Mart University	Active faculty member	Ceramic focus, Yıldız Ötügen affiliation
Buket Coşkuner	PhD	Art history	ANAMED, Koç University	Director/Coordinator	ANAMED director, ISGBS, Hacettepe affiliation
Buket Kitapçı Bayrı	PhD	History	GABAM, Koç University	Director/Coordinator	ICBS academic coordinator, PhD abroad (France)
Bülent İşler	Assoc. Prof.	Art history	Hacı Bayram Veli University	Active faculty member	Georgian and Armenian focus, Mine Kadiroğlu affiliation
Burcu Ceylan Duggan	Professor	Architectural history	Akdeniz University	Active faculty member	Late antique focus, Yıldız Ötügen affiliation
Ceren Ünal	Professor	Art history	Celal Bayar University	Active faculty member	Numismatic and small finds focus
Doğan Kuban	Professor	Architectural history, conservation	Istanbul Technical University	Retired faculty member	Pioneer, architectural history and conservation
Ebru Altan	Professor	History	Istanbul University	Active faculty member	Crusader focus, Işın Demirkent affiliation
Ebru Parman	Professor	Art history	Anadolu University	Retired faculty member	Small finds, Semavi Eyice affiliation
Elif Keser Kayaalp	Assoc. Prof.	Archaeology, architectural history	Dokuz Eylül University	Active faculty member	Northern Mesopotamia focus, PhD abroad (UK)
Engin Akyürek	Professor	Art history	Koç University	Active faculty member	Research center, Semavi Eyice and Ayla Ödekan affiliation, track change
Gülgün Köroğlu	Professor	Art history	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	Active faculty member	Excavation team head, Semavi Eyice affiliation
Günder Varinlioğlu	Assoc. Prof.	Archaeology, art history	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	Active faculty member	Dumbarton Oaks experience, PhD abroad (USA)
İlber Ortaylı	Professor	History	Galatasaray University	Active faculty member	Pioneer, early Republican history, MA abroad (USA)
Koray Durak	Assoc. Prof.	History	Boğaziçi University	Active faculty member	Research center, PhD abroad (USA), track change
Kutlu Akalın	PhD	History	Medeniyet University	Active faculty member	Ancient languages and late antique focus, PhD abroad (USA), track change
Melek Delilbaşı	Professor	History	Ankara University	Retired faculty member	National committee head, ICBS, Akdes Nimet Kurat and Şerif Baştaş affiliation
Meryem Acara Eser	Assoc. Prof.	Art history	Cumhuriyet University	Active faculty member	Metalwork focus, Yıldız Ötügen affiliation

Murat Keçiş	Professor	History	Sıtkı Koçman University	Active faculty member	Transitional period focus, Melek Delilbaşı affiliation
Nevra Necipoğlu	Professor	History	Boğaziçi University	Active faculty member	Research center, national committee, MA and PhD abroad (USA), track change
Nilay Çorağan	Professor	Art history	Erciyes University	Active faculty member	Cappadocian studies, Yıldız Ötüken affiliation
Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek	Assoc. Prof.	Art history	Istanbul University	Active faculty member	Ceramic focus
Sacit Pekak	Professor	Art history	Hacettepe University	Active faculty member	Cappadocia expertise, Yıldız Ötüken and Ebru Parman affiliation
Şahin Kılıç	PhD	History	Trakya University	Active faculty member	Bibliography project, Melek Delilbaşı affiliation
Sema Doğan	Professor	Art history	Hacettepe University	Active faculty member	Excavation team head, Yıldız Ötüken affiliation
Semavi Eyice	Professor	Art history	Istanbul University	Retired faculty member	Pioneer, art history
Suna Çağaptay	PhD	Architectural history	Bahçeşehir University	Active faculty member	Transitional period focus, PhD abroad (USA), track change
Tolga Uyar	Assoc. Prof.	Art history	Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University	Active faculty member	Cappadocian studies, MA and PhD abroad, France, track change
Turhan Kaçar	Professor	History	Medeniyet University	Active faculty member	Late antique focus, MA and PhD abroad (UK)
Ufuk Serin	Assoc. Prof.	Architectural history	Middle East Technical University	Active faculty member	Heritage expertise, PhD abroad (Italy)
Yelda Olcay Uçkan	Professor	Art history	Anadolu University	Active faculty member	Excavation team head, Yıldız Ötüken and Ebru Parman affiliation, glass focus
Zeliha Demirel Gökalep	Professor	Art history	Anadolu University	Active faculty member	Excavation team head, Ebru Parman and Yıldız Ötüken affiliation, numismatic focus
Zeynep Mercangöz	Professor	Art history	Ege University	Active faculty member	Conservation, Doğan Kuban and Metin Ahunbay affiliation
Zeynep Ahunbay	Professor	Architectural history, conservation	Istanbul Technical University	Retired faculty member	Excavation team head, Yıldız Ötüken affiliation

The semi-structured format provided:

1. **Flexibility:** Pre-designed flows ensured key topics were addressed while enabling interviewees to share unanticipated but valuable information.
2. **Depth of Context:** The open-ended nature of the interviews facilitated exploration of cultural, historical, and institutional contexts influencing the field.
3. **Personal Narratives:** The method encouraged detailed accounts of individual experiences, enriching the study's historical narrative.

Customized interview flows were prepared for each participant based on their CVs, publications, and specific contributions. These flows acted as prompts rather than strict questionnaires, reflecting the adaptive nature of oral history research. See Appendix 3 for an example of a generic flow.

The project adhered to rigorous ethical standards:

1. **Ethical Approval:** Initial approval was obtained from the Koç University Social and Humanities Ethics Committee (Approval Decision Number: 2017.101.IRB3.054). Renewals were obtained in 2018, 2021, and 2022 to align with the project's extended timeline and ensure compliance with ethical standards.
2. **Consent Process:** Interviewees provided signed informed consent forms and signed privacy notice and consent forms updated in compliance with new privacy legislation (Law on Protection of Personal Data No: 6698, see Appendix 4 for the informed consent form).

The oral history project was carried out through a clear and organized series of steps to ensure the interviews were conducted effectively and ethically:

1. Preparatory research into each interviewee's background.
2. Sharing of introductory materials and consent forms (see Appendix 5 for the project overview shared with the prospective interviews).
3. Coordination of interview appointments with the interviewee and filming teams.
4. Conducting video-recorded interviews.
5. Transcription, review, and translation of the recordings.¹³⁵
6. Editing and subtitling for online dissemination.

The video recordings of the 25 interviews conducted during the first phase have been finalized and uploaded to the dedicated project website. The editing and subtitling of the remaining 10 interviews are currently in progress and are expected to be completed by the 2026. The oral history project can be accessed through the following link: [GABAM Oral History Project](#). The quotations from the oral history interviews included in this dissertation have been transcribed in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the Oral History Transcription Style Guide by the Columbia University Center for Oral History Research and translated to English by the author.

¹³⁵ In the first phase of the project, transcribed interviews were shared with the interviewees for review upon request. In the second phase, they were shared with all interviewees.

2.4.2 From Oral History to Theoretical Model Selection

Building upon the oral history project, the research framework transitions into an analytical phase that integrates grounded theory and abductive analysis to derive meaningful themes and connect them to broader theoretical frameworks. This subsection outlines the systematic processes that transformed oral history interviews into theoretical models, as visualized in Figure 2.2.

Grounded Theory: Generating Recurring Themes

Grounded theory, originally developed in sociology and anthropology, emerged as a response to the growing dominance of quantitative methods and their reliance on statistical analysis.¹³⁶ In early qualitative research, the process of deriving insights often lacked transparency, relying heavily on the authority of the researcher. Grounded theory addressed this gap by providing a systematic approach to qualitative analysis, ensuring that theories are constructed directly from data through iterative, comparative analysis. This method was employed as a systematic approach to analyze qualitative data from the oral history interviews. This method emphasizes constructing theories directly from data through iterative, comparative analysis, ensuring explanations are “grounded” in empirical observations rather than preconceived frameworks. By iteratively reviewing interview transcripts, this research identified recurring themes central to the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Key recurring themes, derived and refined through constant comparative analysis, include:

- **Mentorship and Apprenticeship Dynamics:** Highlighting the pivotal role of figures such as Semavi Eyice and Yıldız Ötüken in shaping successive generations of scholars. This theme also encompasses the impact of mentorship styles, including interdisciplinary guidance and mentorship clusters that formed intellectual communities.
- **Institutional Disparities:** Examining the uneven support for Byzantine studies across universities, with notable clusters forming in institutions like Hacettepe and ITU. This theme also highlights differences in resource allocation, institutional support, and the roles of specific departments or faculties in fostering Byzantine studies.

¹³⁶ Ylona Chun Tie, Melanie Birks, and Karen Francis, “Grounded Theory Research: A Design Framework for Novice Researchers,” *SAGE Open Medicine* 7 (2019).

- **Socio-Political Influences:** Understanding how nationalist ideologies, political shifts, and societal perceptions shaped the discipline's growth, often posing challenges for scholars pursuing Byzantine studies in Türkiye.
- **Early Life and Background:** Reflecting on the formative experiences of scholars, including their childhood environments, family influences, and early educational experiences. These factors often set the stage for their later academic pursuits in Byzantine studies.
- **Challenges in Byzantine Studies:** Addressing institutional and societal hurdles faced by scholars, such as limited resources, bureaucratic barriers, and fieldwork logistics, which significantly influenced the development and sustainability of the discipline.

These themes were supported by rich narratives from the oral history interviews, illustrating the personal, institutional, and societal factors that have influenced the evolution of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. For a detailed breakdown of coding and themes, see Appendix 6. Grounded theory enabled the systematic organization of these themes, forming the foundational framework to analyze how personal, institutional, and societal factors influenced the evolution of the discipline.

Abductive Analysis: Bridging Themes and Theory

Abductive analysis is a methodological approach that complements grounded theory by introducing an iterative, interpretive process that connects empirical observations with theoretical constructs.¹³⁷ Unlike purely inductive approaches, which derive theories directly from data, or deductive methods, which test pre-established hypotheses, abduction operates in the middle ground. It begins with surprising or puzzling patterns in the data and seeks plausible explanations by moving between data and existing theoretical frameworks.

In this study, abductive analysis not only facilitated the identification of meaningful theoretical connections but also guided the deliberate selection of the Four-Stage Model and the concept of Institutional Entrepreneurship as the most suitable frameworks to explain the observed phenomena. The Four-Stage Model proved instrumental in

¹³⁷ Iddo Tavory and Stefan Timmermans, *Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research* (University of Chicago Press, 2014); Stefan Timmermans and Iddo Tavory, "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis," *Sociological Theory* 30, no. 3 (2012).

conceptualizing the evolution of Byzantine studies as a scholarly community, mapping its development through distinct stages of intellectual and institutional growth. This process ensured that these frameworks were not arbitrarily imposed on the data but were instead validated and refined through iterative reflection and dialogue between empirical observations and theoretical insights. For example:

- The recurring theme of mentorship networks aligned closely with the “**Cluster Stage**” of the **Four-Stage Model**, which describes the formation of intellectual communities around central figures.
- **Institutional Entrepreneurship** provided a lens to understand how key individuals actively shaped the discipline’s trajectory by fostering collaborative networks and institutional support structures.

The selection of these frameworks was driven by their explanatory power in addressing the recurring themes while remaining adaptable to the unique context of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. A critical strength of abductive analysis lies in its ability to integrate the researcher’s prior knowledge and theoretical sensitivity without compromising the emergent nature of the findings. By maintaining a reflective and self-critical stance, it allowed the research to navigate the interplay between empirical data and theoretical constructs, ensuring robust and contextually grounded insights.

2.4.3 Quantitative Validation and Exploration of Scholarly Networks

To validate and expand the qualitative insights generated through grounded theory and the conceptual models refined through abductive analysis, the research employed both social network analysis (SNA) and content analysis. SNA was used to construct and examine the academic network of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, drawing on an extensive dataset of graduate theses to trace advisor–student relationships, jury participation, and institutional affiliations. In parallel, content analysis was applied to thesis titles to identify frequently occurring terms, thematic trends, and their evolution over time. Together, these two quantitative methods provide complementary lenses for testing and extending the theoretical frameworks developed earlier in the study. In addition, co-authorship patterns drawn from the Bibliography Project further supported the identification of key actors and scholarly clusters, contributing to the validation of the broader analytical model.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a systematic method for identifying, coding, and interpreting patterns within textual or visual data. It allows researchers to quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of certain words, themes, or concepts, often to trace trends or construct thematic categories across a dataset.¹³⁸ In this study, content analysis was applied to the titles of graduate theses in Byzantine studies to examine how research orientations and thematic emphases have evolved over time. By identifying frequently occurring terms and clustering them into broad categories, the method enabled a high-level mapping of the field's cognitive structure across different decades and institutions.

Social Network Analysis

SNA is a methodological approach that examines social structures using network and graph theory.¹³⁹ By mapping relationships among individuals, groups, or institutions, it reveals patterns of collaboration, influence, and structural dynamics. Beyond identifying connections, SNA highlights key actors who foster connectivity, bridge isolated groups, or exert influence through their position. It also offers quantitative and visual tools for analyzing complex systems. Key concepts and metrics used in this study include:

- **Nodes and Edges:** Nodes represent entities (e.g., scholars and universities), while edges denote the relationships or affiliations between them (e.g., mentorship or institutional ties).
- **Degree Centrality:** Measures the number of direct connections a node has, identifying key individuals or institutions with significant influence.
- **Betweenness Centrality:** Highlights nodes that act as bridges or connectors within the network, playing a pivotal role in fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- **Eigenvector Centrality:** Measures the influence of a node not just by its direct connections, but by the importance of the nodes it is connected to. This

¹³⁸ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004).

¹³⁹ Craig M. Rawlings et al., *Network Analysis: Integrating Social Network Theory, Method, and Application with R*, Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

highlights key scholars or institutions embedded in influential parts of the network.

- **Clustering Coefficient:** Examines the tendency of nodes to form tightly-knit groups, reflecting intellectual clusters or institutional collaborations.
- **Network Density:** Evaluates the overall level of connectedness in the network, indicating the strength and cohesion of the scholarly community.

In this study, SNA drew on an extensive dataset of graduate theses to construct a timeline-enabled two-mode model (scholars and universities). This dynamic model mapped mentorship, colleagueship, assessorship, and institutional affiliations, showing how clusters and networks formed around key mentors. The analysis highlighted the centrality of certain scholars, the interdisciplinarity of research, and the influence of specific universities in shaping the discipline. The timeline feature further revealed how these networks evolved, offering a dynamic perspective on the field's development. By integrating quantitative findings, SNA complemented qualitative insights from grounded theory and abductive analysis. The resulting visualizations both validated the Four-Stage Model and expanded understanding of structural dynamics, pointing to new directions for research and collaboration.

Graduate Theses Data for Social Network Analysis

One of the key data sources for this study is a graduate thesis dataset compiled from the National Thesis Center (Ulusal Tez Merkezi) and cross-referenced with academic CVs, institutional records, and bibliographic databases. The dataset includes both master's and doctoral theses produced in Türkiye between 1933 and 2025 that meaningfully engage with Byzantine studies. It was curated through an extended process of keyword search, manual review, and categorization into nine topic-based types and two methodological orientations. While previous studies in the field relied on smaller samples or keyword-based surveys, this dataset represents the most comprehensive and systematically curated compilation of its kind.

In addition to topical and disciplinary data, the dataset includes detailed information on supervisors, co-supervisors, jury members, and their institutional affiliations. This enriched metadata makes it possible to reconstruct academic genealogies, map mentorship networks, and analyze institutional mobility. Affiliations were recorded according to the thesis completion year, ensuring contextual accuracy. These features

helped identify influential scholars, institutional hubs, and the formation of academic clusters over time. The inclusion of jury members further expanded the scope of SNA, shedding light on cross-institutional collaboration and professional recognition. This dataset provides the empirical foundation for the network visualizations, cluster analyses, and disciplinary diagnostics presented in chapter 4. A full account of its construction, classification logic, and analytical scope is provided in 4.2.1.

Co-Authorship Analysis

The co-authorship analysis examined collaborative dynamics among pioneering scholars in Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Using the Bibliography Project database, co-authored publications were identified to trace patterns of scholarly interaction. Since the database was not digitized at the time, the data was manually curated, and the analysis therefore focused on early scholars and their co-authorship patterns. The sample included scholars who completed their doctorates by 2000. Of the 52 identified, 13 were excluded for having fewer than five publications, which was deemed insufficient for meaningful analysis. Additionally, four scholars from ITU, whose doctorates were in other fields but who later made significant contributions to Byzantine studies, were included.¹⁴⁰ In total, 43 scholars were analyzed, with co-authorship ratios calculated as a share of total publications. These co-authorships were further categorized into three groups:

1. **Intra-Disciplinary Collaborations:** Co-authorship with mentors, mentees, and colleagues from the same discipline.
2. **Interdisciplinary Collaborations:** Co-authorship with scholars from other disciplines, reflecting cross-disciplinary collaboration.
3. **International Collaborations:** Co-authorship with foreign scholars, showcasing global academic interactions.

Table 2.2 and Figure 2.3 present the key metrics and findings of the co-authorship analysis. Further interpretation and discussion will take place in subsequent chapters. This analysis identified key figures and their collaborative networks, revealing the formation of intellectual clusters that shaped the trajectory of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. It also highlighted interdisciplinary collaborations and the role of co-authorship in mentoring and intellectual exchange. The co-authorship data analysis provides a bridge between the oral history narratives and the broader social dynamics studied through SNA.

¹⁴⁰ Doğan Kuban, Ayla Ödekan, Zeynep Ahunbay, and Turgut Saner.

Table 2.2: Co-authorship data analysis overview.

Scholar	PhD Year	Total	Co-authored		Intra-disciplinary	Interdisciplinary	International
Semavi Eyice	1952	398	7	1.76%	1	4	2
Gülgün Köroğlu	1994	92	16	17.39%	7		9
Işın Demirkent	1978	86	2	2.33%	2		
Yıldız Ötügen	1974	85	17	20.00%	14	2	1
Yelda Olcay Uçkan	1997	81	33	40.74%	32		1
Turhan Kaçar	2000	74	2	2.70%		2	
Nevra Necipoğlu	1990	72	6	8.33%	3	2	1
Sema Doğan	1996	72	23	31.94%	20	3	
Engin Akyürek	1995	69	16	23.19%	9	5	2
Brigitte Pitarakis	1996	69	12	17.39%		2	10
Zeynep Mercangöz	1985	59	15	25.42%	10	2	3
Asnu Bilban Yalçın	2000	52	3	5.77%		1	2
Lale Doğer	1997	49	14	28.57%	11	1	2
Meryem Acara Eser	1997	46	14	30.43%	10	4	
Ferudun Özgümüş	1994	42	10	23.81%	1		9
Vera Bulgurlu	1998	40	16	40.00%	11	2	3
Nergis Günsenin	1990	37	9	24.32%	5	1	3
Nilay Çorağan	1998	35	6	17.14%	6		
Ebru Altan	2000	35	2	5.71%	2		
Melek Delilbaşı	1973	34	3	8.82%	2	1	
Mustafa Daş	1999	34	1	2.94%		1	
Ebru Parman	1978	31	10	32.26%	7	3	
Mehmet İhsan Tunay	1984	28	2	7.14%	2		
Sacit Pekak	1991	28	6	21.43%	6		
Şerif Baştav	1947	26	0	0.00%			
Özkan Ertuğrul	1989	26	4	15.38%	4		
Fahmeddin Başar	1991	19	5	26.32%	3	1	
Burcu Ceylan Duggan	2000	19	7	36.84%	3	4	
Metin Ahunbay	1969	17	4	23.53%	3		1
Zeynep Ahunbay	1975	15	9	60.00%	5	2	2
Yılmaz Büktel	1995	15	1	6.67%		1	
Doğan Kuban	1954	14	7	50.00%	1		6
Casim Avcı	1997	14		0.00%			
Ayla Ödekan	1976	13	5	38.46%	5		
Macit Tekinalp	2000	13	2	15.38%	1	1	
Mine Kadiroğlu	1989	12	4	33.33%	4		
Akdes Nimet Kurat	1933	9	0	0.00%			
Turgut Saner	1995	9	7	77.77%	6		1
Levent Kayapınar	1999	9	4	44.44%	2	2	
Yıldız Demiriz	1969	7	0	0.00%			
Ayşe Emel Erten	1993	7	2	28.57%		2	
Ahmet Ersen	1986	6	3	50.00%		3	
Yılmaz Selim Erdal	1996	6	1	16.67%	1		

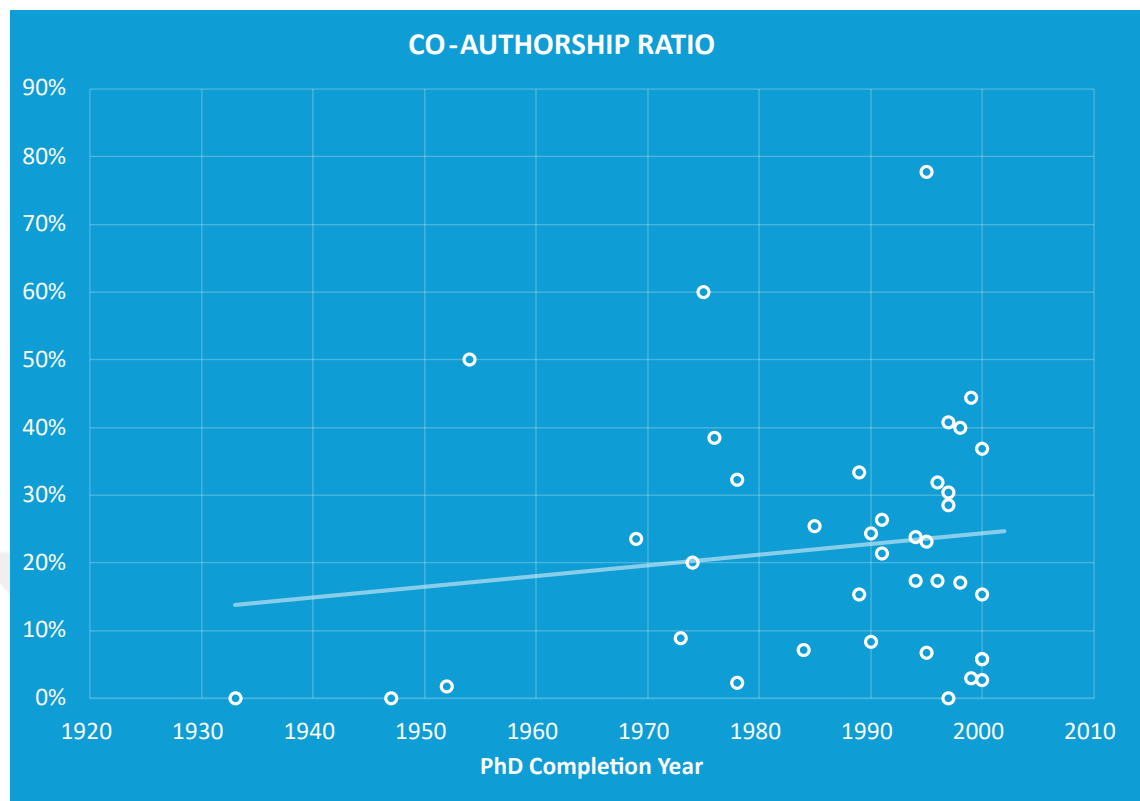


Figure 2.3: Co-authorship graph. This figure displays the co-authorship ratios of selected Byzantine studies scholars, as detailed in Table 2.2. The horizontal axis represents the scholars' PhD completion years, while the vertical axis indicates co-authorship ratios.

2.4.4 Bridging Research with Practical Action

Participatory action research (PAR) represents a methodological approach that integrates research and action to address real-world challenges while simultaneously contributing to theoretical knowledge. Rooted in critical theory and social constructivism, PAR challenges the traditional separation between researchers and participants, emphasizing co-creation, collaboration, and practical problem-solving. This study adopts PAR principles through the development and implementation of Bizantolog, a virtual scholarly community for Byzantine studies, as an actionable outcome of this research.

PAR is characterized by three interlinked components: participation, action, and research. It fosters democratic participation by engaging all stakeholders, including practitioners, scholars, and other community members, as co-researchers. This approach ensures that knowledge generation is intertwined with real-world applications, addressing the practical needs of participants while advancing theoretical frameworks. As Davydd J.

Greenwood and Levin assert, PAR democratizes the research process, transforming participants into co-creators of knowledge and agents of change.¹⁴¹

The establishment of Bizantolog exemplifies how PAR can translate theoretical insights into concrete community-building initiatives. As a virtual community, Bizantolog leverages new media, which is characterized by digital, interactive, and networked forms of communication. According to Manuel Castells' "network society" theory, digital networks restructure social interactions, reshaping economic, political, and cultural processes.¹⁴² Castells highlights that digital networks redefine how individuals and institutions access, share, and collaborate on knowledge, fostering cross-border and interdisciplinary opportunities. Bizantolog embodies these principles by transcending geographical limitations to enable academic development and collaboration through a shared digital platform.

Furthermore, Henry Jenkins' concept of "participatory culture" underscores new media's transformative role in engaging individuals as active content creators rather than passive consumers.¹⁴³ This participatory aspect is evident in Bizantolog's member-driven activities and content creation, where volunteers shape and share academic resources, embodying Jenkins' vision of a decentralized and collaborative digital culture. By integrating new media into its framework, the platform fosters networking, collaboration, and knowledge sharing among scholars and students, effectively bridging geographical and institutional divides. Reflecting the iterative cycles of PAR, Bizantolog has evolved through the active engagement of its members, who contribute to shaping its priorities, activities, and long-term goals. This aligns with the PAR principle of empowering participants to take ownership of the research process and its outcomes.¹⁴⁴

The iterative nature of PAR, involving planning, action, observation, and reflection, has been integral to the development and refinement of Bizantolog.¹⁴⁵ These cycles have ensured that the platform remains responsive to the evolving needs of its community, fostering collective learning and continuous adaptation in line with PAR principles.

¹⁴¹ Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (SAGE Publications, 2007), 3.

¹⁴² Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Cambridge, MA/Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996).

¹⁴³ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: NYU Press, 2006).

¹⁴⁴ A. Lawson Hal, "Introducing Participatory Action Research," in *Participatory Action Research*, ed. A. Lawson Hal et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 34.

¹⁴⁵ Hal, "Participatory Action," 13.

By leveraging PAR, this study also provides a replicable model for building virtual academic communities. The integration of digital technologies and new media within PAR enables wider participation, creating spaces for dialogue, resource sharing, and collaborative problem-solving. The development and implications of Bizantolog as an epilogue to this research will be explored further, reflecting its role as a lasting contribution to the field of Byzantine studies.

2.4.5 Conclusion to the Research Methodology and Data Collection Strategy

The research methodology and data collection strategy outlined above exemplify a comprehensive and integrative approach to studying the development and current state of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods with participatory action research, this study bridges individual narratives and institutional structures, offering a nuanced understanding of the field. The oral history project serves as a foundational qualitative dataset, enriched through grounded theory and abductive analysis, while Social Network Analysis validates and expands these insights through quantitative rigor. The application of participatory action research through Bizantolog demonstrates how scholarly inquiry can translate into practical, community-driven solutions. Together, these methodologies not only provide a robust analytical framework but also foster new avenues for collaboration and knowledge sharing within the academic discipline.

PART II: MAPPING A FRAGMENTED FIELD

Chapter 3 – Sailing in Uncharted Waters: The Formative Years of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye

The title of this chapter reflects the pioneering efforts to establish Byzantine studies as a distinct academic specialty in Türkiye. It explores the initial stages of the field in Turkish academia, focusing on key scholars, institutions, and the sociopolitical dynamics of the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. This phase aligns with what Mullins defines as the normal stage, when a few independent researchers work in a loosely defined field lacking formal organization or institutional recognition. The chapter is organized into six sections: 3.1 situates the historical and sociopolitical context; 3.2 examines the role of foreign scholars; 3.3 and 3.4 analyze the contributions of pioneering Turkish historians and art historians; 3.5 assesses the shift from foreign tutelage to local trajectories, tracing both barriers and emerging leadership; and 3.6 concludes with reflections on the formative constraints of this period and their long-term implications.

3.1 Historical and Sociopolitical Context

The formative trajectory of Byzantine studies in Türkiye was shaped by the late Ottoman Empire's multicultural intellectual environment and the nationalist historiography of the early Republic. These settings provided both opportunities and constraints, creating the parameters within which Byzantine studies later emerged as an academic field.¹⁴⁶

3.1.1 Byzantine Heritage in the Late Ottoman Multicultural Context

Byzantine studies first took root in the late Ottoman period, when intellectual curiosity about Byzantium intersected with modernization, heritage preservation, and international scholarly networks. Istanbul, with its imperial monuments and diverse communities, was the principal locus of these early developments.

¹⁴⁶ For a detailed account of Byzantine scholarship in this period, see Kılıç Yıldız, "Byzantium." For papers on various accounts of the development of Byzantine studies from the late Ottoman era to the first decades of the Turkish Republic, Also, see the chapters "Looking at Byzantium from the Ottoman Empire" and "The Perception of History in the Early Republican Period and the Share of Byzantium in It" in Durak, *Odyssey*, 23-164.

Ottoman Greek scholars were central to these initiatives. The Syllogos of Constantinople (est. 1861) produced pioneering research and collaborated with Ottoman Muslim intellectuals and Western visitors.¹⁴⁷ As Koray Durak has shown, Edwin A. Grosvenor's Constantinople (1895) acknowledged the contributions of Syllogos members alongside prominent Ottoman figures such as Osman Hamdi Bey, demonstrating the interconnected networks that sustained early Byzantine research.¹⁴⁸ Ottoman Muslim intellectuals also engaged Byzantine heritage. By the early twentieth century, scholars were producing works on Constantinople's history, architecture, and topography, influenced by modernization reforms that expanded museums, preservation efforts, and scientific societies.¹⁴⁹ These studies selectively adapted European scholarly methods while developing distinct local perspectives.

Political and diplomatic dynamics reinforced this interest. Kaiser Wilhelm II's visits, restoration projects, and the patronage of monuments like the Kaiser Wilhelm Fountain illustrate the symbolic role of Byzantium in international politics.¹⁵⁰ During the Allied occupation after World War I, foreign researchers documented monuments, further enriching the emerging field.¹⁵¹ Beyond Istanbul, figures such as Gertrude Bell and Guillaume de Jerphanion contributed to the study of Anatolian Byzantine architecture, though serious investigations outside the capital largely stalled until the 1950s.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Çağla Derya Tağmat, "İstanbul'da sosyo-kültürel Hellenizm'in temsilcisi bir cemiyet: "Syllogos" (1861-1923)," *Tarihin Peşinde*, no. 13 (2015); George Vassiadis, "Monuments, Manuscripts, and Memories: The Greek Philological Syllogos of Constantinople and the Emergence of Byzantine Studies in Istanbul," in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022).

¹⁴⁸ Durak, *Odyssey*, 53.

¹⁴⁹ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, "Ottoman Scholars and the Byzantine Architectural Legacy of Istanbul," in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022); Kılıç Yıldız, "Byzantium."

¹⁵⁰ Wilhelm II, who saw Emperor Constantine as a model ruler, admired Byzantine art and architecture, a sentiment that materialized in the Neo-Byzantine Kaiser Wilhelm Fountain in Sultanahmet Square. The fountain, built under his patronage, was not only a diplomatic gift but also a statement of historical continuity, reinforcing the idea of Byzantium as a bridge between empires, see Ceren Göğüş and Zeynep Kuban, "German Traces in Ottoman Istanbul: The Kaiser Wilhelm Fountain," *A|Z ITU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture* 12, no. 2 (2015). Also, for the repairs of the Byzantine monuments prior to his visit, see Merve Savaş, "Alman İmparatoru II. Wilhelm'in Filistin ve Suriye ziyareti (1898) (Master's thesis, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, 2018), 43.

¹⁵¹ Ayşe Ercan Kydonakis, "Historia (Non?) Grata: Byzantine Archaeology of Istanbul during the First World War and the Allied Occupation," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 31, no. 6 (2024).

¹⁵² Among the foreign researchers and institutions interested in Byzantine art and architecture in Anatolia were, for instance, British traveler Gertrude Lowthian Bell, who published the *Binbirkilise in Karaman* together with archaeologist William Mitchell Ramsay, see William M. Ramsay and Gertrude L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909).; and Guillaume de Jerphanion, an

Foreign institutions, especially the Russian Archaeological Institute in Istanbul under Fyodor Uspenski, and visiting scholars such as Josef Strzygowski and Charles Diehl, left a lasting imprint.¹⁵³ Their contrasting interpretations—Strzygowski privileging “Eastern” influences and Diehl emphasizing Greco-Roman continuities—set the stage for methodological debates that resonated in Türkiye.¹⁵⁴

In this intellectual milieu, Edhem Eldem argues that the Ottoman “discovery” of Byzantium was largely a product of modernization and Westernization, which encouraged a more critical approach to history.¹⁵⁵ The nineteenth-century shift from antiquarianism to archaeology fostered sustained interest in material culture, from monuments to manuscripts, and engagement with Western historiography compelled Ottoman scholars to acknowledge Byzantium as a historical reality with political and ideological implications. While some aspects of Byzantium had been studied earlier, Eldem notes that evidence before the mid-nineteenth century was sporadic. More decisive steps came with the establishment of the Museum of Antiquities in Hagia Irene in 1846 and the restoration of Hagia Sophia by Gaspard and Giuseppe Fossati beginning in 1847, both under Sultan Abdülmecid.¹⁵⁶

Among Ottoman historians, Ahmed Refik [Altınay] (1876–1971) was particularly influential in urging the study of Byzantium. Unlike many contemporaries who dismissed

Assumptionist priest who documented Cappadocian churches in his seminal five-volume work, see Guillaume De Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin: les églises rupestres de Cappadoce* (P. Geuthner, 1925-1942). The Assumptionist center founded in Kadıköy had become a hub for Byzantine studies and maintained close relations with Greek and Russian Byzantinists in the city, see Durak, *Odyssey*, 48. As Robert G. Ousterhout and Mark P.C. Jackson note in the foreword to the second edition of *The Thousand and One Churches*, the first decade of the twentieth century was a particularly productive period for the study of Byzantine Asia Minor, regarded at the time as “ein Neuland der Kunstgeschichte” thanks to Josef Strzygowski, to whom Ramsay and Bell dedicated their book; see Josef Strzygowski, *Kleinasien ein neuland der kunstgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1903). However, subsequent conflicts, including the Balkan Wars, World War I, and the Turkish War of Independence, disrupted research for decades. While studies later shifted to Istanbul, serious investigations in central Asia Minor resumed only in the 1950s, see William M. Ramsay and Gertrude L. Bell, “Editors’ Foreword,” in *The Thousand and One Churches*, ed. Robert G. Ousterhout and Mark P. C. Jackson (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1909), xxviii.

¹⁵³ Pınar Üre, “İstanbul’da Rus Arkeoloji Enstitüsü,” *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi*, no. 254 (Şubat 2015); Üre, “Russian Archaeological Institute.”

¹⁵⁴ Bahri Ata, “Avusturyalı arkeolog ve sanat tarihçi Josef Strzygowski’nin Türkiye gezileri ve sonraki etkileri,” in *Prof. Dr. Mehdi İlhan anısına tarihe adanan bir ömür*, ed. Mehmet Doğan and Kamil Çolak (Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2022); René Dussaud, “Notice sur la vie et les travaux de M. Charles Diehl, membre de l’Académie,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 89, no. 4 (1945).

¹⁵⁵ Edhem Eldem, “The Ottoman (Re)discovery of Byzantium,” in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022), 21.

¹⁵⁶ Eldem, “The Ottoman (Re)discovery of Byzantium,” 21-22.

it as alien or decadent, he emphasized the direct links between Byzantine and Ottoman history, insisting that familiarity with Byzantium—above all with Constantinople—was vital for Ottoman patriotism.¹⁵⁷ He devoted one of his six-volume history to Byzantium and wrote a book on Byzantine empresses, where in the opening essay, “Introduction to Byzantine History,” he exhorted readers to study Byzantium both as a scholarly pursuit and as a means to strengthen their attachment to Istanbul and the homeland.¹⁵⁸

Despite such initiatives, Byzantium was not systematically taught in late Ottoman education. The only concrete evidence of its curricular presence is the published lecture notes of Yusuf Behçet [Gücer]’s (1890–1952) 1915–16 course on the “Medieval History of Eastern Societies” at Dârülfünûn, and a high school textbook by Ali Reşat (1877–1929) from the same year that included Byzantium. These remained isolated efforts rather than institutionalized teaching.¹⁵⁹

Late Ottoman engagement with Byzantine heritage thus unfolded in a multicultural and international scholarly setting, yet remained fragmented and confined to elite circles, with only marginal incorporation into formal education. Perceptions of Byzantium also shifted with political change: after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, historical narratives became increasingly nationalist, and Byzantium was recast as the archetypal adversary, reflecting rising anti-Greek sentiment. This antagonistic framing, hardened during the Balkan Wars, World War I, and the War of Independence, would decisively shape early Republican historiography.

3.1.2 Between Exclusion and Appropriation: Early Republican Era

As the Ottoman Empire gave way to the Turkish Republic, the perception of Byzantine heritage was reshaped by new ideological and institutional priorities. Whereas late Ottoman intellectuals had engaged Byzantium in different ways—acknowledging its cultural significance in some contexts while casting it as an imperial rival in others—the early Republican period introduced a nationalist framework that further marginalized

¹⁵⁷ For Ahmed Refik Altınay’s role and contribution to place Byzantine legacy as a part of Ottoman identity, see Kılıç Yıldız, “Byzantium,” 111–18. For other key scholars such as Celal Esad [Arseven] (1876–1971) and Mehmed Ziya (1871–1930) who were influential in the production of knowledge regarding the Byzantine heritage in the Late Ottoman era, see chapters 4 and 5 in Kılıç Yıldız, “Byzantium,” 97–175.

¹⁵⁸ Ahmed Refik, *Bizans imparatoriçeleri* (İstanbul, 1915), cited in Kılıç Yıldız, “Byzantium,” 114.

¹⁵⁹ Delouis and Pitarakis, *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800–1955*, 12; Durak, *Odyssey*, 25–26.

Byzantium while selectively integrating aspects of its legacy into a broader Anatolian narrative.

The establishment of the Republic in 1923 marked a decisive shift. Nationalist historiography emphasized pre-Byzantine and pre-Ottoman civilizations as the foundations of the new nation, while Byzantium was largely cast as an era of decline or a legacy appropriated by Greek nationalism. History and archaeology became central instruments of identity construction.¹⁶⁰ The “Turkish History Thesis” sought to demonstrate an ancient Turkish presence in Anatolia, and archaeology was mobilized to substantiate historical depth and cultural legitimacy.¹⁶¹ New institutions, such as the Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography (DTCF), and the sponsorship of students abroad reflected these priorities. Yet Byzantine studies remained peripheral, as occasional initiatives did not align with the nationalist vision of historical scholarship.¹⁶²

Although the state allowed or supported the work of foreign scholars and Turkish museologists such as Arif Müfid Mansel (1905–1975) and Aziz Ogan (1888–1956) on Byzantine monuments, no institutional effort was made to establish Byzantinology as a discipline.¹⁶³ The conversion of Hagia Sophia into a museum in 1934 epitomized this

¹⁶⁰ Mehmet Özdoğan, “Ideology and Archaeology in Turkey,” in *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, ed. Lynn Meskell (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Tanyeri-Erdemir, “National Pride.”; Atakuman, “Cradle or Crucible.”; Redford and Ergin, “Introduction.”; Ergin, “Archaeology and Perception.”; Shankland, “Afterword: Heritage, Nationalism and Archaeology in the Republic of Turkey.”

¹⁶¹ The Turkish History Thesis, formulated in *Türk tarihinin ana hatları* [*The main tenets of Turkish history*] (1930), was initiated by Atatürk and led by Afet İnan to support the nationalist agenda of the new regime. It claimed that Turks, as an ancient brachycephalous race, originated in Central Asia and, after ecological changes forced migration, brought civilization to regions from China and India to Egypt, Anatolia, Greece, and Italy. Anatolia was thus framed as a second homeland and Turks as founders of major civilizations. For a detailed accounts of the Turkish History Thesis, see Atakuman, “Cradle or Crucible.” For the use of archaeology, see Tanyeri-Erdemir, “National Pride.”; Ergin, “Archaeology and Perception,” 16-17.

¹⁶² Akyürek, “Byzantine Art History,” 208. One agenda item of the 1923 government program was sending students abroad for higher education. After the first group in 1924, Law no. 1416 (1929) regulated the process, and about 3,500 students were sent to Europe between 1925 and 1945. For details, see Kansu Şarman, *Türk Promethe'ler: Cumhuriyet'in öğrencileri Avrupa'da (1925-1945)* (Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2005), 23-33. Most records before 1950 were lost in a fire, but Şarman compiled a list of 40 returnees who became pioneers in history and archaeology (e.g., Afet İnan, Enver Ziya Karal, Ekrem Akurgal, Sedat Alp, Jale İnan, Oktay Aslanapa). No Byzantinists are known among them, though some individuals such as Akdes Nimet Kurat, Şerif Baştav, and İbrahim Kafesoğlu are discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁶³ Arif Müfid Mansel was also lecturing at the Istanbul University while working at the Istanbul Archaeological Museums; he left his position at the museum when he gained full professorship in 1946. Other museologists such as Nezih Fıratlı (1921–79), Rüstem Duyuran (1914–92), and Necati Dolunay (1913–?) from the Istanbul Archaeological Museums also conducted archaeological excavations at Byzantine sites. Muzaffer Ramazanoğlu (1901–58) and Feridun Dirimtekin (1894–976), the second and third directors of the Hagia Sophia after its conversion into a museum, were also actively involved in

ambivalent approach. Following the restoration of its mosaics by the Byzantine Institute, the act was justified in universalist terms, claiming the transformation would “bring joy to the entire Orient and provide mankind with a new institution of science.”¹⁶⁴ As Edhem Eldem notes, this symbolic gesture projected secular ideals and diplomatic alignment with the West, but it did little to raise the academic status of Byzantine studies.

Murat Ergin has argued that early Republican scholars approached classical and Byzantine heritage with caution, shaped by fraught relations with Greece and the rivalry over Anatolia’s legacy as the “cradle of civilizations.”¹⁶⁵ Byzantium was thus both a point of contention and a tool for diplomacy. Western views of Byzantium as a classical-Christian patrimony complicated its integration into the Turkish narrative, keeping the field peripheral, with limited institutional support and a focus on utilitarian objectives.

Mehmet Fuad Köprülü’s (1890–1966) seminal 1931 article on Byzantine influences on Ottoman institutions, published in *Türk Hukuk ve İktisat Tarihi Mecmuası*, together with two articles by Austrian art historians Josef Strzygowski and Heinrich Glück in *Türkiyat Mecmuası* (1935, at Köprülü’s invitation), played a key role in shaping perceptions of the Byzantine legacy.¹⁶⁶ Köprülü’s essay directly countered Orientalist claims that the Ottomans lacked institutional sophistication and had inherited their structures from Byzantium.¹⁶⁷ His insistence on severing Byzantium from Ottoman and Turkish history profoundly influenced medieval scholarship, especially after the rise of the Turkish–Islamic synthesis in the late 1940s.¹⁶⁸ This approach remained entrenched for decades. In 1999, Murat Belge argued that Köprülü’s thesis—minimizing Byzantine

Byzantine research. Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans sanatı,” 382-93; Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans mimarisi,” 465-68; Akyürek, “Byzantine Art History,” 208-10.

¹⁶⁴ Eldem, “The Ottoman (Re)discovery of Byzantium,” 32-33.

¹⁶⁵ Ergin, “Archaeology and Perception,” 22-29; Atakuman, “Cradle or Crucible,” 227.

¹⁶⁶ Kılıç, “Bibliography Project,” 94; Ergin, “Archaeology and Perception,” 23-24; Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, “Bizans müesseselerinin Osmanlı müesseselerine te’siri hakkında bâzı mülâhazalar” *Türk Hukuk ve İktisat Tarihi Mecmuası* 165-313 (1931); Josef Strzygowski, “Türkler ve Orta Asya san’atı meselesi,” *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 3 (1935); Heinrich Glück, “Türk sanatının dünyadaki mevkii,” *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 3 (1935).

¹⁶⁷ Durak, *Odyssey*, 57-58; Kılıç, “Bibliography Project,” 94; Eldem, “The Ottoman (Re)discovery of Byzantium.” Eldem clarifies that Köprülü did not outright dismiss the idea of Byzantine influence on the Ottomans but instead offered a critical reassessment. According to Köprülü, the Ottomans did not directly adopt Byzantine institutions; rather, they inherited many of them through the intermediary role of earlier Islamic states, particularly the Umayyads and Abbasids, as well as through the early Turkic presence in Anatolia.

¹⁶⁸ Nevra Necipoğlu, “The Current State and Future Direction of Byzantine History in Turkey” in *Essays in Honor of Aptullah Kuran*, ed. Lucienne Thys-Şenocak, Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, and Günhan Danişman (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), 39; İlber Ortaylı, *Tarih yazıcılık üzerine* (İstanbul: Cedit Neşriyat, 2009), 68-69; Kılıç, “Bibliography Project,” 94-96.

influence—had become a symbolic stronghold, “much like the defensive battles of Kanije or Plevna,” fostering a nationalist mission to erase or “dissolve” Byzantium’s presence in Ottoman history.¹⁶⁹

In art history, Glück emphasized the assimilative power of Turkish culture, while Strzygowski framed Byzantine and Islamic art as “contaminated” by Semitic influences. He contrasted these with the “pure” traditions of the Turkish north and Germanic art, opposed to the “contaminated” Greek art of the south, which he argued had been tainted by Semitic elements. Since both Byzantine and Ottoman art were heirs to Greek traditions, he concluded that they, too, were impure.¹⁷⁰ These ideological framings reinforced the denial of historical links between Ottoman and Byzantine heritage and discouraged further interest.

One of the most symbolic acts of the early Republican period was the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a museum in 1935. Intended to project a modern, secular identity while acknowledging Byzantium’s place in Türkiye’s cultural heritage, the act was accompanied by state-sponsored excavations and museum initiatives that reflected a pragmatic acceptance of Byzantine artifacts as part of Anatolia’s richness.¹⁷¹ Yet contradictions marked this policy: while nationalist ideologies downplayed Byzantium’s influence—asserting the originality and continuity of Turkish civilization—Western scholars continued to value it as part of the classical and Christian heritage. This external appreciation shaped cultural policies, forcing the Republic to balance anti-imperialist nationalism with aspirations to align with Western modernity.

Western institutions and scholars thus remained central to Byzantine research.¹⁷² The Byzantine Institute of America and the German Archaeological Institute collaborated

¹⁶⁹ Murat Belge, “Obadan kubbeye: Tarih yazımında bir ekol,” *Cogito (Bizans)* 17 (1999): 398. Kanije (1601) and Plevna (1877) became nationalist symbols of defiance against overwhelming odds—Kanije as victory, Plevna as heroic defeat. Belge argued that Byzantium was framed in a similar way, not only in the past but as a continuing process shaping scholarship and national narratives into the late twentieth century.

¹⁷⁰ Ergin, “Archaeology and Perception,” 23-24.

¹⁷¹ Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans sanatı.” For an overview of excavations that specifically aimed at uncovering the Byzantine period and the display of Byzantine artifacts in museums and exhibitions, see Durak, *Odyssey*.

¹⁷² For the earliest account, see Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans mimarisi.” For an overview of the activities of foreign institutes, scholars, and the Greek community of Istanbul, see Durak, *Odyssey*, 130-46. As mentioned earlier, most research on Byzantine monuments was conducted in Istanbul until the 1950s. For studies carried out in Istanbul by foreign institutions and scholars, see Zeynep Kızıltan and Turgut Saner, “Byzantine Archaeology in Istanbul: Glimpses from the Istanbul Archaeological Museums Archive, 1923–1955,” in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800–1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022);

with Turkish authorities on excavations and restorations, and figures such as Thomas Whittemore and Alfons Schneider worked closely with officials, highlighting the collaborative yet marginal position of Byzantine studies within nationalist frameworks.¹⁷³

In conclusion, the late Ottoman and early Republican periods established the ideological and institutional framework of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Nationalist historiography and limited support impeded its development as an independent field, yet engagement persisted through multicultural networks, international collaborations, and state-led heritage policies—pragmatic rather than systematic, but sufficient for survival.

3.1.3 Byzantine Studies in Turkish Higher Education in the Early Republican Era

The emergence of Byzantine studies as an academic discipline in Türkiye is tied to the educational reforms of the early Republic. The 1933 University Reform, which replaced the Dârülfünûn with Istanbul University, and the establishment of DTCTF in 1935 marked the first steps toward an academic infrastructure that could eventually include Byzantine studies. Later, the founding of Istanbul Technical University (ITU) in 1944 and Ankara University in 1946 expanded this framework. As Koray Durak notes, Istanbul University and DTCTF reflected the authoritarian, reformist policies of the early Republic, while ITU and Ankara University, founded during the transition to a multi-party system in 1946, allowed greater academic autonomy and a more decentralized structure.¹⁷⁴

Holger A. Klein, “From Robert College to the Byzantine Institute: American Contributions to the Rediscovery, Study, and Preservation of Byzantine Monuments in Istanbul, ca. 1830-1950,” in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022); Lenia Kouneni, ““By Scottish Munificence”: The Walker Trust Excavations of the Great Palace, 1935-55,” in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022); Anna Kelley, Leslie Brubaker, and Daniel Reynolds, “Byzantium from Below: The Archive of David Talbot Rice and the Unearthing of Constantinople,” in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022); Jesko Filduth, “The Study of Byzantium in Istanbul: Theodor Wiegand, Alfons Maria Schneider, and the Istanbul Department of the German Archaeological Institute,” in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022).

¹⁷³ For the activities of Byzantine Institute of America and Thomas Whittemore see, Klein, “From Robert College to the Byzantine Institute: American Contributions to the Rediscovery, Study, and Preservation of Byzantine Monuments in Istanbul, ca. 1830-1950,” 215-34. For the German Archaeological Institute and Alfons Schneider see, Filduth, “The Study of Byzantium in Istanbul: Theodor Wiegand, Alfons Maria Schneider, and the Istanbul Department of the German Archaeological Institute,” 377-89 and 94-99.

¹⁷⁴ Ironically, while the 1933 University Reform laid the groundwork for the institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, it also resulted in the dismissal of key figures who had advocated for or taught aspects of the field. Among them were Ahmed Refik Altınay, who long argued for the importance of studying Byzantium, and Yusuf Behçet Gücer, who had taught Byzantine history as part of his medieval history course since the 1910s, see Durak, *Odyssey*, 106. For an overview of the higher

In the early Republic, as in the late Ottoman period, Byzantine civilization was not taught as a distinct subject.¹⁷⁵ It appeared only within broader courses in history, archaeology, and literature, usually framed as part of the Ottoman or Turkish past. This tradition continued into the Republican period, evident in translations of Byzantine sources—though limited compared to classical texts—used mainly to illuminate Seljuk and Ottoman history.¹⁷⁶ Mehmet Fuad Köprülü's students, such as İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, drew on these translations, reflecting an indirect engagement with Byzantium that, though fragmented, persisted.¹⁷⁷

Foreign scholars played a pivotal role in establishing Byzantine studies within universities, particularly in art and architecture. Albert Louis Gabriel, a French architect and art historian teaching at Istanbul University (1926–1930), included Byzantine art in his lectures, providing an early focus on the subject.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Georg Rohde, a classical philologist teaching at DTCF between 1935 and 1949, introduced Greek and Latin, offering linguistic foundations essential for Byzantine research.¹⁷⁹

Before Byzantine studies formally entered university curricula, museums, foreign research centers, and state institutions such as the Turkish Historical Society sustained the field. Excavations at Rhegion (modern Küçükçekmece) beginning in 1937 exemplified these collaborations, involving Aziz Ogan and Arif Müfid Mansel from the Istanbul Archaeological Museums and Ernest Mamboury, the Swiss teacher renowned for his guidebooks on Byzantine architecture.¹⁸⁰ By 1940–41, the project also included assistants from Istanbul University, bridging fieldwork and academia. Mansel's formal appointment to Istanbul University in 1936 marked another milestone, further reinforced

education system in Türkiye, see Songül Sallan Gül and Hüseyin Gül, "Türkiye'de yükseköğretimin gelişimi, güncel durumu ve eleştirisi," *Toplum ve Demokrasi Dergisi* 8, no. 17 (2014): 52–55.

¹⁷⁵ Kılıç, "Byzantine Studies in Turkish Universities," 120; Durak, *Odyssey*, 105.

¹⁷⁶ Durak, *Odyssey*, 61–67; Çetinkaya, Yanık, and Tümkaya, "Translated Books," 252–53.

¹⁷⁷ Kılıç, "Bibliography Project," 95.

¹⁷⁸ Bingöl, "Art History," 26; Semavi Eyice, "Prof. Albert - Louis Gabriel," *Belleten* 37, no. 147 (1973): 324. Albert Louis Gabriel was an expert on Turkish and Islamic art history and remained in Türkiye after his teaching at *Dârülfünûn* (1926–1930) and continued significant research. Assigned by the Ministry of Education, he documented and published architectural heritage in Anatolia. In 1931, he also played a crucial role in establishing the French Archaeological Institute in Istanbul, where he served as director, fostering early research on Anatolian and Byzantine heritage.

¹⁷⁹ Kılıç, "Bibliography Project," 101; Durak, *Odyssey*, 108.

¹⁸⁰ Semavi Eyice, "Ernest Mamboury," *Belleten* 17, no. 67 (1953).

by his translation of Alexander Vasiliev's *Histoire de l'empire Byzantin*, which integrated Byzantine history into Turkish scholarly discourse.¹⁸¹

Byzantine studies became formally recognized in higher education in 1942, when courses on Byzantine history and art were introduced at Istanbul University. This marked the foundational stage of the discipline, shaped by the combined contributions of foreign and local scholars and by the institutional initiatives examined in the following sections.

3.2 Inception of Byzantine Studies by Foreign Scholars

The development of Byzantine studies in Turkish higher education was shaped by foreign scholars, whose teaching, mentoring, and collaboration played a central role in initiating the discipline. This section examines selected academics who influenced and trained key Turkish scholars that later became pioneers in the field. Their contributions—analyzed in detail by Verda Bingöl's doctoral thesis and Alessandra Ricci's paper at the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium—are revisited here to contextualize their foundational role. Findings from oral history interviews and other primary sources have also been incorporated. This overview highlights their collective impact and provides a backdrop for the more detailed analyses that follow.

3.2.1 Initiation of Byzantine Studies at Turkish Universities: Sir Steven Runciman

Sir Steven Runciman (1903–2000), a British Byzantinist, served at Istanbul University between March 1942 and 1945, becoming a pivotal figure in the institutionalization of Byzantine studies.¹⁸² His appointment to the newly created Byzantine Art History Chair formed part of a wartime collaboration between the Ministry of Education, the British Council, and the university, reflecting both academic and diplomatic objectives.¹⁸³

At the time, Istanbul University operated under a certificate system, requiring students to complete three coursework-based certificates and a final thesis certificate.¹⁸⁴ The Byzantine Art History Chair, held by Runciman, primarily supported the Departments of Archaeology and History rather than functioning independently.¹⁸⁵ Archaeology students

¹⁸¹ Alexander A. Vasiliev, *Bizans İmparatorluğu tarihi*, trans. Arif Müfid Mansel, 2 vols., vol. 1, Ana İlim Kitapları Tercüme Serisi, (Ankara: Maarif Vekaleti, 1943).

¹⁸² See Bingöl, "Art History," 48-63; Ricci, "Three Foreign Byzantinists," 72-76.

¹⁸³ Bingöl and Kuban, "British Wartime Politics."

¹⁸⁴ Bingöl, "Art History," 179; Aziz Doğanay and Şevket Kamil Akar, "Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi üzerine," 7, no. 14 (2009): 349-50; Semavi Eyice, "Cumhuriyet döneminde Bizans çalışmaları ve arkeoloji," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 5 (1999): 33.

¹⁸⁵ Bingöl, "Art History," 59.

could take a Byzantine art history certificate, while history students could pursue a Byzantine history certificate.¹⁸⁶ His contract required him to teach both areas, organize field trips, prepare a bibliography, and advise on monuments. In practice, as Verda Bingöl notes, he did not compile a bibliography, prepare a textbook, or lead research trips; his travels were personal or on behalf of the British Council.

Runciman's research focus was history, though he also lectured on art history.¹⁸⁷ His Byzantine history classes were attended mainly by Muslim male students, while his art history lectures attracted minorities and women.¹⁸⁸ His smaller art history seminars were often conducted in English or French, sometimes at his residence. In addition to his university duties, he lectured at the Academy of Fine Arts and in public forums, many later published.¹⁸⁹ Despite language barriers that required assistance, he introduced structured methods and emphasized Byzantium's broader historical significance. His comparative approach encouraged a more nuanced understanding of the empire within European traditions.¹⁹⁰ Semavi Eyice, who began his studies after Runciman's departure but had access to his lecture notes, later remarked: "Runciman prepared his Byzantine art history courses systematically, using references like O. M. Dalton's works."¹⁹¹ His public lectures and publications further enhanced the visibility of Byzantine studies.

Following Runciman's resignation in 1945, continuity faltered. Charles John Hope Johnstone was appointed through the British Council but, lacking expertise, relied on Runciman's notes.¹⁹² As Bingöl notes, his appointment was a temporary measure rather than a step toward securing the continuity of a Byzantine art history division.¹⁹³ Later, Oktay Kazanlı, an archaeology assistant, taught Byzantine history, followed in 1947–48 by Fuat Ezgü, who was dismissed in 1948.¹⁹⁴ Ernst Diez, head of the Turkish and Islamic

¹⁸⁶ Bingöl, "Art History," 56.

¹⁸⁷ Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," 408.

¹⁸⁸ Minoo Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight: The Byzantine Life of Steven Runciman* (Penguin Books Limited, 2016), 283-84; Bingöl, "Art History," 57-58.

¹⁸⁹ Bingöl, "Art History," 58-62; Dinshaw, *Steven Runciman*, 287.

¹⁹⁰ Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," 408.

¹⁹¹ Sacit Pekak, "Semavi Eyice ile bir sohbet bir konferans," *Vakıflar Dergisi* (2019): 261. O. M. Dalton was a British museologist and author of one of the early books that covered the whole period of Byzantine art, Ormonde M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (London, 1911); see Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack, "Byzantine Studies," 13.

¹⁹² Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," 409.

¹⁹³ Bingöl, "Art History," 63-64.

¹⁹⁴ Durak, *Odysey*, 60-68; Bingöl, "Art History," 64-65.

Art Chair, briefly offered a one-hour weekly Byzantine art course to enable students to complete their certificates.¹⁹⁵

An attempt was also made in 1946 to appoint Alfons Maria Schneider, professor at Göttingen University and a former member of the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul. Although his name appeared in the 1947–48 student guide, he declined, reportedly due to campaigns against German faculty.¹⁹⁶ The invitation reflected a shift toward university autonomy in appointments during the transition to a multi-party system and indicated a preference for an archaeologist-Byzantinist over a historian.¹⁹⁷ Yet the absence of a qualified successor after 1945 meant that Runciman's tenure, though significant as an initiation, did not provide a durable foundation for the discipline.

3.2.2 Consolidation of Byzantine Art History: Philippe Schweinfurth

Philippe Schweinfurth (1877–1954), a German-born art historian, taught at Istanbul University between 1950 and 1954, following a five-year hiatus after Steven Runciman's departure.¹⁹⁸ His appointment, the result of a prolonged international search, represented a concerted effort to stabilize Byzantine art history teaching at the university.¹⁹⁹ Schweinfurth arrived in Istanbul after severe wartime hardship. Having lost his home in Berlin, he fled East Germany for Switzerland before accepting the position in Türkiye. His lectures, delivered in German and translated into Turkish by his assistant Semavi Eyice, who had studied under him in Berlin during World War II, were renowned for their precision and scholarly depth. Eyice recalled that he “meticulously prepared his lectures in polished German texts, often resembling standalone academic articles.”²⁰⁰

Methodologically, Schweinfurth emphasized the continuity of Byzantine art with Hellenistic and Roman traditions and rejected claims of dominant Eastern influence.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵ Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans sanatı,” 409-10.

¹⁹⁶ Bingöl, “Art History,” 69; Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 264.

¹⁹⁷ Bingöl, “Art History,” 68-69.

¹⁹⁸ Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans sanatı,” 410-13; Semavi Eyice, “Philipp Schweinfurth ve Feth’in 500. yılı nedeniyle İstanbul Üniversitesi’nde verdiği konferans,” *Dîvân: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 1, no. 14 (2003): 185-87; Bingöl, “Art History,” 69-75; Semavi Eyice, “Prof. Dr. Philipp Schweinfurth (1877-1954),” *Belleten* 18, no. 70 (April 1954).

¹⁹⁹ A commission of professors led the process and shortlisted six candidates, see Bingöl, “Art History,” 68-70. Ricci reports that the other two finalists for the international competition were two well-known Italian scholars, Ugo Monneret de Villard (1881-1954) and Sergio Bettini (1905-1986) and suggests that Eyice, who was Diez’s assistant at the time, might have contributed to Schweinfurth’s selection, see Ricci, “Three Foreign Byzantinists,” 78.

²⁰⁰ Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 262. For a detailed account of Philipp Schweinfurth’s life, work and short bibliography, see Eyice, “Philipp Schweinfurth.”

²⁰¹ Eyice, “Philipp Schweinfurth,” 239 and 44-45.

He defended this position internationally, including at the Ninth International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Thessaloniki, where he clashed with followers of Josef Strzygowski.²⁰² In Türkiye, however, this classical emphasis contrasted with prevailing interpretations shaped by Strzygowski and Mehmet Fuad Köprülü, which distanced Ottoman heritage from Byzantium.

Although unable to conduct fieldwork in Anatolia due to age and poor health, Schweinfurth concentrated on Istanbul's monuments.²⁰³ His studies included the Golden Gate, which he attributed to Theodosius II, as well as research on iconography and fortifications.²⁰⁴ He published in Turkish journals such as *Belleten*, including a 1953 article on the opus sectile floors of Zeyrek Camii (Pantokrator Monastery), translated by Eyice, showcasing their academic collaboration, as Alessandra Ricci observes.²⁰⁵ However, despite his contributions, Schweinfurth faced challenges in securing institutional support. He was excluded from excavation rights for the Zeyrek mosaics, which were instead granted to the Byzantine Institute of America.²⁰⁶ Despite such contributions, he faced institutional limitations: excavation rights at Zeyrek were granted to the Byzantine Institute of America rather than the university.

In addition to Byzantine art history, Schweinfurth was asked to teach Byzantine history following the precedent set by Runciman. His history lectures were translated by Fikret İşıltan, while Eyice handled the translation of his Byzantine art lectures.²⁰⁷ Eyice recalled that Schweinfurth meticulously prepared his lectures in polished German texts, "often resembling standalone academic articles rather than conventional course material," favoring expansive, topic-focused discussions over a structured syllabus and reflecting his intellectual curiosity.²⁰⁸ His interests extended well beyond Byzantium, encompassing a broad intellectual landscape that made him, in Eyice's words, an inspiring teacher: "Possessing an astonishingly powerful memory, Prof. Schweinfurth read constantly and fully absorbed everything he read."²⁰⁹ This extraordinary memory shaped his scholarship

²⁰² Eyice, "Philipp Schweinfurth," 243. For other congresses and conferences, including the Third, Fifth and Sixth ICBS, that Schweinfurth attended, see Eyice, "Philipp Schweinfurth," 236-45.

²⁰³ Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," 411.

²⁰⁴ Eyice, "Philipp Schweinfurth," 243.

²⁰⁵ Ricci, "Three Foreign Byzantinists," 79.

²⁰⁶ Eyice, "Philipp Schweinfurth," 244; Paul A. Underwood, "A Report on the Work of the Byzantine Institute of America, 1954," *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, no. 8 (1957).

²⁰⁷ Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," 410-11; Altan, "Türkiye'de Bizans tarihi," 297.

²⁰⁸ Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," 410.

²⁰⁹ Eyice, "Philipp Schweinfurth," 236.

and teaching. His lectures, enriched with encyclopedic knowledge, seamlessly combined literary and historical references, often with recitations from memory. He also recalled vividly the people and events he had encountered—memories that, as Eyice lamented, “were buried with him.” His remarkable memory and expansive intellectual scope later became defining features of Eyice’s own scholarship and teaching.

Although Schweinfurth left Switzerland for Istanbul in 1950, he did not bring his wife with him, instead visiting her during holidays. Her death in Locarno in early 1953 dealt him a severe emotional blow and worsened his health problems.²¹⁰ Combined with bureaucratic difficulties at the university, this led him not to renew his contract in 1954. His contributions to Byzantine studies were cut short by his untimely death in June of that year, leaving his planned Byzantine art history handbook unpublished, despite its Turkish translation by Eyice and its listing as a forthcoming university publication.²¹¹ Eyice lamented that Schweinfurth’s passing received little recognition in Turkish media, limited to brief notices in newspapers and academic journals.²¹² Both the failure to publish his textbook, despite completion of its first volume, and the muted response to the death of an internationally renowned scholar underscored the marginal place of Byzantine studies in Türkiye at the time.

Despite these setbacks, Schweinfurth’s mentorship profoundly shaped Eyice, who became a leading figure in advancing Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Though his detailed and systematically prepared lectures never coalesced into a structured curriculum, his tenure marked a transition from broad surveys to more specialized study of Byzantine art and architecture, laying the groundwork for a more focused academic tradition.

3.2.3 Expansion of Byzantine Studies: Paolo Verzone

Paolo Verzone (1902–1989), an Italian architect and Byzantinist, joined ITU in 1952 as the first Italian professor in Türkiye.²¹³ His appointment reflected both the growing recognition of interdisciplinary approaches in architectural education and the diplomatic

²¹⁰ Eyice, “Philipp Schweinfurth,” 235.

²¹¹ Eyice, “Philipp Schweinfurth,” 250; Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans sanatı,” 412.

²¹² Eyice, “Philipp Schweinfurth,” 235, n. 1.

²¹³ Ricci, “Three Foreign Byzantinists,” 80; İlknur Kolay and Zeynep Kuban, “İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi Mimarlık Tarihi Anabilim Dalı’nın tarihi,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 7, no. 13 (2009): 674. Some sources indicate Verzone’s appointment at ITU as 1951, while others state 1952. It seems that Verzone’s appointment occurred in 1951, but he formally began his teaching in 1952 when the Architectural History Department was established.

efforts of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Politecnico di Torino, which supported his candidacy over other applicants, including a UNESCO-backed nominee. ITU's dean, Sait Kuran, emphasized that Verzone's expertise in architectural history and conservation, together with his institutional ties to the Politecnico, made him the ideal choice.²¹⁴ Before his arrival, architectural history at ITU remained part of a technically focused curriculum; his appointment established it as an independent chair.

Verzone's engineering background shaped an empirical approach that challenged the aesthetic and connoisseurly traditions of Italian art history. Rather than stylistic analysis, he emphasized structures as technical constructs defined by materials, construction methods, and structural logic.²¹⁵ His 1942 book, *L'architettura religiosa dell'Alto Medioevo nell'Italia settentrionale*, revitalized a neglected field with precise measurements, technical drawings, and archaeological documentation.²¹⁶ Rejecting idealized reconstructions, he prioritized rigorous, field-based study, aligning his methodology with contemporary American and European medieval scholarship.²¹⁷ By shifting focus from visual analysis to construction and craftsmanship, Verzone bridged Italian scholarship with evolving international trends.

Unlike contemporaries who focused on celebrated Renaissance masters, Verzone studied "anonymous" architecture—collective medieval production rather than individual genius. By examining lesser-known buildings and details such as ornamentation and stucco, he traced patterns of craftsmanship and technological transmission.²¹⁸ His work reinterpreted the late antique–medieval transition, resisting rigid periodization and emphasizing Mediterranean exchanges among Byzantium, the Islamic world, and Western Europe.²¹⁹ His commitment to materiality and interdisciplinary analysis marked a decisive shift from idealist to archaeology-driven approaches.²²⁰

²¹⁴ Paolo Mighetto, "La storia come scavo della realtà architettonica. Paolo Verzone (1902-1986): un percorso di ricerca" (PhD diss., Politecnico di Torino, 1999), 70-71.

²¹⁵ Carlo Tosco, "Verzone e la storia dell'architettura medievale," in *Paolo Verzone (1902-1986) tra storia dell'architettura, restauro, archeologia*, ed. Donatella Ronchetta (Celid, 2005), 99. On the formation of Verzone's methodology for studying medieval art, see Chapter 1.3 in Mighetto, "La storia come scavo," 33-51.

²¹⁶ Tosco, "Paolo Verzone," 98; Paolo Verzone, *L'architettura religiosa dell'Alto Medioevo nell'Italia settentrionale* (Milano, 1942).

²¹⁷ Tosco, "Paolo Verzone," 98-99.

²¹⁸ Tosco, "Paolo Verzone," 99.

²¹⁹ Mighetto, "La storia come scavo," 72 and 79-80; Tosco, "Paolo Verzone," 99.

²²⁰ Tosco, "Paolo Verzone," 101.

At ITU, Verzone significantly influenced the teaching of architectural history. Moving away from text-based instruction, he introduced site visits to Byzantine and Ottoman monuments, encouraging comparative analysis and situating Byzantine architecture within broader Roman and Ottoman traditions.²²¹ He also pioneered the integration of conservation theory into architectural curricula, equipping students with a scientific framework for studying and preserving Byzantine and late antique structures.²²² Field research became central to his teaching. He conducted surveys in Anatolia, training students in documentation, drawing, and comparative analysis.²²³ His collaborative fieldwork with Turkish archaeologist Arif Müfid Mansel led to significant contributions in Byzantine and late antique studies.²²⁴ Between 1953 and 1954, he participated in the Side excavations, focusing on the reconstruction of a major mausoleum in the western necropolis. He was also actively involved in Semavi Eyice's doctoral research on the Byzantine era of Side.²²⁵

His influence extended strongly through his assistant, Doğan Kuban, who translated his lectures and often joined him in the field. Kuban later recalled: "We traveled together in Anatolia. He would travel more in Central Anatolia. I joined him on those trips—to Niğde, then up to Kayseri, and so on. He would wander around those regions, and I would accompany him. We would constantly take photographs. ... Of course, we would visit old cities together, wander around. Sometimes, we would go to places where no one had been before. Verzone took photographs the most. If we went along, we would help him with surveying."²²⁶ This training shaped Kuban's own methodology, which combined fieldwork with comparative analysis. When Verzone departed in 1957, Kuban succeeded him, ensuring continuity of this field-based approach.²²⁷

²²¹ Kolay and Kuban, "İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi," 681.

²²² Ricci, "Three Foreign Byzantinists," 81.

²²³ Ricci notes that one of Paolo Verzone's lesser-known contributions in Türkiye was his work on the Late Antique pilgrimage center at Alahan in Isauria. Notably, his research on Alahan was first published in Turkish as a collaborative effort, co-authored with multiple contributors, including his students and his assistant at the time, Mükerrerrem Usman-Anadolu, see Ricci, "Three Foreign Byzantinists," 83; Mighetto, "La storia come scavo," 166 and 69.

²²⁴ Mükerrerrem Anadolu, "Hocaların hocası Ord. Prof. Dr. Arif Müfid Mansel," *Anadolu Araştırmaları* 17, no. 1 (2004): 168; Mighetto, "La storia come scavo," 72-73 and 127-28.

²²⁵ Pekak, "Semavi Eyice," 267-68.

²²⁶ Doğan Kuban, "Oral History Interview with Doğan Kuban," interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 4 December 2017, 2017, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/dogan-kuban/>. For relations with his other assistants, see also Mighetto, "La storia come scavo," 73, 127, 66 and 69; Anadolu, "Arif Müfid Mansel," 167.

²²⁷ Kolay and Kuban, "İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi," 674 and 81. Although

Beyond teaching and research, Verzone strengthened ITU's academic resources. Kuban recalled: "One of the things I learned from him was how to look at book catalogs. He would bring in catalogs from all over the world, mark them, and buy incredible books. At that time in Türkiye, there was a Jewish bookseller who brought books from North Africa, from Tunisia, and he was associated with Hachette. Verzone would buy amazing books from there."²²⁸ This practice was later continued by Kuban, who expanded the library collections and carried forward his mentor's commitment to building resources.

Verzone's documentation and structural analyses of Byzantine sites remain valuable, particularly for conservation studies. His comparative, material-based methodology—integrating engineering, archaeology, and architectural history—introduced a new framework for studying Byzantine architecture in Türkiye. He advanced architectural history and conservation studies at ITU and, through Kuban's students, ensured continuity of his field-based approach encompassing late antique and Byzantine architecture.

3.2.4 Challenges Faced by Foreign Scholars

The 1933 University Reform, while enabling the recruitment of foreign academics and émigré scholars fleeing Nazi persecution, also placed them in a complex environment.²²⁹ Their expertise was valued but sometimes met with suspicion by displaced Turkish colleagues or drawn into nationalist projects that reinforced Türkiye's historical and linguistic claims. Byzantine studies faced particular difficulties, as nationalist narratives cast Byzantium as a Greek or Christian legacy rather than part of Türkiye's own cultural history.

Linguistic barriers were a constant challenge. Philippe Schweinfurth, with limited French, relied on an assistant who translated from English and French into Turkish, a process so ineffective that Semavi Eyice eventually stepped in to translate directly from German.²³⁰ This episode reflects broader difficulties foreign scholars faced in adapting

²²⁸ Kuban, interview.

²²⁹ For a detailed account of scholars who fled Nazi regime and worked at Turkish universities, see Murat Ergin, "Cultural Encounters in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Western Émigré Scholars in Turkey," *History of the Human Sciences* 22, no. 1 (2009).

²³⁰ Semavi Eyice, "Oral History Interview with Semavi Eyice," interview by Şebnem Dönbekçi, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 28 July 2017, 2017, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/semavi-eyice/>. The assistant was Münire Karacalarlı-Çelebi, a Hittitology graduate fluent in English, who worked with Runciman throughout his time at Istanbul University. She was later dismissed, see Ricci, "Three Foreign Byzantinists," 75.

their teaching, as translation slowed courses and added an extra burden for students. Steven Runciman also struggled, later writing to his mother that teaching was “not very rewarding,” describing his students as “so raw,” referring to the uneven academic preparation of his audience.²³¹ At times, assistants delivered lectures in the absence of foreign professors, especially when Runciman was traveling or unwell.²³²

Political dynamics within universities further complicated their work. Runciman served on an Examination Board divided between a staunch pan-Turanian Kemalist and a devout religious scholar. He initially maintained equilibrium but lost influence after the pan-Turanian (Zeki Velid Togan?) was arrested, later admitting: “I realized then that I was unsuited for oriental academic life. It was time for me to leave.”²³³ He was also disillusioned by nepotism in examinations and by wealthy students whom he believed attended university merely as a matter of course rather than out of scholarly ambition.²³⁴

In addition to internal ideological struggles, tensions also arose between foreign and Turkish scholars, particularly with German academics during World War II, when political alignments complicated academic relations. Runciman recalled being asked to arbitrate a dispute between a Turkish and a German professor; the latter, despite his Nazi sympathies, reluctantly accepted his mediation.²³⁵ He noted that this same professor, once respected while Nazi Germany held power, was now dismissed by Turkish colleagues.

Similar strains appeared in the case of Austrian art historian Ernst Diez, classified as German and exiled to Kırşehir during the war. Some German scholars remained in Türkiye under contract, but many were interned in provincial towns. Eyice later recounted that after Diez’s release in 1946 he was poised to lead the Art History Department.²³⁶ Yet rumors of a new university reform law provoked competition among Turkish scholars eager to secure permanent posts. Pressured to produce a Turkish art history textbook within two years, Diez hastily compiled a work, allegedly mistranslated by Oktay Aslanapa. Its numerous errors, exposed by rivals, discredited the project and led to the

²³¹ Dinshaw, *Steven Runciman*, 286-87.

²³² Dinshaw, *Steven Runciman*, 306.

²³³ Dinshaw, *Steven Runciman*, 306.

²³⁴ Dinshaw, *Steven Runciman*, 283 and 305.

²³⁵ Dinshaw, *Steven Runciman*, 286-87.

²³⁶ Eyice, interview; Selim Efe Erdem, *Semavi Eyice kitabı: İstanbul'un yaşayan efsanesi* (Tımas Yayınları, 2014), 201-02.

termination of his contract and his forced return to Austria.²³⁷ These episodes illustrate the precarious position of foreign scholars, whose careers could be derailed by both political instability and professional rivalries.

The experiences of foreign Byzantinists in Türkiye were thus shaped by an academic environment of collaboration and tension, alongside broader ideological shifts.²³⁸ Scholars such as Runciman and Schweinfurth made important contributions to the teaching and study of Byzantium yet also faced institutional and political obstacles. Their expertise was welcomed for modernization but constrained by nationalist frameworks that treated Byzantium as external rather than shared heritage. The challenges included securing research support, navigating linguistic and curricular limits, and adapting to a university system in flux. Runciman struggled with academic politics, while Schweinfurth lacked institutional backing for excavations. Despite these obstacles, both played vital roles in introducing and sustaining Byzantine studies, even as the field remained peripheral to nationalist narratives.

By contrast, Paolo Verzone, arriving later at ITU, faced fewer difficulties. His institution's technical and archaeological orientation, and his ability to integrate into Turkish and international circles, allowed him to navigate academic life with greater ease. Yet all three engaged with Türkiye's evolving academic landscape, facilitating knowledge exchange and advancing Byzantine studies under conditions where foreign expertise was both valued and shaped by national priorities. Their careers reflect the complexities of working in a society balancing modernization with the assertion of national identity.

3.2.5 Legacy and Impact

Foreign scholars played a pivotal role in the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye by introducing new methodologies, structuring courses, and mentoring pioneering Turkish scholars such as Semavi Eyice and Doğan Kuban. Steven Runciman initiated its formal teaching, Philippe Schweinfurth consolidated systematic approaches, and Paolo Verzone expanded the field into architectural history and conservation. Collectively, they

²³⁷ Ernst Diez, *Türk sanatı: Başlangıcından günümüze kadar* (İstanbul: Üniversite Matbaası, 1946); Semavi Eyice, "İÜ Edebiyat Fakültesi Sanat Tarihi Kürsüsü'nün kurucusu: Prof. Dr. Ernst Diez (1878-1961)," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, no. 14 (1997): 4; Pekak, "Semavi Eyice," 262-63.

²³⁸ A stark example of tensions among foreign scholars was Runciman's discovery that his salary had been secured by cutting the wages of German Jewish professors, creating resentment among émigré colleagues who saw him as a privileged British interloper, Dinshaw, *Steven Runciman*, 282-83.

contributed to the emergence of Byzantine studies as a specialized area of academic inquiry within Turkish higher education.

Their contributions, however, were constrained by short and precarious tenures. Runciman stayed only three years and Schweinfurth four, both ending abruptly. Verzone had a more stable five-year tenure at ITU, and while his interdisciplinary approach and fieldwork left a more enduring legacy, his broader academic focus extended beyond Byzantine monuments. The brevity of all three appointments hindered the establishment of a robust foundation, leaving responsibility for the field to a small number of Turkish scholars prematurely tasked with carrying it forward.

Unlike Istanbul University and ITU, DTCF did not recruit a Byzantinist. Instead, several students were sent to Europe for doctoral training, though they later shifted to other fields—a trajectory discussed in the following section. This lack of sustained emphasis further constrained the development of Byzantine history at a time when the Faculty was the country's leading center for the humanities and a symbol of the new nation-state's commitment to modern scholarship.

The early foundations laid in Istanbul focused primarily on material culture—art, architecture, and conservation—reflecting both the abundance of Byzantine remains in the city and the nationalistic imperative to train Turkish scholars in their preservation. Although Runciman and later Schweinfurth taught Byzantine history, it never became a mainstream specialization at Istanbul University.

The absence of lasting institutional and state support hindered the recruitment of successors and the consolidation of Byzantine history and art history as academic specializations. The contributions of foreign scholars, though vital, left a fragile foundation that struggled to gain momentum. Their legacy underscored the continuing need for continuity and stronger institutional backing to secure the long-term growth of Byzantine studies in Türkiye—a theme explored further in the next section.

3.3 Pioneering Turkish Scholars of Byzantine Textual and Historical Studies

The early development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye was driven by a handful of pioneering scholars who sought to navigate an uncharted intellectual landscape within Turkish academia. While they made significant strides in incorporating Byzantium into historical scholarship, their efforts remained largely fragmented. This section examines their contributions and trajectories.

3.3.1 Introducing Byzantine Sources to Turkish History: Akdes Nimet Kurat

Early Life and Education

Akdes Nimet Kurat (1903–1971) was among the first Turkish historians to systematically use Byzantine sources. Born in Berkete, Kazan, into a prominent Tatar family, he was educated in Russian schools and later attempted university studies in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, without success.²³⁹ After fleeing Russia in 1922, he was detained and worked in Poland before arriving in Türkiye in 1924, where he gained citizenship. He began philosophy at Istanbul Dârülfünûn, soon shifted to history, joined the Institute of Turkology in 1925 as Mehmet Fuad Köprülü's assistant, and graduated from the history department in 1928.²⁴⁰

In 1929, he was sent to Germany for doctoral training, studying Eastern European and Byzantine history, philosophy, and economics at Breslau and Hamburg. His 1933 dissertation examined Laonikos Chalkokondyles' prosopography of Turkish rulers, drawing on Byzantine, Ottoman, and Latin sources.²⁴¹ Published in German, it became the first Turkish dissertation to comparatively analyze Byzantine and Ottoman sources in a Western academic context.²⁴²

Academic Career and Research

Returning to Türkiye, he became an associate professor candidate in DTCF's Medieval History Department. Between 1935 and 1937, he published on the value of Byzantine Greek sources for early Ottoman history, as well as two works on Turkish history incorporating Byzantine material.²⁴³ However, he did not pursue Byzantine studies

²³⁹ Reşat Genç, "Akdes Nimet Kurat'ın hayatı ve eserleri," in *Akdes Nimet Kurat'ın Hayatı ve Eserleri Sempozyumu*, ed. İlyas Kemaloğlu (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2016); Melek Delilbaşı, "Türk tarihçiliğinin önderlerinden hocam Akdes Nimet Kurat," in *Akdes Nimet Kurat'ın Hayatı ve Eserleri Sempozyumu*, ed. İlyas Kemaloğlu (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2016); Kazım Yaşar Koprman, "Bir öğrencisinin gözüyle Akdes Nimet Kurat'ın hayatı ve eserleri," in *Akdes Nimet Kurat'ın Hayatı ve Eserleri Sempozyumu*, ed. İlyas Kemaloğlu (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2016).

²⁴⁰ Genç, "Akdes Nimet Kurat," 53; Koprman, "Akdes Nimet Kurat," 76-77.

²⁴¹ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Die türkische prosographie bei Leonikas Chalcocondilas* (Hamburg, 1933).

²⁴² Delilbaşı, "Akdes Nimet Kurat," 44.

²⁴³ Akdes Nimet Kurat, "Bizans'ın son Osmanlıların ilk tarihçileri," *Türkiyat Mecmuası* III (1935); Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Çaka: İzmir yakınındaki adaların ilk Türk hakimi* (İstanbul: Edirne ve Yöresi Eski eserleri Sevenler Kurumu, 1936); Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Peçenek tarihi* (İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1937). Kazım Yaşar Koprman states that Kurat initially prepared his doctoral dissertation on Pecheneg history, but his advisor, Professor Richard Georg Salomon, did not approve the topic. Koprman, "Akdes Nimet Kurat," 78. In this research, he extensively drew upon the work Byzantium and the Pechenegs by the Russian Byzantinist Vasilyev and used Byzantine primary sources comparatively with Arab and Russian sources. Delilbaşı, "Akdes Nimet Kurat," 45.

further beyond this period, although he occasionally incorporated Byzantine sources in his later works on Turkish history.²⁴⁴

After a dispute with Köprülü in 1937, he left Ankara, spending time in Stockholm, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, The Hague, and London as a guest lecturer and researcher.²⁴⁵ He returned in 1938, resumed teaching at DTCF in 1941, became professor in the Russian Language and Literature Department in 1944, and in 1954 transferred back to Medieval History.²⁴⁶ He also served as dean of DTCF (1954–1955).

Following the 1960 coup, he was accused of communist sympathies due to his scholarly assessment of Baltacı Mehmet Pasha, an early-eighteenth century Ottoman vizier and a controversial statesman.²⁴⁷ However, thanks to the testimony of his close colleagues, including Şerif Baştav, he was acquitted of all charges.²⁴⁸ After this incident, he gradually reduced teaching and focused on writing until his death in a 1971 traffic accident. Supported by research grants, he worked in Washington, London, Paris, New York, Princeton, Berkeley, the Hoover Institution, Harvard, and Yale, laying the groundwork for his later volumes on Türkiye and Russia.

Scholarly Influence and Limitations

Kurat's multilingualism—Russian, German, French, English, Polish, Swedish, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Latin, and Greek—gave him unique access to sources.²⁴⁹ His student Melek Delilbaşı remembered asking which language to prioritize, to which he replied: “Arabic, Persian, Russian, Greek, Latin... all of these are necessary for the Middle Ages.”²⁵⁰ He also emphasized modern languages, inviting a young Justin McCarthy (later a noted historian) to improve his students' English.²⁵¹

²⁴⁴ Akdes Nimet Kurat, “Malazgirt Savaşına ait yazı ve tetkikler,” *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi*, no. 47 (August 1971); Delilbaşı, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 45; Abdullah Gündoğdu, “Akdes Nimet Kurat'ın Türk tarihçiliğine katkıları,” in *Akdes Nimet Kurat'ın Hayatı ve Eserleri Sempozyumu*, ed. İlyas Kemaloğlu (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2016), 104.

²⁴⁵ Genç, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 54-55; Koprman, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 78-79; Gündoğdu, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 105.

²⁴⁶ Koprman, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 79.

²⁴⁷ Koprman, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 80.

²⁴⁸ Resul Turan, “Akdes Nimet Kurat (1903-1971),” in *Atatürk Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Yasemin Doğaner (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2021).

²⁴⁹ Koprman, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 83; Delilbaşı, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 42.

²⁵⁰ Melek Delilbaşı, “Oral History Interview with Melek Delilbaşı,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 21 April 2018, 2018, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/melek-delilbasi/>.

²⁵¹ Delilbaşı, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 42; Koprman, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 86.

Kurat made significant methodological contributions to historical research and teaching. As Delilbaşı recalled: “He placed great emphasis on proseminar courses. I still assigned one of his articles as homework to my students. Some information is outdated, but the methodology remains important.”²⁵² In this article Kurat emphasized the importance of academic rigor in history education, advocating for quality over quantity in graduating students. In that article, he demanded that professors be true experts, rejected passive lecture-based teaching, and stressed seminars, archives, and primary sources.²⁵³ He also promoted fieldwork, leading students to Istanbul’s archives, museums, and libraries, and in 1967 conducting oral history in Erzurum and Kars, recording testimonies of the 93 War (1877–78), the Russian occupation of Erzurum (1916), and the Sarıkamış campaign.²⁵⁴ As dean, he organized over fifty colloquia to advance research and methodology. For him, history was a tool to learn from past mistakes, especially military defeats, in order to guide Türkiye’s future.

Legacy in Byzantine Studies

By the late 1930s, Kurat shifted from Byzantium to Turkic, Ottoman, and later Republican history, especially Russian–Turkish relations. His nationalist outlook and the dominance of national historiography framed Byzantium as secondary, a tool for understanding Turkish history. As Şahin Kılıç observed, “Byzantine studies were never seen as an independent field. Kurat’s perspective was the same—Byzantine history was considered a tool to help us understand Turkish history.”²⁵⁵ While he continued to reference Byzantine sources, he used them comparatively, situating Byzantium within broader medieval studies rather than as an autonomous subject. This approach, later adopted at DTCF, kept Byzantine studies subsidiary within Turkish historiography.

Kurat’s lasting contribution was to introduce Byzantine sources into Turkish historical research, broadening methodology and creating a comparative framework. Though

²⁵² Delilbaşı, interview.

²⁵³ Akdes Nimet Kurat, “Akademik tarih tahsili, proseminer ve seminerlere dair,” *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* I, no. 2 (1943); Delilbaşı, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 46-47; Kopraman, “Akdes Nimet Kurat,” 79.

²⁵⁴ Ahmet Vurgun, “Akdes Nimet Kurat’ın tarih eğitimi anlayışı,” in *Akdes Nimet Kurat’ın Hayatı ve Eserleri Sempozyumu*, ed. İlyas Kemaloğlu (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2016), 141-42.

²⁵⁵ Şahin Kılıç, “Oral History Interview with Şahin Kılıç,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 29 April 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/sahin-kilic/>.

Byzantium never became his central focus, his work ensured that Byzantine sources remained a relevant tool for understanding Ottoman and Turkish history.

3.3.2 Efforts to Expand Byzantine Studies within Ottoman and Medieval

Historiography: Şerif Baştav

Early Life and Education

Şerif Baştav (1913–2010) was a medieval historian renowned for his work on Byzantine historiographical sources. Born in Beyşehir, Konya, he faced economic hardship after losing his father during World War I at a young age.²⁵⁶ Following a hiatus after primary school, he continued his education on a state scholarship, first at Konya Teacher Training School and later at Istanbul Teacher Training School, graduating in 1935. Before graduation, he took the entrance exam for the newly established DTCF. After briefly teaching in Isparta, he enrolled in the faculty as a boarding student with a state scholarship when it opened in 1936. He graduated in 1940 as one of the first students of Hungarology and Medieval History under the mentorship of László Rásonyi and Mehmet Fuad Köprülü.²⁵⁷

In 1942, during World War II, he was sent to Hungary for doctoral studies by a special decree of the Council of Ministers, supported by President İsmet İnönü.²⁵⁸ In Budapest, he studied under distinguished scholars: Gyula Németh (Turkology), Lajos Fekete (Ottoman history), Károly Czeglédy (Inner Asian history), Gyula Moravcsik (Byzantine philology), and Lajos Ligeti (Mongolian and Turkic studies). Murat Keçiş recalled a conversation years later, when the retired Baştav described how he persevered with his doctorate in Hungary under wartime hardships—while his contemporary İbrahim Kafesoğlu abandoned his studies and return to Türkiye. Baştav successfully defended his thesis, *Ordo Portae*, a critical edition of a fifteenth-century Byzantine Greek text on the Ottoman court protocol under Mehmed II. He received the title of Doctor of Greek

²⁵⁶ For an account of Baştav's life and an interview conducted with him in 2007, see Ayşe D. Kuşçu, "Prof. Dr. Mekki Şerif Baştav (1913-2010)," *Türk Yurdu* 30, no. 280 (2010); Yücel Namal, "Prof. Dr. M. Şerif Baştav'la söyleşi," *Tarih Okulu Dergisi* 2011, no. IX (2011). For an earlier account of his life, publications and contributions to Hungarology, see "Prof. Dr. Mekki Şerif Baştav'ın hayatı ve eserleri," *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları (Prof. Dr. Şerif Baştav'a Armağan)* XXV, no. 2 (1987); Hicran Akın, "Prof. Dr. Mekki Şerif Baştav'ın Hungaroloji'ye hizmetleri," *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları (Prof. Dr. Şerif Baştav'a Armağan)* XXV, no. 2 (1987).

²⁵⁷ Kuşçu, "Şerif Baştav," 72; "Hayatı ve eserleri," v. His source language was Latin and had passed the state French language exam at graduation.

²⁵⁸ Kuşçu, "Şerif Baştav," 72.

Philology in 1947.²⁵⁹ Among his doctoral jury members were his thesis supervisor Byzantinist Moravcsik, and the Turcologists Németh and Ligeti.²⁶⁰ His work illuminated Byzantine-Ottoman political and ceremonial structures, especially the influence of Byzantine traditions on the early Ottoman court. After completing his doctorate, he studied German in Vienna in 1948 before returning to Türkiye the same year.

Academic Career and Research

Upon his return, Baştav joined the Institute of Hungarology at Ankara University. Political upheavals soon forced Hungarian professors to leave.²⁶¹ He later became associate professor in Medieval History, teaching across both fields. Between 1957 and 1960, he held a Humboldt fellowship in Munich, where he studied under Franz Dölger, one of the era's leading Byzantinists.²⁶²

His scholarship was multifaceted. He translated an anonymous sixteenth-century Ottoman chronicle from Greek into Turkish, covering events up to Mehmed II's reign and drawing on Greek, Ottoman, and Italian sources alongside the latest scholarship. He wrote on Byzantine historians Doukas and Chalkokondyles, and in 1989 published *The History of the Last Period of the Ottoman Empire*. His last work, a Byzantine history handbook for students and the general public, appeared posthumously in 2021.²⁶³ His ability to work with Greek sources was instrumental in expanding their use in Turkish historical research, particularly for Byzantine-Ottoman interactions, administrative structures, and historiographical traditions.

²⁵⁹ Şerif Baştav, *Ordo Portae: description grecque de la Porte et de l'armée du Sultan Mehmed II*, vol. 27 (Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetemi Görög Filológiai Intézet, 1947).

²⁶⁰ Kuşçu, "Şerif Baştav," 72.

²⁶¹ Hungarian professors Tibor Halasi-Kun and János Eckmann were dismissed from the Hungarology Department following the 1948 Liquidation, in which Pertev Naili Boratav, Niyazi Berkes, and Behice Boran were expelled from DTCF at Ankara University on charges of communist affiliation. This purge resulted in the abolition of their academic positions and had broader repercussions for foreign scholars in the faculty, as well as reflecting the racist-nationalist interventions of the regime in university autonomy. See Halise Karaaslan Şanlı, "Basında ve mecliste 1948 tasfiyesine ilişkin tartışmaların söylemi," *Kültür ve İletişim* 14 (1), no. 27 (June 2011); Erdal Çoban, "Türkiye'de bir Macar Türkolog: Tibor Halasi-Kun" *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 56, no. 2 (January 2016).

²⁶² Kuşçu, "Şerif Baştav," 72.

²⁶³ Delilbaşı, "Byzantine Studies," 16; Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*; Şerif Baştav, *Bizans tarihi: Kuruluşundan yıkılışına kadar* (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2021). For an extensive list of Baştav's works, see Şerif Baştav, *Makaleler 1*, ed. E. Semih Yalçın and Emine Erdoğan, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Berikan Yayınevi, 2005); Şerif Baştav, *Makaleler 2*, ed. E. Semih Yalçın and Emine Erdoğan, 3 vols., vol. 2 (Berikan Yayınevi, 2005); Şerif Baştav, *Makaleler 3*, ed. E. Semih Yalçın and Emine Erdoğan, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Berikan Yayınevi, 2005); Şahin Kılıç and Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, eds., *Byzantine Studies in Turkey: A Bibliography (19th Century-2020)*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (İstanbul: Vehbi Koç Foundation, 2021).

His career, however, was not without challenges. After the 1960 military coup, he was temporarily dismissed with 146 other academics in the purge known as “the 147 Incident.”²⁶⁴ The dismissals, often fueled by internal rivalries, provoked widespread backlash as faculty and rectors protested the violation of university autonomy. A 1962 law reinstated the academics, but the purge left lasting scars.²⁶⁵ During this period, Baştav remained academically active, holding a fellowship from the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities.²⁶⁶ After reinstatement, he resumed teaching and research, working to expand Byzantine studies within an Ottoman-centered intellectual landscape. He retired in 1982 but continued research abroad: a fellowship at Harvard’s Dumbarton Oaks in 1983, research trips to Hungary (1989–91), and intermittent teaching of Byzantine history at Gazi University until 2006 despite health challenges.

Scholarly Influence and Limitations

Baştav was the second Turkish historian, after Akdes Nimet Kurat, to systematically integrate Byzantine sources into medieval and Ottoman historiography. His comparative research linked Byzantine, Ottoman, and Hungarian sources, particularly in military, administrative, and diplomatic history. Influenced by Hungarian and German traditions, he emphasized comparative analysis between Byzantine and Ottoman institutions and broadened Ottoman historiography by incorporating Hungarian sources.

His linguistic proficiency was remarkable, spanning Hungarian, German, French, Modern Greek, some Russian and English, as well as Greek, Latin, and Ottoman Turkish. This enabled him to engage directly with both primary and secondary sources, a rarity among his contemporaries. He openly criticized the lack of well-trained scholars in Türkiye, remarking: “At that time, many people interested in Turkology were amateurs. Those without proper philological training conducted research with incomplete knowledge, which negatively impacted the development of the field.”²⁶⁷

Baştav stressed that Byzantine history was indispensable for understanding Turkish history. He underlined that Byzantine chroniclers provided “perhaps the most accurate

²⁶⁴ Kuşçu, “Şerif Baştav,” 73.

²⁶⁵ Mehmet Ö. Alkan, “1960 darbesi ve üniversiteden tasfiyeler: 147’ler olayı,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 266 (2017). The coup leaders initially sought university support, but as political tensions rose, they purged academics deemed obstructive. The move provoked backlash: several rectors and faculty resigned, citing violations of university autonomy. Though a 1962 law reinstated the dismissed, the incident left lasting scars, reinforcing state intervention in higher education and shaping future purges.

²⁶⁶ Kuşçu, “Şerif Baştav,” 73.

²⁶⁷ Namal, “Prof. Dr. M. Şerif Baştav’la söyleşi,” 225.

information” about Turkish peoples, especially in periods lacking Turkish written sources. As he emphasized in his preface, Byzantine chroniclers meticulously recorded encounters with Huns, Pechenegs, Seljuks, and Ottomans, offering unique insights into their movements and political structures.²⁶⁸

Yet he lamented that Turkish historiography focused overwhelmingly on Ottoman and Seljuk history, sidelining Byzantium.²⁶⁹ He criticized the absence of Byzantine Studies departments in Turkish universities, noting that DTCF—despite its early establishment as a hub for historical and philological studies—confined Byzantium to medieval history courses rather than recognizing it as an independent discipline.²⁷⁰ Unlike European and American institutions with specialized centers, Turkish academia lacked institutional commitment and systematic curricula to sustain the field.

Despite his advocacy, Baştav’s framework remained Ottoman-centered, treating Byzantium as a counterpart rather than an independent subject. While his use of Byzantine materials advanced historical studies, his work did not fully engage with Byzantium on its own terms, a limitation that reflected the intellectual climate of his time.

Legacy in Byzantine Studies

Baştav’s contributions were significant in bridging Ottoman and Byzantine historiography. His philological expertise in Greek texts and his comparative work on Byzantine-Ottoman relations advanced the field, while his insistence that Turkish scholars reclaim Byzantium as part of their intellectual heritage became central to his legacy.²⁷¹

He observed critically that much of Türkiye’s Byzantine heritage had been studied by foreign scholars, pointing out that while Western academia produced thousands of works, Türkiye had not even a single dedicated research center or specialized journal.²⁷² This institutional gap, he argued, marginalized Turkish scholars from international discourse despite the country’s centrality to Byzantine history and heritage.

²⁶⁸ Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*, 5-14.

²⁶⁹ Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*, 16.

²⁷⁰ Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*, 16; Baştav, *Bizans tarihi*, 23.

²⁷¹ Both of his books on the history of the Byzantine Empire have a special section dedicated to the historiography of Byzantine studies, in which Baştav provides an overview of Byzantine studies in the West and discusses its state in Türkiye, see Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*, 13-18; Baştav, *Bizans tarihi*, 15-24.

²⁷² Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*, 16.

Baştav regarded Byzantine studies as essential for understanding both Turkish and broader Eurasian history. He rejected the notion—common among some Turkish historians—that Byzantine history was a foreign or secondary subject, insisting instead on its deep entanglement with Turkish history. One obstacle he repeatedly emphasized was the limited access to sources in Türkiye. Many key manuscripts and archival materials remained in Western institutions, forcing Turkish scholars to travel abroad, a dependence that further reinforced the marginalization of Byzantine studies within Turkish academia.²⁷³

Baştav also emphasized Byzantium's significance as the Eastern Roman Empire and the longest-lasting medieval state.²⁷⁴ For him, Byzantium represented a synthesis of Roman governance, Greek culture, and Eastern influences that became increasingly Hellenized and served as the protector of Orthodox Christianity. Its greatest contribution, he argued, was the preservation and transmission of ancient cultural heritage, which shaped Europe's intellectual foundations. Much like the Ottoman Empire, Byzantium produced multiple successor states in the Balkans, the Mediterranean, and Central Europe. This international legacy, he concluded, explains why Byzantine studies became a global field and underscored the need for greater engagement in Türkiye.

In his later years, Baştav sought to broaden Byzantine studies beyond specialized research and make it accessible to students and the public. Drawing on the materials he had encountered over decades of work—including sources consulted at Dumbarton Oaks and during research abroad—he authored two books.²⁷⁵ Although these did not present original research, they aimed at introducing Byzantium to a wider Turkish audience.

Baştav's career illustrates both the potential and the limitations of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. His work laid a foundation for integrating Byzantine sources into Ottoman historiography, yet the structural issues he identified—above all the absence of dedicated programs, research centers, and journals—persisted long after his time. His calls for greater investment went largely unheeded during his lifetime, and while the field has since advanced, some of the institutional shortcomings he highlighted remain unresolved.

²⁷³ Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*, 17-18.

²⁷⁴ Baştav, *Bizans tarihi*, 13.

²⁷⁵ Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*; Baştav, *Bizans tarihi*.

3.4 Pioneering Turkish Scholars of Byzantine Material and Visual Culture Studies

Building on the early efforts to integrate Byzantium into Turkish scholarship, a distinct group of scholars emerged, focusing on Byzantine material and visual culture. This section examines their trajectories and contributions to the development of Byzantine studies.

3.4.1 Tireless and Solitary Champion of Byzantine Studies: Semavi Eyice

Early Life and Education

Semavi Eyice (1922–2018) was born in Kadıköy, Istanbul, into a long-established family of Amasra-origin seafarers.²⁷⁶ His father, Mehmet Kâmil Eyice, a naval officer who had to retire from the navy when the newly founded Republic restructured its officer corps, strongly believed that foreign languages opened the path to opportunity: “If a person in Türkiye has reached the age of literacy, there is one thing they must do: learn a foreign language. You will learn a foreign language, and then you can become whatever you want to be.”²⁷⁷ Despite modest means, he enrolled his children at French schools. Semavi studied at Saint Louis and Saint Joseph before Galatasaray High School, where he also learned English and Latin.²⁷⁸ Eyice’s early exposure to foreign languages, particularly French, played a crucial role in shaping his academic trajectory.

²⁷⁶ Eyice, interview; Yasemin Akçaoğlu and Sema Doğan, *Semavi Eyice kaynakçası: 86 yıla armağan* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2009), 10. Eyice’s grandfather left Amasra in the 1890s for Istanbul to avoid a seafarer life for his sons. Indeed, two of his sons joined the navy and one became a doctor. Mehmet Kâmil (Eyice’s father), graduated from the Naval Academy and became a naval officer. For detailed accounts of Eyice, among many, see Nazan Yavuzoğlu Atasoy, “Ülkemizin ilk Bizantolog’u Prof. Dr. Semavi Eyice (1923-2018),” *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, no. 28 (2019); Pekak, “Semavi Eyice.”; Sema Doğan, “İstanbul’a ve sanat tarihine adanmış bir ömür: Semavi Eyice (1922-2018),” *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 2 (December 2019); Semavi Eyice and Sema Doğan, *Prof. Dr. Semavi Eyice külliyesi* (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2015); Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*; Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi.”; Yasemin Akçaoğlu, “Türk sanatı ve tarihine katkılarıyla Semavi Eyice (Hayatı ve eserleri)” (Master’s thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2005); Saadet Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” in *Yaşamöyküm: Sali toplantıları (2001–2002)* (Yapı Kredi yayınları, 2004); Gökhan Tok, “Sanat tarihinden tarihe, Bizanstan Osmanlıya, bilimden kültüre Semavi Eyice,” *Bilim ve Teknik*, no. 353 (1997).

²⁷⁷ Eyice, interview; Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 9-10. The Haydarpaşa Fire of 1922 destroyed the Eyice family home, leaving them temporarily homeless and worsening their financial difficulties. Around the same time, his father was forced into early retirement, as the newly founded Republic dismissed hundreds of naval officers en masse. He turned to maritime-related work—most notably managing a shipyard on Lake Van in 1925–1926—spending long periods away from home captaining ships and overseeing port operations. By 1930, he had returned to Istanbul, where he combined maritime business with teaching. These absences and economic uncertainties left a lasting mark on Eyice’s formative years.

²⁷⁸ Eyice, interview; Doğan, “Semavi Eyice,” 331; Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 10-11. As Eyice was finishing fourth grade, the Turkish government intensified its oversight of foreign schools, with some being closed due to allegations of Christian proselytization. Concerned about these developments, Eyice’s father decided to transfer him to a local Turkish primary school for fifth grade, believing that mastering Turkish-language subjects would be essential for passing the exams required for entry into Galatasaray

His passion for monuments began early. A school project on the conquest of Istanbul led him to explore the Land Walls, igniting a lifelong commitment to fieldwork.²⁷⁹ He created notebooks of observations and, with a second-hand Kodak camera, built a personal archive of photographs that complemented his notes. He later recalled, “After that, I became deeply interested in this. From then on, I started writing small notes about the places I visited and put them together in a notebook.”²⁸⁰ His wanderings worried his mother, but his family supported him, providing guidebooks such as Ernest Mamboury’s that belonged to his uncle, and indulging his growing book-collecting habit.²⁸¹

At Galatasaray High School, several teachers played formative roles in nurturing Eyice’s historical curiosity, most notably the historian Cavit Baysun—who would later become his colleague at Istanbul University—and his French instructor Monsieur Couderc.²⁸² Equally influential was his military instructor, known as “Laz Fehmi,” whose rigorous emphasis on discipline and organization instilled in Eyice habits that he later applied systematically to his archaeological surveys.²⁸³ By the time he reached high school, Eyice had also become acutely aware of the absence of Ottoman and Byzantine history in the official curriculum. As he later recalled, “That made me notice we’ve got Byzantine monuments all around us, and we’re not even aware of them.”²⁸⁴ This awareness deepened his sense of frustration when contrasted with the diligence of foreign scholars: “Germans have come and written thick books about the Walls; the English have conducted excavations in the ruins of the Byzantine Palace and published excavation reports in thick volumes ... And we are sleeping soundly.”²⁸⁵

High School. According to Eyice’s recollections, he took placement exams in multiple subjects—particularly French—when moving to his new school. After completing fifth grade in a Turkish public primary school, he sat for Galatasaray High School’s entrance exam, where his strong command of French allowed him to pass with little difficulty. From sixth grade onward, he was enrolled at Galatasaray, eventually graduating in 1943. This episode was presumably the first time Eyice encountered a conflict rooted in religious and political tensions, an experience that may have influenced his later perspectives and stance.

²⁷⁹ Eyice, interview; Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 347-48; Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” 75-76.

²⁸⁰ Eyice, interview.

²⁸¹ Eyice, interview; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 83 and 344-45; Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 11-14; Tok, “Semavi Eyice,” 83. Beyond his field observations, he cultivated an early love of books, often visiting bookshops and using his pocket money to build a personal collection that later became one of his greatest legacies.

²⁸² Eyice, interview; Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 11-12; Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” 76.

²⁸³ Eyice, interview.

²⁸⁴ Eyice, interview.

²⁸⁵ Eyice, interview.

Encouraged by Byzantinist Alfons Maria Schneider of the German Archaeological Institute, whom he encountered through local bookseller circles, Eyice persuaded his father—who envisioned a diplomatic career for him—to let him study abroad.²⁸⁶ In autumn 1943 he went to Germany to become, as he later said, “the first Byzantine art expert with a diploma.”²⁸⁷ As he was not on a state scholarship, his family’s means made it possible for him to study Byzantine art history in Germany.²⁸⁸ He began in Vienna under Vladimir Zalizky and Weissen Hofer, then moved to Berlin in 1944 due to the war, studying with Philip Schweinfurth (Byzantine art), Gerhart Rodenwaldt (archaeology), and Kurt Erdmann (Islamic art).²⁸⁹

In spring 1945, he returned to Istanbul, joined the archaeology program at Istanbul University led by Arif Müfid Mansel, and successfully transferred his coursework as he passed the exams.²⁹⁰ The presence of émigré and foreign scholars at Istanbul University made it possible for him to first study and later teach art history and Byzantine art.²⁹¹ He completed his undergraduate thesis on Istanbul minarets in 1948.²⁹² After graduating, he became assistant to Ernst Diez, returning from wartime internment, and later to Philippe

²⁸⁶ Alfons Maria Schneider joined the University of Göttingen in 1939 as a private lecturer on Byzantine and Early Islamic art. In the autumn of 1943, he returned to Istanbul after being offered a permanent position at the German Archaeological Institute and was not in Germany when Eyice went there.

However, following the institute’s closure, he returned to Göttingen in the summer of 1944 to take up a professorship. Filduth, “The Study of Byzantium in Istanbul: Theodor Wiegand, Alfons Maria Schneider, and the Istanbul Department of the German Archaeological Institute,” 394-98; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 145-46; Eyice, interview; Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 354.

²⁸⁷ Eyice, interview; Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” 77-78; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 101-03. Eyice repeatedly emphasized that his decision was shaped not only by the absence of local research and publications on the Byzantine and Ottoman monuments he had explored during his middle and high school years in Istanbul, but also by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s recommendation, as leader of the young Turkish Republic, to send students abroad for advanced training in art history and archaeology.

²⁸⁸ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 106. Eyice does not mention about applying for a state scholarship in any of his interviews or memoirs.

²⁸⁹ Eyice, interview; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 145-49; Atasoy, “Semavi Eyice,” 133-34; Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 16; Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 357-58.

²⁹⁰ Eyice, interview; Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” 82; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 187-89. Eyice recounts that he had difficulty to obtain the lecture notes from fellow students to study for the exams as there were no published notes or textbooks, but with Mansel’s support he could get them from Mükerrrem Usman-Anadolu. His two semesters in Germany were counted as one academic year of his studies.

²⁹¹ Eyice, “İÜ Edebiyat Fakültesi Sanat Tarihi Kürsüsü’nün kurucusu: Prof. Dr. Ernst Diez (1878-1961),” 4 and 12; Eyice, “Philipp Schweinfurth ve Feth’in 500. yılı nedeniyle İstanbul Üniversitesi’nde verdiği konferans,” 186; Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans sanatı,” 408-12. For the activities of Western intellectuals and experts who visited Türkiye in the early Republican era (1923–50), see Ergin, “Cultural Encounters in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Western Émigré Scholars in Turkey.”

²⁹² Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 263. Eyice recounted that his thesis topic was assigned by Diez and subsequently approved by Diez, Mansel, and Baysun. Although only three signatures were required, Eyice also sought the signature of Gabriel, whom he considered an expert on the subject.

Schweinfurth.²⁹³ Eyice also translated the lectures of Kurt Erdmann and Albert Louis Gabriel from German and French respectively.²⁹⁴ He joined Mansel's Side excavations and completed his doctorate in 1952 on Byzantine-period monuments of Side.²⁹⁵

Academic Career and Research

After completing his doctorate, Eyice continued research at Side until 1953, contributing to the study of two late antique tombs and a sarcophagus. He initially planned to use this material for his associate professorship but abandoned the idea: "One day we were sitting at the site... I said, 'I've thought it over; I'm giving up on turning this into a thesis.' Then I said I would do a different topic... and I did. In fact, it was published as a book on Byzantine art... Then I obtained my associate professor title. I left that entire subject to

²⁹³ Eyice, interview; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 213-14; Doğanay and Akar, "Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi," 361-62; Pekak, "Semavi Eyice," 263; Tok, "Semavi Eyice," 87. Eyice decided to continue his career in art history not accepting an assistantship position offered to him in the chair of history and was hoping to be recruited for a job at the Istanbul Archaeological Museums after graduation. His coincidental encounter with Macit Gökberk changed the course of his search and provided him with the opportunity to secure a position at the university. This became possible because in this same period, there had been an attempt to replace seasoned assistants who had not climbed up the academic ladder with young graduates.

²⁹⁴ Kurt Erdmann, one of Eyice's professors at Berlin University, was invited in 1951 by the Faculty of Letters at Istanbul University to assume the chair of Turkish and Islamic art following Ernst Diez's departure. He taught there until 1958, see Semavi Eyice, "Erdmann, Kurt," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (1995). Albert Louis Gabriel, meanwhile, had first taught at the Dârülfünûn between 1926 and 1930, later giving lectures at Istanbul University from 1930 to 1956 and offering a formal course in 1952. Eyice recalled first meeting Gabriel while working in the library of the French Institute for his graduation thesis; Gabriel subsequently served on his doctoral jury together with three faculty members, see Doğanay and Akar, "Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi," 361-62. In 1952-1953 Eyice translated Gabriel's conferences, and after Gabriel's retirement in 1956 and return to France, their relationship deepened into a close friendship, see Eyice, "Prof. Albert - Louis Gabriel," 327 and 50 n.32.

²⁹⁵ Atasoy, "Semavi Eyice," 135; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 223; Doğanay and Akar, "Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi," 362. Although Eyice often recalled in detail the jury members of his graduation thesis on Istanbul's minarets and his associate professorship thesis on late Byzantine architecture, he conspicuously omitted information about the jury for his doctoral dissertation in his interviews. Despite his otherwise meticulous recollections, he either left the matter unmentioned or, when prompted, claimed not to remember, see Doğanay and Akar, "Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi," 362. In addition to his supervisor, Mansel, it is probable that Paolo Verzone also served on the jury, given his close friendship with Mansel and his involvement in the Side excavations. For Verzone's questioning of a structure that Eyice had identified as a bath in his thesis, see Pekak, "Semavi Eyice," 267.

Mr. Arif.”²⁹⁶ He felt the finds should be published by Mansel, who had long supported him.²⁹⁷ “He always stood behind me like an older brother,” Eyice recalled.²⁹⁸

In 1955 he became associate professor with a study on late Byzantine architecture in Istanbul.²⁹⁹ Recalling the competitive climate, he remarked: “In our Art History Department, there was only one assistant position... They made a huge fuss to send me away... I served my military duty in Istanbul and finished my thesis... On the last day, March 31, I turned in my thesis and appeared before the jury. We struggled, we worked so hard, and we had to deal with such things on the one hand.”³⁰⁰ His experience illustrates the precarious nature of academic appointments, where even compulsory absences could threaten one’s position, while also reflecting the institutional rivalries and power struggles that shaped Turkish academia.³⁰¹ That same year he also served as secretary of the Tenth

²⁹⁶ Eyice, interview; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 226 and 384-85. Eyice recounted the same incident to Selim Efe Erdem as an event in the course of his professorship in 1964, but it is obvious that Eyice was mistaken the order of the events as these two tomb structures were explored during the 1951-1952 season when Eyice attended the dig and was already presented at the Eleventh ICBS by Mansel in 1958 and published twice in 1956 and 1958, see Arif Müfit Mansel, “Side’de iki mezar anıtı,” *Belleten* 25, no. 95 (July 1960). In another interview, Eyice recalled that he had prepared the work as his 1952 doctoral thesis, intended for publication but never submitted, adding only that he was the first to enter the flat-roofed building, then unknown and unidentified, see Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 267.

²⁹⁷ Eyice, interview; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 188-89 and 229.

²⁹⁸ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 214 and 15-16. He deemed it appropriate to leave the publication of these finds to Mansel, who had supported him since his university entrance exams and would later help him reestablish the Byzantine Art History Chair.

²⁹⁹ Semavi Eyice, *Son devir Bizans mimarisi. İstanbul'da Palaiologos'lar devri anıtları*. (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1963). This work was expanded and republished in 1980

³⁰⁰ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 223. Eyice’s associate professorship jury included Mazhar Şevket İpşiroğlu of Istanbul University, with whom he had a strained relationship; Ekrem Akurgal, professor of archaeology at DTCF; Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, the writer and professor of Turkish literature at Istanbul University; Arif Müfid Mansel, founder of the department of classical archaeology at Istanbul University; and Katharina Otto-Dorn, professor of Turkish art and founder of the art history department at DTCF. For Eyice’s detailed account of the application process and his jury, see Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 224-26.

³⁰¹ Eyice frequently recounted attempts to remove him, claiming that Mazhar Şevket İpşiroğlu sought to replace him with his close friend Turgut Cansever, the architect who completed Türkiye’s first doctorate in art history in 1949, see Eyice, interview; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 196 and 70-75; Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 362 and 67-68; Tok, “Semavi Eyice,” 87. Faruk Deniz, however, notes a chronological inconsistency: Cansever only completed his associate professorship thesis in 1960 and applied for a faculty position in 1965, whereas Eyice had already been promoted to associate professor in 1955 and full professor in 1964, see Faruk Deniz, ““Velhasıl bir doçentlik tezi yazdım!” Turgut Cansever’in Modern Mimarlığın Temel Meseleleri’nin hikayesi,” *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 25, no. 48 (October 2020): 140. Deniz also highlights contradictions in Eyice’s statements regarding both Cansever and his father, as well as references to events that never occurred. Archival records from Istanbul University further show that, during the 1965 Faculty Council evaluation of Cansever’s application, an initial commission report—prepared by Oktay Aslanapa, Eyice, and a third member—was positive. Yet Aslanapa subsequently submitted a revised report with a negative assessment, and minutes record Eyice verbally opposing the appointment on the grounds of insufficient publications. The Faculty Council then unanimously rejected Cansever’s candidacy, see Deniz, “Turgut Cansever,” 142-46. Deniz interprets this episode, and the positions taken by Aslanapa and Eyice, as

International Congress of Byzantine Studies (ICBS), presented a paper, and prepared a French booklet for participants.³⁰² Even before his promotion he had begun lecturing on Byzantine art under Mansel's supervision.³⁰³ He later started offering courses independently, and introduced classes on Ottoman architecture "on his own initiative," which quickly drew student interest.³⁰⁴

In 1958, Eyice received a Humboldt Fellowship and spent thirteen months at Munich University, also the Eleventh ICBS.³⁰⁵ On returning to Istanbul in 1959, he resumed teaching and undertook surveys of Byzantine and Ottoman monuments in Thrace (1961–62).³⁰⁶ The establishment of the Turkish and Islamic Art History Chair under Oktay Aslanapa in 1963 raised questions about the future of Byzantine studies at the university. "I asked, 'What about me? What will happen to our Byzantine studies?' They told me, 'You'll have to fend for yourself,'" he recalled. Eventually, senior colleagues proposed a separate chair for Byzantine art, arguing that it had a distinct certification and now had a qualified leader.³⁰⁷ The university senate approved the proposal on January 9, 1964.

That same year Eyice became full professor with his study on early Ottoman architecture, which explicitly rejected theories of Byzantine influence on *zawiyas*, emphasizing their Central Asian and Seljuk roots.³⁰⁸ From 1964 until the dissolution of

indicative of the rivalries, ideological divisions, and power struggles that characterized Istanbul University and Turkish academia more broadly at the time.

³⁰² Semavi Eyice, *Istanbul: petit guide à travers les monuments byzantins et turcs* (İstanbul Matbaası, 1955).

³⁰³ Pekak, "Semavi Eyice," 261 and 63; Eyice, interview.

³⁰⁴ Tok, "Semavi Eyice," 88. An early indication of his dual focus on Byzantine and Ottoman art.

³⁰⁵ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 256 and 386; Tok, "Semavi Eyice," 86. Eyice attended the Ninth ICBS in Thessaloniki in 1953 when he was an assistant. He presented papers at the Tenth ICBS held in Istanbul in 1955, the Eleventh ICBS in Munich in 1958, and the Twelfth ICBS in Ohrid in 1961. For the papers he presented at these congresses, see Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 29, 32, 34, 36. Although his bibliography does not list a paper presented at the Thirteenth ICBS in Oxford in 1966, a memoir by one of his doctoral students indicates that he did present there, see Yıldız Demiriz, *Anılarımdaki sanat tarihi* (Yorum Sanat, 2005), 90-91. Eyice himself confirms that neither he nor any other scholars from Türkiye attended the Fifteenth ICBS held in Athens in 1976, which coincided with a period of heightened tensions between Greece and Türkiye, see Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 409-10. Eyice also stated that he attended the exhibition that accompanied the Twentieth ICBS held in Paris in 2001 but not the congress itself, see Baykal, "Semavi Eyice," 90. Thus, it is clear that Eyice attended and presented at least five ICBS congresses throughout his career.

³⁰⁶ Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 19; Doğan, "Semavi Eyice," 331-32.

³⁰⁷ Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," 413; Doğanay and Akar, "Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi."; Eyice, interview; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 229. Eyice noted that Mansel was again at the forefront of encouraging this initiative.

³⁰⁸ Semavi Eyice, "İlk Osmanlı devrinin dini ve içtimai bir müessesesi: Zaviyeler ve zaviyeli camiler," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 23, no. 1-2 (1963); Atasoy, "Semavi Eyice," 135. Although Eyice's appointment to professorship was accepted in early summer, its approval by the senate took place later, and he did not actually assume the professorial position for another nine years, see

the chair by Higher Education Council (YÖK) in 1982, he directed the Byzantine Art History Chair.³⁰⁹ In contrast to the earlier period, under Eyice Byzantine art could serve as a primary certificate and thesis field.³¹⁰ His rigor shaped student choices. Yıldız Demiriz recalled that only a handful chose Byzantine art, which fostered close seminars: “The reason for this low number was his meticulous work ethic—he demanded the same level of precision from his students.”³¹¹ Hülya Tezcan likewise remembered how he returned theses multiple times with corrections, even supplying sources and translations himself.³¹²

Fieldwork was central to his teaching. He led small expeditions and larger student trips across Thrace, the Black Sea, and Anatolia: “In my detailed studies in Anatolia, I could only take four or five students... But in broader trips, the group could be ten to fifteen, and we’d rent a minibus.”³¹³ Between 1972 and 1974 he also taught at Hacettepe University, commuting every other week to deliver intensive classes.³¹⁴ Abroad, he lectured at Bochum (1974), the Sorbonne and Collège de France (1976), Geneva (1976), and the Institute of Ravenna in Bologna.³¹⁵ Officially retiring in 1990 under YÖK rules,

Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 363-64; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 227; Eyice, interview.

³⁰⁹ YÖK was established in 1981 following the military coup of 1980. In 1982, the Turkish higher education system was transformed into a unified structure consisting of twenty-seven universities and their affiliated faculties, institutes, vocational schools, conservatories, and higher education institutions, see “Tarihçe,” 2025, <https://www.yok.gov.tr/kurumsal/tarihce>. As part of this restructuring, the chairs of Aesthetics and Art History, Byzantine Art, and Turkish and Islamic Art were merged into a single department within the Department of Archaeology and Art History.

³¹⁰ Eyice, interview. He recalled gaining greater independence in this period, concentrating on his collections and supervising theses. Students choosing Byzantine art prepared a year-long thesis under his guidance and submitted slide sets that were added to the department’s archives.

³¹¹ Tok, “Semavi Eyice,” 86; Demiriz, *Anılarımdaki*, 76. Demiriz was Eyice’s first doctoral student.

³¹² Tok, “Semavi Eyice,” 88.

³¹³ Ebru Parman, “Oral History Interview with Ebru Parman,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 6 October 2017, 2017, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/ebru-parman/>; Demiriz, *Anılarımdaki*; Atasoy, “Semavi Eyice.”; Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi.”; Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” 83 and 88-89.

³¹⁴ Zeynep Mercangöz, “Oral History Interview with Zeynep Mercangöz,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 9 February 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/zeynep-mercangoz/>. As an undergraduate, Zeynep Mercangöz recalled his routine of flying in every other week to teach six hours over Friday and Saturday.

³¹⁵ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 258 and 461. The exact dates of Eyice’s seminars at the Ravenna Institute are not explicitly stated in his interviews or biographies. However, he participated in a series of annual symposia held in Ravenna, known as *Corsi di Cultura sull’Arte Ravennate e Bizantina*. These seminars hosted some of the most renowned Byzantinists of the time, including five Turkish scholars: Feridun Dirimtekin in 1956 and 1965; Eyice in 1965, 1971, and 1979; Mansel in 1965; Nezi̇h Fıratlı in 1979; and Doğan Kuban in 1982. See Giovanni Gasbarri and Livia Bevilacqua, “Byzantine Art History in Italy between the 1930s and the 1960s,” in *Picturing a Lost Empire: An Italian Lens on Byzantine Art in*

he continued teaching briefly at Marmara and Mimar Sinan and remained active until his eyesight was severely damaged by surgery in 1997.³¹⁶

Alongside teaching, Eyice was deeply involved in heritage preservation. He served as the youngest member of the Antiquities Commission in the 1950s, then on the Supreme Council of Antiquities and Monuments from 1958 to 1999.³¹⁷ He joined the Turkish Historical Society in 1968 and represented Türkiye internationally.³¹⁸ His fieldwork extended to Thrace, the Silifke region (a decade-long project begun in 1972), and to Ottoman heritage in the Balkans during the Cold War, while continuing to publish and present at conferences worldwide.³¹⁹

Scholarly Influence and Limitations

Eyice was among the most prolific early researchers of Byzantine architecture in Türkiye. He authored nearly 9% of all Byzantine-related works published before his retirement in 1990 and 5% of the total output up to 2020.³²⁰ His meticulous documentation preserved knowledge of monuments that have since disappeared. Zeynep Ahunbay described him as “an institution unto himself... the number one researcher of Byzantine architecture.”³²¹ His publications extended beyond monographs and articles to numerous encyclopedia entries.³²² His bibliographic rigor established new academic writing standards, marked by extensive references and exhaustive footnotes. Ayla Ödekan, his student at Istanbul

Anatolia, 1960-2000, ed. Livia Bevilacqua and Giovanni Gasbarri (2018), 45. It is highly probable that Eyice was referring to his participation in these seminars when talking about his lectures at the Ravenna Institute. His bibliography includes five publications from this seminar series in its proceedings, *Corsi di Studi Ravennati e Bizantini*, which correspond with the years of his attendance, see Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 37, 40, and 45.

³¹⁶ Doğan, “Semavi Eyice,” 333; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 253-56.

³¹⁷ Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” 85-86; Doğan, “Semavi Eyice,” 332.

³¹⁸ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 275-85 and 89-305. Eyice served on the Supreme Council of Antiquities and Monuments for nearly forty years and was a member of the Turkish Historical Society for more than a decade. However, his affiliation with both institutions was severed at various times for different reasons, only to be reinstated later. In 1982, he was dismissed from the Turkish Historical Society along with prominent scholars such as Ekrem Akurgal and Halil İnalcık, but he was reappointed a few years later. However, he remained an inactive member, and his membership was ultimately revoked again after a short period. His long-standing service on the Supreme Council of Antiquities and Monuments, which began in 1958, ended when he opposed the approval of a mosque project in Taksim Square. see Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 290.

³¹⁹ Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 365-67.

³²⁰ Kılıç, “Bibliography Project.” Almost all of these contributions were sole-authored; only 7, or less than 2%, of Eyice’s 398 publications in this bibliographical database are co-authored with other scholars.

³²¹ Zeynep Ahunbay, “Oral History Interview with Zeynep Ahunbay,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 21 November 2017, 2017, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/zeynep-ahunbay/>.

³²² Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 67-105; Atasoy, “Semavi Eyice,” 140; Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” 86.

University, described his approach as uniquely influential for his times and recalled that his bibliographies and footnotes were “astonishingly detailed relative to the main text, always guiding and opening up new avenues.”³²³ Engin Akyürek remembered him dictating footnotes from memory, complete with page numbers.³²⁴

Eyice’s lectures were both methodical and dynamic, marked by his disciplined yet engaging teaching style. His delivery was often theatrical, captivating his audience with a combination of deep expertise and lively storytelling. He spoke largely from memory, using only brief notes or index cards containing names, dates, locations, and sources as references. Demiriz noted he never read from a text but continually refined his notes.³²⁵ This approach let him adapt explanations to his audience, presenting the same material at varying depths while preserving rigor. He took pride in structuring his lectures himself, drawing on multiple sources.³²⁶ His visual slide collections became central to his pedagogy. Ebru Parman likened his classroom presence to a stage performance: “He would come out on stage like a theater actor, play his role, say ‘curtain,’ and then leave.”³²⁷ Akyürek, who attended all of Eyice’s lectures for two years as his assistant and assisted with the slide projector, praised his ability to hold his audience’s attention with great enthusiasm: “In that large amphitheater, not a sound would be heard; everyone would listen to him very attentively.”³²⁸ Demiriz also described how Eyice recaptured students’ attention during his hour-and-a-half-long lectures by seamlessly incorporating a joke, historical event, or personal anecdote.³²⁹ Another student, Gülgün Köroğlu, remembered Eyice entering his classes with an almost imperial air, balancing an authoritative presence with a deeply engaging teaching style.³³⁰ She added that students

³²³ Ayla Ödekan, “Oral History Interview with Ayla Ödekan,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 11 January 2018, 2018, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/ayla-odekan/>.

³²⁴ Engin Akyürek, “Oral History Interview with Engin Akyürek,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 11 December 2018, 2018, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/engin-akyurek/>.

³²⁵ Tok, “Semavi Eyice,” 86.

³²⁶ Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 369-70.

³²⁷ Parman, interview.

³²⁸ Akyürek, interview.

³²⁹ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 440-41.

³³⁰ Gülgün Köroğlu, “Oral History Interview with Gülgün Köroğlu,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 25 February 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/gulgun-koroglu/>.

often memorized his slides and prioritized his Byzantine art courses in their studies at Istanbul University.

Eyice's influence extended through mentorship as well as teaching and publications. His students produced theses on subjects ranging from Byzantine architecture in Istanbul and Anatolia to manuscripts, textiles, coins, music, and decorative arts, often addressing monuments in both Türkiye and the wider Byzantine world. He required them to compile detailed visual and textual archives and complete two seminar papers before submission. His exacting standards—theses were said to “break out in measles” from repeated corrections—deterred some, but the results, complete with photographs, drawings, and slide sets, formed a visual archive.³³¹

Eyice explicitly rejected German formalism, stating: “A nineteenth-century German methodology became fashionable: form analysis. I am not in favor of such an approach to art history. A historian of art must research like a historian. Culture history is part of general history, and art is part of cultural history. I do not believe that art history can be reduced to analyzing a painting and describing Christ's facial features.”³³² His insistence on historical context over stylistic analysis defined his methodological outlook. While his critics regarded this approach as overly descriptive and catalog-like, lacking theoretical synthesis, it created an indispensable empirical foundation for the study of Byzantine art in Türkiye.³³³ His extraordinary memory and mastery of sources, combined with his meticulous documentation of monuments—many now vanished—made his work an irreplaceable record of lost heritage.

Despite his achievements, Eyice faced serious challenges. The 1982 YÖK reforms dissolved the Byzantine Art History Chair and reduced the subject to a two-hour course, curtailing meaningful engagement.³³⁴ Political instability, financial constraints, and fears of terrorism in the 1970s further limited fieldwork. The shift in the educational system further compounded these difficulties, replacing hands-on, visually oriented training with written or even multiple-choice exams—an approach ill-suited to the study of Byzantine art history as Demiriz noted.³³⁵

³³¹ Atasoy, “Semavi Eyice,” 136-37; Eyice, “Bizans çalışmaları ve arkeoloji,” 34.

³³² Akçaoğlu and Doğan, *Kaynakça*, 20.

³³³ Atasoy, “Semavi Eyice,” 138.

³³⁴ Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 275; Eyice, “Bizans çalışmaları ve arkeoloji,” 34.

³³⁵ Tok, “Semavi Eyice,” 87.

Eyice belonged to an elite network of scholars and museologists, including figures with a strong sense of Ottoman identity such as Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, Feridun Dirimtekin, Mansel, and Aziz Ogan, as well as foreign colleagues like Kurt Bittel, Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, and Rudolf Naumann, who taught at Istanbul University while directing the German Archaeological Institute.³³⁶ His participation in numerous international conferences and his invitations to leading universities and research centers show his strong integration into international academia. Yet he often voiced frustration with the bureaucracy at Istanbul University, particularly the delays in his professorship, reflecting a broader lack of institutional support.

Eyice also faced cultural and ideological resistance for his work in Byzantine studies. He was dismissed from the Turkish Historical Society on the grounds that his research did not align with “Turkish” scholarship.³³⁷ He recounted how, in the 1970s and 1980s, a conservative female student defended him in a right-wing newspaper against accusations that he was “teaching Christian matters to Muslim children.”³³⁸ Eyice also recalled the backlash his students encountered when applying for scholarships, as their interest in Byzantine art was met with suspicion.³³⁹ In 1996, while serving as President of the Cultural and Natural Heritage Protection Board, he was dismissed by Minister of Culture Ismail Kahraman after commenting that any planned mosque in Taksim Square should be architecturally suitable for the historical texture of the area. Referring to Eyice’s scholarship in Byzantine art, Kahraman publicly declared, “He had never touched his forehead to the ground in prayer; he was a pawn of the Christians! So, I grabbed him by the arm and threw him out the door.”

Eyice’s scholarship also had limitations. While he produced groundbreaking empirical studies, he was less engaged with the theoretical frameworks that later shaped global Byzantine studies. His traditionalist methodology, focused on architectural typologies and descriptive studies, contrasted with the interdisciplinary and social-historical approaches that gained prominence in the late twentieth century. His nationalist outlook also occasionally colored his perspectives, particularly in his critiques of Western archaeologists and their interpretations of Byzantine heritage. Despite these

³³⁶ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 216-18.

³³⁷ Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” 84 and 87; Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 372; Tok, “Semavi Eyice,” 89.

³³⁸ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 238.

³³⁹ Eyice, interview.

shortcomings, his work laid the foundational groundwork for Byzantine studies in Türkiye and continued to influence subsequent generations of scholars.

Legacy in Byzantine Studies

Eyice's research extended beyond Byzantium to Ottoman and Islamic art, cultural heritage, and historical preservation. Best known for his studies on Istanbul, he also examined Byzantine monuments in Anatolia, Western Thrace, and former Ottoman territories. His interests included foreign painters and travelers to Türkiye, travelogues, Genoese traces in Anatolia, figures who contributed to Turkish civilization, and the historiography of Turkish art.³⁴⁰ While often acknowledging continuities between Byzantine and Ottoman structures, his scholarship remained grounded in document-based analysis and site surveys. Reflecting on his career, he stated: "As a Turkish academic specializing in Byzantine art history, I did not neglect Ottoman art. In every study I conducted on Byzantium, I equally researched and studied Ottoman art. I traveled even to Islamic countries where there were no Byzantine monuments solely to examine Turkish-Islamic works. From Greece to Poland, I conducted research in the Balkans to study both Byzantine and Turkish-Islamic art. It was no coincidence that my work on Ottoman *zawiyas* was my thesis for promotion to professorship."³⁴¹

This breadth of expertise also shaped his teaching. Erdem Yücel, a student in Eyice's two-year Byzantine art certificate program in the 1960s, recalled that during a period when Aslanapa was abroad, Eyice took over the courses on Turkish-Islamic art, broadening the curriculum.³⁴² Until then, Yücel explained, instruction had focused mainly on Sasanian, Umayyad, Abbasid, Achaemenid, and Mamluk art; Eyice introduced early Ottoman structures, enabling students to grasp architectural history across Byzantine, early Ottoman, and classical periods. Aykut Köksal, his former assistant, later observed that although Eyice had initially planned to focus on Ottoman art, he turned to Byzantium because Aslanapa had already established himself in that field.³⁴³ Köksal noted that

³⁴⁰ Doğan, "Semavi Eyice," 332.

³⁴¹ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 226.

³⁴² Erdem Yücel, "Semavi Eyice'nin ardından... 'Bunu da bilersen geçtin yoksa kaldın!'," *Gazete Duvar*, 30 May 2018, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/kultur-sanat/2018/05/30/semavi-eyice-bunu-da-bilersen-gectin-yoksa-kaldin>. Yücel also emphasized Eyice's methodological rigor, particularly his emphasis on source research and proper citation practices—skills that shaped their academic formation.

³⁴³ Doğan Kuban et al., "Bizans'ın mirası üzerine tartışma," *Cogito (Bizans)* 17 (1999): 388; Aykut Köksal, "Doğan Kuban'ı yitirdik, mimarlık tarihçiliğimizde bir dönem kapandı," *Mimarizm*, 5 October 2021, https://www.mimarizm.com/kose-yazilari/dogan-kuban-i-yitirdik-mimarlik-tarihciligimizde-bir-donem-kapandi_132916.

Eyice's writings on Ottoman art likely outnumbered those on Byzantine topics in his bibliography, underscoring his deep engagement with both traditions.

His devotion to research was embodied in the vast personal library he built over his lifetime, encompassing works on Byzantine, Ottoman, and Islamic history and art, archaeology, literature, travelogues, and city monographs in multiple languages. By the early 2000s, the collection had grown so large it no longer fit in his apartment. In 2005, he donated it to the Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation's Istanbul Research Institute, where it became the Semavi Eyice Library of Byzantine Studies.³⁴⁴

Eyice's stature was recognized nationally and internationally. He received the French Légion d'Honneur, membership in the German Archaeological Institute, and the Turkish Presidential Culture and Arts Grand Award, and twice held visiting fellowships at Dumbarton Oaks.³⁴⁵ He lectured at major institutions worldwide. Among his most enduring contributions was his work in heritage preservation: a vocal critic of unregulated urban development, he served for decades on the Supreme Council of Antiquities and Monuments, where he championed the protection of Byzantine and Ottoman structures. His abrupt dismissal in 1996 sparked public controversy, exposing the ideological tensions surrounding cultural heritage in Türkiye. Despite such resistance, Eyice's contributions remain foundational for Byzantine studies in Türkiye. His rigorous methodology, expansive bibliographic legacy, and lifelong dedication to teaching, documentation, and preservation decisively shaped the field.

3.4.2 Architect of Architectural Historiography and Civilizational Continuum:

Doğan Kuban

Early Life and Education

Doğan Kuban (1926–2021) was born in Paris as his early years were marked by his father's diplomatic and military career, which took the family to Berlin, Istanbul, and several Anatolian towns and finally to Ankara.³⁴⁶ He eventually graduated from Gazi

³⁴⁴ Doğan, "Semavi Eyice," 333. A total of 18,192 items in the collection have been classified as follows: books: 7,854; theses: 282; offprints: 8,010; periodicals: 556 titles comprising 858 issues; and rare works: 1,188.

³⁴⁵ Doğan, "Semavi Eyice," 332.

³⁴⁶ Kuban, interview; Doğan Kuban, "Portre: Prof. Dr. Doğan Kuban," *Yalıtım Dergisi*, no. 63 (2006); Zeynep Ahunbay, "In Memoriam: Doğan Kuban (8 Nisan 1926-22 Eylül 2021)," *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies* 3 (2021); Baykal, "Doğan Kuban.," "Prof. Dr. Doğan Kuban yaşamını yitirdi," 2021, https://www.mimarizm.com/haberler/gundem/prof-dr-dogan-kuban-yasamini-yitirdi_132873?sourceId=132916.

High School, one of the premier institutions of the early Republic. Recalling those years, he remarked: “Gazi High School was one of the schools most valued by the newly founded Republic. We were raised according to Atatürk’s principles. It was a time of becoming a nation. We were workers of the secular Republic.”³⁴⁷

His household nurtured an early intellectual orientation: “My father was a soldier, but he loved history,” Kuban recalled. “My mother was also well-educated—she had been trained as a primary school teacher during the Ottoman period.”³⁴⁸ Early exposure to his father’s history books, together with training in French and German, laid the foundation for a scholarly path.³⁴⁹ Kuban initially considered naval engineering but was discouraged by his relative Emin Onat, founding dean of ITU’s Architecture Faculty, who noted that Türkiye did not yet build ships.³⁵⁰ He studied architecture instead, enrolling in the High Engineering School (Yüksek Mühendis Mektebi, later ITU) in 1943, graduating in 1949.

After completing his compulsory architect-engineer service and military duty, Kuban gravitated toward art history. In 1952, Onat—then ITU rector—introduced him to Paolo Verzone, newly arrived from Torino to head the Chair of Architectural History.³⁵¹ To test him, Verzone asked for a study on Istanbul’s Turkish Baroque fountains. Impressed by the report, he appointed Kuban as his assistant.³⁵² Choosing architectural history was unconventional at the time; as he noted, no Turkish architect had previously specialized in the subject.³⁵³

Academic Career and Research

As Verzone’s assistant, Kuban translated his lectures from French to Turkish and accompanied him on expeditions in Anatolia, documenting classical and early Christian monuments in Cappadocia and Pisidia.³⁵⁴ Verzone also imparted habits that would shape his career: “One of the things I learned from Verzone was how to consult book catalogues... Thanks to him, I myself purchased many books for the Technical

³⁴⁷ Kuban, “Portre,” 55; Kuban, interview; Baykal, “Doğan Kuban,” 19-20. Kuban recounted that his friends at high school came from prominent families including the children of members of the parliament, ministers, and the president of the Republic.

³⁴⁸ Kuban, interview.

³⁴⁹ Kuban, “Portre,” 56 and 61; Baykal, “Doğan Kuban,” 11-20.

³⁵⁰ Kuban, “Portre,” 55; Kuban, interview.

³⁵¹ Kuban, “Portre,” 56; Kuban, interview; Ahunbay, “Doğan Kuban,” 197.

³⁵² Kuban, interview.

³⁵³ Baykal, “Doğan Kuban,” 22.

³⁵⁴ Kuban, “Portre,” 56; Kuban, interview; Ahunbay, “Doğan Kuban,” 197.

University—about 4,000 in total.”³⁵⁵ Kuban continued and expanded this acquisition program, building an extraordinary library for the department that reflected contemporary international scholarship.³⁵⁶

In 1954, under Verzone’s supervision, he completed his doctoral thesis, which was among the earliest scholarly attempts to examine Ottoman modernization through architecture.³⁵⁷ He was then sent to Italy, where he also received a fellowship from the Italian state with Verzone’s help.³⁵⁸ He conducted research at the Palazzo di Venezia library in Rome, learned Italian, and traveled widely. His associate professorship thesis argued that Ottoman spatial centralization, as in the Süleymaniye, must be seen in dialogue with Renaissance domes as well as Hagia Sophia.³⁵⁹ Hagia Sophia would continue to inform his architectural interpretations in the years to come.³⁶⁰

When Verzone returned to Italy in 1957, Kuban took charge of the Architectural History and Surveying Department in 1958. “Although I was a docent, I was the one managing everything,” he recalled, noting that regulations required a full professor to hold the chair formally.³⁶¹ He expanded the curriculum to include European, Byzantine, Seljuk, Ottoman, and modern architecture.³⁶² In 1962–63 he was a Fulbright visiting professor at the University of Michigan, where he met Oleg Grabar.³⁶³ Grabar invited him to Dumbarton Oaks, where Kuban worked in 1963–64 on a catalogue of Christian

³⁵⁵ Kuban, interview.

³⁵⁶ Köksal, “Doğan Kuban.”

³⁵⁷ Doğan Kuban, *Türk barok mimarisi hakkında bir deneme* (Pulhan Matbaası, 1954).

³⁵⁸ Kuban, “Portre,” 56; Kuban, interview; Ahunbay, “Doğan Kuban,” 197.

³⁵⁹ Doğan Kuban, *Osmanlı dinî mimarisinde iç mekân teşekkülü (Rönesansla bir mukayese)* (İstanbul: İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, 1958).

³⁶⁰ Köksal, “Doğan Kuban.” Köksal highlights Kuban’s evolving perspective on Byzantine influence in Ottoman architecture. While Kuban’s early work acknowledged the impact of Hagia Sophia on Sinan, he would later revise this view. In his monumental *Ottoman Architecture* (2007), he described the emphasis on Hagia Sophia as a “fashion,” arguing that the schematic design of the Şehzade Mosque refuted any straightforward imitation of the Byzantine model. Köksal interprets this shift as revealing the influence of nationalist historiography on Kuban’s thinking over time: “The difference in evaluation that emerged over time shows that the nationalist outlook of our official historiography eventually drew Kuban into its orbit.” Yet in 2017, Kuban reaffirmed the foundational importance of Hagia Sophia for Sinan’s early work, stating, “But the first thing Sinan did was to look at Hagia Sophia and build a mosque.” This remark suggests that despite the more cautious tone in his later publications, Kuban remained critical of attempts to downplay the Byzantine legacy in the formation of Ottoman architecture, Kuban, interview.

³⁶¹ Kuban, interview. Kemali Söylemezoğlu, a professor of architecture at ITU who served as the dean of the Faculty of Architecture between 1956–1958, was in charge as chairs had to be full professors.

³⁶² Ahunbay, “Doğan Kuban.”; Kolay and Kuban, “İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi,” 674.

³⁶³ Kuban, “Portre,” 56 and 61; Kuban, interview; Baykal, “Doğan Kuban,” 22–23. Kuban recalled that he was largely self-taught in English, improving his proficiency before his Fulbright in the United States through interactions with American visiting professors in Istanbul. By spending time with them and translating their lectures, he developed both his language skills and his academic engagement.

buildings in Anatolia.³⁶⁴ During the 1963–64 academic year, In 1964 he served as excavation architect at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi in Syria, directed by Grabar.³⁶⁵ His promotion to full professorship in 1965 followed the publication of his work that emphasized cross-cultural interaction and the layered complexity of architectural development in Anatolia.³⁶⁶

The following year, he launched one of the most significant Byzantine field projects in Türkiye: the excavation and restoration of Kalenderhane Mosque in Istanbul. From 1966 to 1978 he co-directed the Dumbarton Oaks–funded project with Cecil L. Striker, returning as a fellow there in 1978–79.³⁶⁷ Kuban was well connected internationally, and maintained enduring ties with leading scholars he met in Michigan and at Dumbarton Oaks, later recalling, “I became friends with them,” a testament to the collegial networks that enhanced the reach of his work.³⁶⁸

At ITU, Kuban served as dean of the Faculty of Architecture (1974–77) and was instrumental in developing conservation and documentation programs.³⁶⁹ His surveys and restoration projects extended to Erzurum, Sivas, Iznik, Kastamonu, Gaziantep, and Safranbolu, laying the groundwork for heritage preservation in modern Türkiye.³⁷⁰ After the 1982 higher-education restructuring, he became founding head of the new Restoration Department, remaining until his retirement in 1993.³⁷¹

Kuban’s international profile grew through lectures abroad, collaborations, and editorial roles in journals and encyclopedias, including *Muqarnas*. He co-founded major heritage organizations and served on cultural boards. His honors included the 1990 Ministry of Culture Award for Service to the Preservation of Cultural Heritage and the Presidential Grand Award for Culture and Arts in 2019.³⁷²

³⁶⁴ Kuban, interview. Oleg Grabar (1929–2011) was a French-born art historian and archeologist, a leading figure in the field of Islamic art and architecture, and son of the Byzantinist André Grabar.

³⁶⁵ Kuban, interview.

³⁶⁶ Doğan Kuban, *Anadolu Türk mimarisi kaynak ve sorunları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi Mimarlık Fakültesi, 1965).

³⁶⁷ Kuban, “Portre,” 57; Kuban, interview; Ahunbay, “Doğan Kuban,” 200.

³⁶⁸ Baykal, “Doğan Kuban,” 23 and 27; Kuban, interview.

³⁶⁹ Kuban, “Portre,” 57.

³⁷⁰ Ahunbay, “Doğan Kuban,” 200.

³⁷¹ Kolay and Kuban, “İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi,” 675; Köksal, “Doğan Kuban.”

³⁷² Ahunbay, “Doğan Kuban,” 201; Kuban, “Portre,” 60–61.

Scholarly Influence and Limitations

Kuban's contributions to architectural historiography were transformative. As his former student Günkut Akın aptly observed, "Starting from architecture, it was Doğan Kuban who initiated a systematic discipline of architectural history in Türkiye and set the bar very high."³⁷³ Kuban's method combined typology with broad civilizational frameworks, moving beyond the descriptive approaches of earlier art history.³⁷⁴

He rejected nationalist paradigms. Recalling his professorship jury, he noted that the external member, Oktay Aslanapa, criticized his dissertation for mentioning Armenians 29 times.³⁷⁵ Kuban's response was unapologetic: "When writing about Anatolia, it would be ridiculous to say there were no Armenians—there's no such thing. There are Georgians, Armenians, Arabs—everyone is there."³⁷⁶ For him, architecture reflected plurality and synthesis, and obscuring these realities was intellectually dishonest.

Kuban's scholarship was central to shaping the intellectual formation of multiple generations of students.³⁷⁷ His textbook on Turkish art history structured around 100 thematic questions and answers, became a foundational. Another widely used book provided students with a conceptual vocabulary for architectural interpretation.³⁷⁸ His *Istanbul: An Urban History* remains a landmark synthesis, tracing the city from antiquity to the Republic.³⁷⁹ Under his leadership, ITU's Architectural History and Restoration Department became hubs of interdisciplinary research, attracting doctoral candidates even from new institutions like Middle East Technical University (ODTU) and abroad.³⁸⁰

His teaching style was legendary—rich, theatrical, and no two lectures were alike.³⁸¹ Striker, Kuban's long-time collaborator on the Kalenderhane project, recalled that Kuban's students, many of whom joined the Kalenderhane excavation, were "truly exceptional" and viewed him as "a god-like figure."³⁸² Zeynep Ahunbay remembered that

³⁷³ Günkut Akın, "Doğan Kuban'ın ardından," *Mimarlık*, no. 422 (2021): 12.

³⁷⁴ Köksal, "Doğan Kuban."

³⁷⁵ Kuban et al., "Bizans'ın Mirası," 389-90 and 93.

³⁷⁶ Kuban, interview.

³⁷⁷ Köksal, "Doğan Kuban."

³⁷⁸ Doğan Kuban, "Türkiye sanatı tarihi," (Gerçek Yayınevi, 1970); Doğan Kuban, *Mimarlık kavramları* (İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi Matbaası, 1973).

³⁷⁹ Doğan Kuban, *Istanbul, an Urban History: Byzantion, Constantinopolis, Istanbul* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1996).

³⁸⁰ Akın, "Doğan Kuban'ın ardından," 14; Kolay and Kuban, "İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi."

³⁸¹ Ödekan, interview; Ahunbay, interview.

³⁸² Cecil L. Striker, "Oral History Interview with Cecil Lee Striker " interview by Claire Moran and Gündür Varinlioğlu, 2-3 May 2012, 2012, <https://www.doaks.org/research/library-archives/dumbarton-oaks-archives/historical-records/oral-history-project/cecil-lee-striker>.

his call for trained experts in preservation led her to a career in conservation.³⁸³ Akin noted that “without any deliberate effort, the department he headed became a center of excellence.”³⁸⁴ Ayla Ödekan described his seminars as open debates beginning at the entrance to the department, creating a rare intellectual environment.³⁸⁵ Fieldwork was equally central: he led student excursions to cities in Anatolia, insisting architecture must be studied in situ.³⁸⁶

Kuban’s large-scale interpretations sometimes invited critique. His comparisons—such as placing Sinan alongside Le Corbusier—were seen as anachronistic.³⁸⁷ He accepted the risk, insisting on situating Ottoman and Turkish architecture within what he called “the universal platform of art.”³⁸⁸

Legacy in Byzantine Studies

Though not a Byzantinist by training, Kuban left a significant legacy in the field. His co-directorship of the Kalenderhane excavation (1966–78) yielded discoveries—such as the pre-iconoclastic fresco and the Saint Francis cycle—that remain central to Byzantine art history.³⁸⁹ The discovery of a pre-iconoclastic fresco during the excavation was a proud moment for Kuban: “We tore down a wall, and there it was—a unique fresco,” he recalled. “What could be a bigger moment than that?”³⁹⁰ The excavations also revealed the only surviving example of Latin artistic activity from the occupation of Constantinople: the fresco cycle of Saint Francis.³⁹¹

Kuban’s teaching ensured Byzantium’s integration into architectural education. Though few students specialized exclusively in Byzantine studies, he mentored figures such as Metin Ahunbay and Ödekan, who advanced the study and preservation of

³⁸³ Ahunbay, interview; Ahunbay, “Doğan Kuban,” 201.

³⁸⁴ Akin, “Doğan Kuban’ın ardından,” 14.

³⁸⁵ Ödekan, interview.

³⁸⁶ Ahunbay, “Doğan Kuban,” 201; Kolay and Kuban, “İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi,” 681.

³⁸⁷ Köksal, “Doğan Kuban.”

³⁸⁸ Doğan Kuban, *Osmanlı mimarisi* (İstanbul: Yem Yayın, 2007), 8.

³⁸⁹ Cecil L. Striker and Doğan Kuban, eds., *Kalenderhane in Istanbul. The Buildings, their History, Architecture, and Decoration. Final Reports on the Archaeological Exploration and Restoration at Kalenderhane Camii 1966-1978* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1997); Cecil L. Striker and Doğan Kuban, eds., *Kalenderhane in Istanbul. The Excavations. Final Reports on the Archaeological Exploration and Restoration at Kalenderhane Camii 1966-1978* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2007).

³⁹⁰ Kuban, interview.

³⁹¹ The author of this dissertation revisited the fresco cycle in her master’s expressing deep admiration for the meticulous documentation of the project, see Şebnem Dönbekci, “Contextualizing the Fresco Cycle of the Life of Saint Francis at the Kalenderhane Mosque in Istanbul” (Master’s thesis, Koç University, 2016).

Byzantine monuments.³⁹² His interdisciplinary, field-based approach encouraged students to see Byzantine, Seljuk, and Ottoman architecture as part of a continuum. In his works, Byzantine monuments appear alongside other traditions within a shared civilizational framework, repositioning Byzantine architecture as an essential, rather than exceptional, part of Türkiye's heritage. His 1963–64 Dumbarton Oaks fellowship, devoted to cataloguing Byzantine heritage in Anatolia, further underscored his role in documenting and preserving this legacy.

Kuban did not shy away from critiquing the widespread public and institutional neglect of the Byzantine past due to the rise of nationalism. "There's no one more ignorant on this subject than our people," he lamented. "Türkiye never gave Byzantine studies the value it deserved... the first thing Sinan did was to look at Hagia Sophia and build a mosque. What happened back then was completely absurd."³⁹³ As Akın noted, while many colleagues avoided Byzantium for political reasons, Kuban saw it as integral to Anatolia's cultural continuity.³⁹⁴

In the broader trajectory of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, Kuban occupies a paradoxical yet pivotal position. He resisted disciplinary labels—"I never really became a Byzantinist," he insisted—yet his scholarship laid essential groundwork for the institutional development of the field. "I'm not a Byzantinist," he remarked, "but since I wrote the history of Istanbul, maybe I can be considered one."³⁹⁵ Among his works, he expressed particular fondness for *Istanbul: An Urban History*, noting that he valued it because it also encompassed the Byzantine period.³⁹⁶ His insistence on Byzantine architecture as a core component of Anatolia's built environment ensured its place in Turkish architectural historiography and trained generations to approach it with scholarly rigor.

3.5 From Foreign Scholars to Local Trajectories

The emergence of Byzantine studies in Türkiye must be understood within the broader transformation of higher education following the 1933 University Reform, which laid the foundations of a modern, secular academic system. While Byzantium was not a priority

³⁹² Esmer, "Bizans mimari mirası," 76.

³⁹³ Kuban, interview.

³⁹⁴ Akın, "Doğan Kuban'ın ardından," 13.

³⁹⁵ Kuban, interview. For Kuban's Istanbul bibliography, see Zeynep Kuban, "Introducing Doğan Kuban's Istanbul Bibliography," *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies* 3 (December 2021).

³⁹⁶ Kuban, "Portre," 58.

of the reform, it gradually entered university curricula in the 1940s and 1950s through foreign scholars invited to Turkish institutions. Steven Runciman taught Byzantine art and history at Istanbul University; Philippe Schweinfurth consolidated Byzantine art history; and Paolo Verzone introduced architectural history of Byzantium at ITU. Their impact went beyond temporary teaching: they shaped the academic formation of a new generation. Semavi Eyice and Doğan Kuban, who became central figures in the study of Byzantine material culture, were direct beneficiaries of this tutelage. At the same time, the state sponsored promising historians such as Akdes Nimet Kurat and Şerif Baştav for graduate study in Central and Eastern Europe, then strongholds of Byzantine and medieval studies. These two paths—elite social capital coupled with foreign mentorship, and state-sponsored doctoral training—produced contrasting academic trajectories that together defined the early phase of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

The institutionalization of archaeology, art history, and related fields in the early Republic was largely driven by socially privileged individuals.³⁹⁷ Often drawn from established bureaucratic, military, or mercantile families in Istanbul and Ankara, they had access to elite schooling, foreign languages, and international networks. Arif Müfid Mansel, Sorbonne-trained archaeologist and relative of Osman Hamdi Bey, exemplifies this pattern.³⁹⁸ Such figures, equipped with linguistic and cultural capital, faced few barriers in defining new areas of inquiry.

Eyice and Kuban fit this profile. Both were born into late Ottoman military families—their fathers high-ranking officers—and grew up in intellectually rich, cosmopolitan environments.³⁹⁹ Though not very wealthy and occasionally facing economic hardship, their backgrounds gave them entry to elite schools and cultivated networks. Their

³⁹⁷ Mehmet Özdoğan, *Arkeolojinin politikası ve politik bir araç olarak arkeoloji* (Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 2006), 56.

³⁹⁸ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 214-15; Anabolı, “Arif Müfid Mansel,” 166-67.

³⁹⁹ Baykal, “Doğan Kuban,” 11-14. Kuban’s reflections illustrate the broader social background shared by many upper-middle-class families in late Ottoman Istanbul—diverse in origin, culturally layered, and shaped by the values of the Republican transition. These families often lived in historically rich neighborhoods such as Cerrahpaşa, Süleymaniye, Kocamustafapaşa, Zeyrek, Üsküdar, or Kadıköy, and belonged to a socially mobile, educated Muslim stratum. While not necessarily wealthy or aristocratic, they upheld traditions of learning, civic responsibility, and disciplined household life. Such environments nurtured a form of cultural capital that combined Ottoman cosmopolitanism with a strong emphasis on diligence, intellectual curiosity, and public service—traits that left a lasting imprint on scholars like Kuban and Eyice.

upbringing combined cultural privilege with the discipline and diligence of military households, shaping their scholarly ethos and lifelong commitment to research.⁴⁰⁰

Eyice, raised in Istanbul's francophone milieu, benefited from early access to books, languages, and cultural circles that fostered his interest in European scholarship. One of his teachers at Galatasaray, Cavit Baysun, decades later served on his professorial jury—a reminder of the long arc of academic networks in Türkiye.⁴⁰¹ Early contact with Alfons Maria Schneider of the German Archaeological Institute, met through Istanbul's bookseller circles, further encouraged his pursuit of Byzantine studies in Germany.

Kuban similarly drew on the resources of an upper-middle-class family and the mentorship of his uncle Emin Onat, founding dean of ITU's Architecture Faculty and rector at the time. Onat introduced him to Verzone and secured his entry into academia. Both Eyice and Kuban moved in elite social circles where foreign languages were common, and where institutional opportunities opened through a mix of family connections and personal diligence. Their privilege afforded them the intellectual freedom to pursue specialized fields—Byzantine art and architectural history—that might otherwise have been precarious choices.

By contrast, Kurat and Baştav advanced under far more difficult circumstances. Kurat, though born into an elite Tatar family in Kazan, was uprooted by the Bolshevik Revolution: his father executed, his family deported, and he was forced to rebuild his life alone in Türkiye.⁴⁰² Baştav, born into a modest family in provincial Konya, endured the disruptions of World War I and the War of Independence. Financial hardship interrupted his schooling, which he resumed only through state-sponsored boarding education.

Both belonged to a new intellectual cadre fostered by Republican state-building. Selected for doctoral training abroad, they were mentored early by Mehmet Fuad Köprülü, the architect of nationalist historiography. Yet their careers soon revealed the volatility of paths tied closely to state institutions. Kurat's quarrel with Köprülü led to a temporary departure from the university; he was later investigated for communism after the 1960 coup. Baştav was dismissed in the same purge, one of the infamous "147" academics. Such episodes underscore how historians—whose discipline was more

⁴⁰⁰ Baykal, "Doğan Kuban," 26-27.

⁴⁰¹ Doğanay and Akar, "Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi," 363.

⁴⁰² Liaisan Şahin, "İdil-Ural'dan Türkiye'ye uzanan yolculuk: Akdes Nimet Kurat," in *Akdes Nimet Kurat'ın Hayatı ve Eserleri Sempozyumu*, ed. İlyas Kemaloğlu (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2016), 95.

directly entangled with national politics than the materially grounded fields of art and architectural history pursued by Eyice and Kuban—were especially vulnerable to ideological pressures. Their dependence on state institutions and exposure to shifting political alignments likely constrained their academic standing and limited sustained engagement with Byzantine topics.

The diverging careers of these four scholars highlight the uneven terrain on which Byzantine studies took shape in Türkiye. Eyice and Kuban leveraged familial privilege, elite networks, and early exposure to European scholarship; Kurat and Baştav advanced through state support under precarious and politicized circumstances. These contrasting trajectories reflect deeper class and institutional hierarchies and underscore the fragmented, unstable character of the field during its formative decades.

Despite the significant contributions of this first generation, Byzantine studies in Türkiye did not develop into a fully institutionalized discipline. The field remained in what might be called the “normal stage” of disciplinary formation: individual efforts without durable structures or coordination. To understand why, one must look beyond individual careers to the structural, ideological, and institutional dynamics that limited its growth. The following subsections examine these constraints—nationalism, weak infrastructure, and the uneven legacy of succession—which together defined the boundaries of the formative period and shaped the precarious conditions under which Byzantine studies entered the twenty-first century.

3.5.1 The Triple Barrier of Nationalism to Byzantine Studies

The formative years of Byzantine studies in Türkiye unfolded within a charged ideological climate as the early Republic sought to define a new national identity. While certain aspects of Byzantine heritage were acknowledged—notably the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a museum in 1935—the regime simultaneously distanced itself from any deeper continuity with Byzantium. A nationalist framework, sometimes implicit rather than overt, constrained scholarly inquiry through a triple barrier: (1) external geopolitical sensitivities, (2) intellectual resistance to acknowledging Byzantine influence, and (3) ideological tensions within higher education.

Geopolitical sensitivities formed the first barrier. Turkish nationalism after the Ottoman collapse remained alert to the symbolic weight of Byzantium, often filtered through fraught relations with Greece and debates over the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Byzantine studies were perceived as vulnerable to appropriation for irredentist or religious agendas, rendering the field politically sensitive.⁴⁰³

This caution intensified during the Cold War. In 1953, the government muted the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Constantinople's conquest to avoid straining relations with NATO ally Greece, prompting nationalist media backlash. Just two years later, the Tenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies convened in Istanbul days after the September 6–7 pogrom, turning what had been imagined as a showcase of international prestige into an exposure of the field's fragility.⁴⁰⁴ As Buket Kitapçı Bayrı notes, the congress highlighted how politically exposed Byzantine studies remained despite growing institutional interest.

Such pressures also shaped individual choices. Semavi Eyice, who had long attended international meetings, eventually ceased traveling to Greece due to politicization. In 1976, two years after the Cyprus intervention, he was questioned by Turkish intelligence about whether he had attended the Fifteenth ICBS in Athens. "I already knew things like this would happen to me later," he recalled, "which is exactly why I didn't go to that congress."⁴⁰⁵ His testimony illustrates how geopolitics could constrain academic freedom and reinforce the perception of Byzantium as an "unclaimed past"—too Greek and too Christian to be comfortably integrated into the Turkish narrative.

The second barrier lay in intellectual historiography. Mehmet Fuad Köprülü and subsequent nationalist scholars marginalized Byzantium within the Turkish past. Recognizing Byzantine contributions to Ottoman institutions was treated with suspicion. As Sezer Tansuğ observed in 1974, even well-documented architectural continuities between the Byzantine and Ottoman periods were often denied: "Fanatic circles often opposed the establishment of such connections, seeking to undermine the dynamic and synthesizing power of the Turk."⁴⁰⁶ Even "well-meaning" scholars hesitated; Tansuğ criticized Eyice for a "hesitant attitude" when attributing Byzantine elements, though Eyice himself was adamant.⁴⁰⁷ In 1999, he declared: "Certain beliefs of what we call this Christian Byzantine civilization continued to permeate Anatolia even after it was

⁴⁰³ In a journal article published in December 1961, Sezer Tansuğ noted that rumors frequently circulated suggesting that Byzantine studies in Türkiye could be perceived as politically imprudent and might provoke adverse reactions among Muslim segments of society, see Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak*, 37.

⁴⁰⁴ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 93; Kitapçı Bayrı, "The 10th International Congress."

⁴⁰⁵ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 409-10.

⁴⁰⁶ Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak*, 169-70.

⁴⁰⁷ Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak*, 245-46, n. 1.

Turkified and Islamized. This, too, must not be denied.”⁴⁰⁸ The emphatic phrasing—“this, too, must not be denied”—reveals both his scholarly stance and the persistent need to justify Byzantium’s place in Turkish cultural history.

The ideological risks were real. Austrian art historian Ernst Diez faced nationalist outcry in the 1950s after suggesting parallels between Hagia Sophia and Sinan’s Süleymaniye Mosque. Despite his admiration for Sinan, the implication of Byzantine influence triggered a campaign that forced him out of Türkiye.⁴⁰⁹ Aykut Köksal later described him as a “brilliant art historian” who was “nearly lynched” for his comparative method.⁴¹⁰ He also noted that Doğan Kuban, initially open to Hagia Sophia’s influence on Sinan, later dismissed such interpretations as a “fashion” by 2007—an evolution reflecting the pressures nationalist sensitivities exerted on scholarship. Eyice, by contrast, retold the Diez episode as a matter of poor translation and editorial preparation, sidestepping the ideological core.⁴¹¹ His version—gathering newspaper clippings but avoiding mention of the contested architectural comparison—shows the caution with which he learned to navigate dominant narratives.

The third barrier was academic polarization. From the 1950s through the 1970s, universities were riven by conflicts between left and right, secularists and Islamists, nationalist and internationalist visions.⁴¹² Within this atmosphere, Byzantine studies were often labeled unpatriotic or foreign. Writing in 1961, Tansuğ described an atmosphere so suffused with suspicion that “even these scholars began to view one another with suspicion.”⁴¹³ Even foreign Byzantinists were affected. Runciman’s departure from Istanbul University reflected not only bureaucratic frustrations but also the difficulty of sustaining international scholarship in such a climate.⁴¹⁴ For local scholars, the sense of

⁴⁰⁸ Eyice, “Bizans çalışmaları ve arkeoloji,” 28.

⁴⁰⁹ Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak*, 237-40. Tansuğ recalled that during his time as an assistant in the Art History Department at Istanbul University in 1955, he accompanied the German professor Kurt Erdmann—Diez’s successor—on a visit to the Beyazıt Mosque. Erdmann, speaking with noticeable caution, remarked that “after building the structure, the Turks turned around and realized that Hagia Sophia had the same plan.” Tansuğ responded sharply to this ironic comment, retorting: “Professor, do you take us for those naive fanatics?”—a reaction so forceful, he notes, that Erdmann was compelled to calm him down.

⁴¹⁰ Köksal, “Doğan Kuban.”

⁴¹¹ Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 262-63; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 201-02. Eyice recounted in detail how Diez and himself corrected the translation errors and how the captions of figures were mistaken without mentioning Diez’s argument on Byzantine influence.

⁴¹² For Eyice’s account of struggles within Istanbul University, see Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 195-208 and 34-38.

⁴¹³ Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak*, 36-37.

⁴¹⁴ Dinshaw, *Steven Runciman*, 306.

exclusion was often deeply personal. Eyice later remarked: “If you wanted to be somebody in Türkiye, you had to be either a leftist or a freemason. I was neither—so I always held my head high. But then again, I never quite became anything either.”⁴¹⁵

Together, these three barriers—geopolitical caution, historiographic resistance, and academic polarization—constrained Byzantine studies in mid-century Türkiye. Scholars such as Eyice and Kuban contributed significantly, but often by maneuvering around ideological limits rather than challenging them directly. For historians like Akdes Nimet Kurat and Şerif Baştav, the risks were sharper, contributing to their eventual pivot toward other fields. The cumulative effect was a discipline marked by caution, fragmentation, and limited institutional footholds—conditions that would shape both the trajectory of individuals and the long-term possibilities for Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

3.5.2 Scholarly Isolation and Institutional Constraints: The Limits of Pioneering Scholars

The foundational figures of Byzantine studies in Türkiye—Akdes Nimet Kurat, Şerif Baştav, Semavi Eyice, and Doğan Kuban—successfully legitimized the field during the exploratory “normal stage” of the Four-Stage Model but did not advance it to the “networking stage.” Even Kuban’s Architectural History and Surveying Chair at ITU, while fostering a cluster, was not centered on Byzantine heritage. Byzantine studies in Türkiye would not fully reach the networking stage until the late twentieth century.

All four shared key traits: strong language skills (classical and modern European), Republican ideals filtered through their own perspectives, and academic rigor. They published widely on Byzantine material culture and maintained some engagement with international networks through conferences, fellowships, and visiting positions. Yet they worked largely in isolation. For Eyice and Kuban, foreign Byzantinist mentors departed prematurely; for Kurat and Baştav, their training took place abroad and was not followed by sustained mentoring upon their return to Türkiye. This likely weakened their ability to train successors. As junior scholars, they were tasked with advancing an underdeveloped field before gaining institutional authority. Eyice, for instance, lectured under senior faculty with no Byzantine expertise, and even saw a foreign scholar with no background

⁴¹⁵ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 259.

in Byzantium invited to teach the subject.⁴¹⁶ Similarly, Kuban taught architectural history under faculty outside his specialty.

Eyice and Baştav repeatedly stressed the need for a Byzantine studies center.⁴¹⁷ Eyice sought to make the Byzantine Art Chair at Istanbul University a hub.⁴¹⁸ Under his leadership, it produced 131 undergraduate theses, 13 master's, and 9 doctorates with extensive fieldwork and visual documentation.⁴¹⁹ Yet he later called the effort a “fiasco—it completely slipped out of my hands.” Baştav likewise lamented the absence of a Byzantine chair at DTCF and urged the creation of a national institute.⁴²⁰

Others echoed these concerns. Sezer Tansuğ warned in 1961 that the Byzantine Institute's projects served restoration more than scholarship, and in 1974 lamented the absence of an institute devoted to Byzantine art, stressing it “requires teamwork.”⁴²¹ Eyice, in a nationalist tone, also voiced frustration: “Foreigners used and processed Türkiye as a raw material in the field of Byzantine archaeology.”⁴²² In 1999 he admitted his own failure to train enough “personnel” to carry the field forward. He also complained of Türkiye's lack of a national Byzantine studies committee, which left the country voiceless at international congresses: “Unfortunately, this has not been realized to this day.”⁴²³ Such remarks underscored both Türkiye's marginal position in global Byzantinology and Eyice's frustration with structural constraints.

Ideological pressures compounded these problems. Eyice recalled dismissive comments: “Isn't there any other art to study in this country? What's the point of Byzantine art!”⁴²⁴ He also sensed a nationalist skepticism toward local scholars, summarized in his observation: “You must not be Turkish... Europeans know better.”⁴²⁵

⁴¹⁶ Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans sanatı,” 413. According to Semavi Eyice, although he had resumed teaching Byzantine art courses as an associate professor in 1956, the university invited Professor Hubert Schrade from the University of Tübingen to lecture on Byzantine art in the summer term of 1960, citing the lack of such instruction. Schrade, a noted specialist in Romanesque art, had no preparation in Byzantine studies and struggled with the material. The university's closure following the political events of April 27, 1960, abruptly ended his teaching. Eyice later noted that this interruption spared Schrade from further difficulties in a field outside his expertise.

⁴¹⁷ Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*, 16.

⁴¹⁸ Baykal, “Semavi Eyice,” 89-90.

⁴¹⁹ Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans araştırmalarının tarihçesi,” 41.

⁴²⁰ Pekak, “Semavi Eyice.”

⁴²¹ Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak*, 37-38 and 237.

⁴²² Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans araştırmalarının tarihçesi.”

⁴²³ Eyice, “Bizans çalışmaları ve arkeoloji,” 31; Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans araştırmalarının tarihçesi,” 49.

⁴²⁴ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 106.

⁴²⁵ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 258-59. Eyice frequently criticized the marginalization of local scholars in heritage work. He recalled being denied access to a Byzantine church on Heybeliada for a publication

Such attitudes may have contributed to his cautious approach, marked by a tendency to avoid expansive syntheses or potentially contentious interpretations. Tansuğ criticized his “timid and inconsistent” stance, reflecting how ideological hostility fostered caution in interpretation.⁴²⁶

Institutional fragility compounded these ideological challenges. The Byzantine Art Chair, founded by foreign scholars, failed to stabilize: Runciman left disillusioned, and Schweinfurth’s tenure ended with illness and financial strain. Eyice faced long delays in gaining professorship and in securing excavation permits.⁴²⁷ His student Ayla Ödekan remembered Byzantine studies in the 1960s as marginal and under-resourced.⁴²⁸

DTCF, designed as a flagship Republican faculty, also faltered.⁴²⁹ After leftist scholars were purged in 1948, political interventions recurred, including the 1960 coup when Baştav was dismissed among the “147.” Such instability, coupled with the absence of a Byzantine chair, left the field sidelined despite Türkiye’s vast Byzantine heritage. Baştav himself lamented this missed opportunity, seeing it as symptomatic of ideological resistance.

In sum, the early pioneers legitimized Byzantine studies but could not institutionalize it. Ideological hostility, institutional fragility, limited mentorship, and the lack of coordinated leadership kept the field fragmented. Their achievements provided a foundation, but the transition to a networked, collaborative discipline awaited the next generation of scholars.

project—only to see it later surveyed and published by foreign researchers. Likewise, although he had written on the Sümela Monastery, he was never consulted, while foreign experts were invited instead. In one case, the Austrian preservationist Alois Machatschek was brought in—whose skills and experience, as the author notes, may indeed have been better suited to the project’s practical demands. Still, for Eyice these episodes reflected a persistent and misplaced faith in foreign authority over domestic expertise, see Eyice, “Bizans çalışmaları ve arkeoloji,” 35; Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans araştırmalarının tarihçesi,” 49.

⁴²⁶ Tansuğ, *Karşıtı aramak*, 245-46.

⁴²⁷ Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans sanatı,” 413. As documented by Eyice, the Byzantine Art Chair at Istanbul University was formally separated from the Department of Aesthetics and Art History in 1963, following the earlier model of the Turkish Art Chair. The university senate approved the decision on January 9, 1964, stressing the importance of Turkish scholars studying and presenting Byzantine art—particularly given that many surviving works are located in Türkiye and the field was vulnerable to political speculation. Associate Professor Eyice was appointed to lead the new chair on March 3, 1964. Later that year, he was nominated for full professorship, approved by the Faculty of Letters on February 2 and confirmed by the Senate on April 4. Initially serving as a professor without an official post, Eyice remained in that role until 1972, when he was formally appointed. That same year, the chair received its first institutional support with the addition of a lecturer, an assistant, and a specialist.

⁴²⁸ Kuban et al., “Bizans’ın Mirası,” 391-92.

⁴²⁹ For an extensive overview of testimonies on DTFC since its foundation, see Hayriye Erbaş, *Bir Cumhuriyet çınarı: sözlü tanıklıklarla Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi’nin 75 yılı* (Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2016), 923-46.

3.5.3 Continuity, Succession, and the Emergence of Organizational Leaders

Although pioneers like Semavi Eyice, Doğan Kuban, Akdes Nimet Kurat, and Şerif Baştav laid crucial intellectual groundwork, their capacity to foster institutional continuity and train successors varied widely. Their personal dispositions, academic styles, and institutional positions shaped whether Byzantine studies could move from isolated scholarship toward a collaborative, networked discipline.

Semavi Eyice and the Limits of Institutional Entrepreneurship

At Istanbul University, Eyice embodied the paradox of intellectual brilliance combined with institutional isolation. His contributions to Byzantine art and architecture earned him national and international acclaim, but his legacy within the university remained limited. Eyice taught with meticulous discipline, inspiring both admiration and fear among his students. His method emphasized close visual analysis and systematic fieldwork, yet these strengths were not matched by a vision for institutional continuity or a collaborative mentorship style. He pursued an individualistic and territorial path that ultimately impeded the formation of a sustainable academic lineage.

Despite decades of teaching and supervising theses, no cohesive “Eyice school” emerged at Istanbul University. As Verda Bingöl observed: “Despite the big number of bachelor theses, it is not possible to track down an ‘Eyice school’, or a dispersion of his students throughout Anatolia, as was the case with Oktay Aslanapa or Katharina Otto-Dorn. Eyice was a big name on his own... However, none of his students followed in his footsteps.”⁴³⁰ Eyice himself blamed the students: “I cannot say that there was anyone. There were a few good students, but I did not see them again later.”⁴³¹ His case highlights the limits of individual agency in field-building, a theme examined through the framework of institutional entrepreneurship in chapter 2.

The creation of the Byzantine Art Chair in 1964 initially seemed a step toward institutionalization. Yet Eyice later explained that the decision was justified defensively, on nationalist grounds: “Since most works of Byzantine art, which can easily be subject to political speculations, are found on our lands, it [the decision] was justified by the benefit of such a chair for Turkish researchers to study them and also introduce their Turkish spheres.”⁴³² That he reiterated this rationale in 1973 suggests the fragile legitimacy

⁴³⁰ Bingöl, “Art History,” 77.

⁴³¹ Bingöl, “Art History,” 77; Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 371.

⁴³² Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans sanatı,” 413.

of the chair, whose function was as much to secure Eyice's own position as to build a program. It did not become fully operational until 1972, when he finally received a formal professorship—eight years after his title had been approved. Even then, it consisted of only himself, one assistant, and a specialist handling administrative tasks.

The chair became a platform to sustain Eyice's personal scholarship rather than to cultivate successors. He often discouraged students from pursuing Byzantine art and struggled with assistants, some of whom failed to establish academic careers. His mentorship was pragmatic and utilitarian: assistants were valued for logistical support more than scholarly promise. Gender played a role in determining who joined fieldwork. "Since there weren't many hotels in Thrace at the time, I generally took male students with me. Because in the villages, we stayed in one room with three or four male students," he explained.⁴³³ Elsewhere he remarked: "Female assistants and students also joined these trips. The girls were good, but the boys were both uninterested and incompetent."⁴³⁴

His first permanent male assistant, recruited from the Archaeology Museum, soon became a source of disillusionment. Eyice accused him of autonomy, disloyalty, and even skipping lectures: "An assistant is supposed to attend classes with their professor. He never joined any of mine."⁴³⁵ For Eyice, such independence was unacceptable, underscoring his expectation of loyalty and his utilitarian view of assistants.

Among the few who regularly worked with him, Münevver (Keşoğlu) Dervişbey stands out as a constant presence.⁴³⁶ Though without a doctorate and described in largely secretarial terms, she participated in nearly every field season. Eyice praised her loyalty in contrast to his students' indifference: "My own students never prepared a *Festschrift* for me. But the Turing Club did publish one... I wanted Münevver, who served as my secretary, to have an essay included. She wasn't in a position to become an academic, but she helped me immensely. When I walked into class, my slides were ready. She took notes, typed my manuscripts. She retired when I did, after completing twenty-five years

⁴³³ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 386.

⁴³⁴ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 391.

⁴³⁵ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 268. Eyice himself remarked on the appointment: "I was about to appoint a male assistant. He had previously worked at the Archaeology Museum but couldn't get along with the institution and transferred laterally to our department." This comment suggests not only his preference for male assistants but also a strikingly negative framing of his assistant's prior career.

⁴³⁶ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 396; Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," 418. There is no record of a graduate thesis of Münevver (Keşoğlu) Dervişbey, but her name is listed among the Byzantine art certificates completed in 1970.

alongside me.”⁴³⁷ Her role highlights both the administrative backbone of his work and the non-academic nature of assistantship structures within his chair.⁴³⁸

His reflections on the lack of successors were marked by frustration and disillusionment. “Supporters certainly emerged because of my scholarly standing. It was solely due to my scholarly presence that a chair in Byzantine art was established at Istanbul University. I achieved something, but this work ended with me. Unfortunately, that’s the reality,” he remarked.⁴³⁹ More than a lament, this statement reveals a worldview centered on his own exceptionalism. Eyice saw himself as both the origin and culmination of Byzantine art history at the university. His sense of discontinuity reflected not only institutional fragility but also a self-referential understanding of legacy: he failed to recognize the achievements of students who carried Byzantine studies forward elsewhere, narrowing “succession” to institutional loyalty and methodological adherence.

At a 1999 symposium, eight years after his retirement, he reiterated this disappointment: “Undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral theses were prepared, and personnel were trained. But how sad it is that it was not possible to benefit from them, and the trained personnel were not placed in the relevant positions.”⁴⁴⁰ His choice of the word *personnel*—in contrast to *researcher*, which he reserved for himself or foreign colleagues—suggests a utilitarian or even dismissive view of young scholars. His tone was passive and accusatory, never reflexive. Ironically, several students he discouraged or failed to support later became foundational figures elsewhere.

Yıldız Demiriz (1929–2016), Eyice’s first doctoral student, completed her degree in 1969 after earning her certificate in 1964 and serving as his assistant until 1970.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 268.

⁴³⁸ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 396-97; Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 271-72.

⁴³⁹ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 433. Eyice’s reflections in various interviews and talks frequently reveal a sense of disappointment and disillusionment. In the concluding remarks of the oral history interview conducted by the author, he stated: “After me, hopefully there will be some among those who come next who are reasonable, perhaps some well-intentioned people, who will continue these things more seriously. That is my only hope. There’s nothing from anyone else. And beyond that, no one seems to be on the horizon,” see Eyice, interview.

⁴⁴⁰ Eyice, “Türkiye’de Bizans araştırmalarının tarihçesi,” 50.

⁴⁴¹ Eyice supervised nine doctoral theses: Yıldız Demiriz (1969); Ebru Parman joined Hacettepe University in 1973 as an assistant and completed her thesis there under Eyice’s supervision (1978, Hacettepe University); Hülya Tezcan (1983); Siavash Ghandi (1983); Mehmet İhsan Tunay (1984); Tayfun Akkaya (1984); Özkan Ertuğrul (1989); Ahmet Vedat Çelgin (1990); Mehmet Baha Tanman (1990). Among these nine doctoral students he supervised between 1969 and 1990, only two worked directly under him within the chair of Byzantine art: Demiriz and Tunay. Apart from them, only Tanman became a faculty member at Istanbul University Art History Department, but both his thesis and subsequent work focus on Ottoman art. Çelgin also became a professor at Istanbul University but

Initially intending to specialize in Turkish art, she was drawn to Byzantium by Eyice's visually rich and energetic lectures, which she found more compelling than those of other faculty such as Oktay Aslanapa.⁴⁴² Even before the Byzantine chair was formally established, she volunteered as his assistant—preparing slides, typing lecture notes, and joining field trips.⁴⁴³ A scholarship took her to Italy in 1967–68, and she presented a paper at the 13th International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Oxford in 1966, early proof of her promise and international exposure.⁴⁴⁴ She also attended Eyice's field trips and surveys.⁴⁴⁵ Her dissertation on interlaced Byzantine mosaic pavements reflected Eyice's emphasis on detailed visual analysis and ornament.⁴⁴⁶ Yet just a year after completing her doctorate, Demiriz transferred to the Chair of Turkish and Islamic Art, leaving Byzantine studies. The reason was never fully revealed. Ara Altun, in a volume dedicated to her, suggested she would clarify in her memoirs, but when these were published, she left the subject untouched.⁴⁴⁷ Institutional limitations likely played a part: despite being named director of the chair in the early 1960s, Eyice did not receive a formal professorship or adequate staff until 1972.

continued his academic career in philology and ancient Greek following his thesis on Roman archaeology. Akkaya continued his academic career in fine arts education at the Marmara University. Tezcan, who was working at the Topkapı Palace Museum during her doctoral studies, continued to work as a curator and became specialized in its collections. She later joined academia and taught Ottoman art and textiles. The subsequent career of Siavash Ghandi, who was likely a foreign student, is unknown. Lastly, Ertuğrul joined the Trakya University shortly after the completion of his degree. In addition to these doctoral theses, Eyice supervised five master's theses in his last years at Istanbul University: Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger (1985), Ferudun Özgümüş (1987), Enis Karakaya (1987), Yılmaz Büktel (1989), Yelda Yalaman (1990), and he was the co-supervisor for Asnu Bilban Yalçın's master thesis completed in 1986 at Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza. Four of these students continued their graduate studies. Asutay got her PhD degree from Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität in 1993 and pursued an academic career in Byzantine studies in Germany, the other three at Istanbul University: Özgümüş and Büktel started their doctoral studies with Eyice but completed their theses under Tunay's supervision in 1994 and 1995 respectively after Eyice's retirement. Lastly, Yalçın's thesis was supervised by Erendiz Özbayoğlu, a professor of the Classical Philology Department, and completed in 2000.

⁴⁴² Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 439-40; Demiriz, *Anılarımdaki*, 5-6 and 11-12.

⁴⁴³ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 440. Demiriz recounted that although some students viewed such responsibilities as menial labor, she later reflected that these duties served both as effective preparation for exams and as valuable training for her future teaching career.

⁴⁴⁴ Eyice, "Türkiye'de Bizans sanatı," 419; Demiriz, *Anılarımdaki*, 88-91; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 441.

⁴⁴⁵ Demiriz recounted the following field trips: Iznik (1961), Edirne (1961), Trabzon (1962), Ereğli-Amasra (1963), Anatolia (twice in 1963) in her memoirs, see Demiriz, *Anılarımdaki*, 22-49.

⁴⁴⁶ Yıldız Demiriz, *Interlaced Byzantine Mosaic Pavements* (Yorum Sanat ve Yayıncılık, 2002). Demiriz told in her doctoral thesis published as a book in 2002 that her path began in 1961, when Eyice, then a docent, asked her to assist with drawings of the floor in Iznik Hagia Sophia. Eyice later suggested she expand this work by collecting similar pavements across Türkiye, which became her 1969 dissertation.

⁴⁴⁷ M.Baha Tanman and Uşun Tükel, *Arkeoloji ve sanat tarihi araştırmaları: Yıldız Demiriz'e armağan* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2001), 16; Demiriz, *Anılarımdaki*.

This lack of opportunity also shaped the path of another promising student, Ayla Ödekan (1940–). She had earned her Byzantine art certificate in 1965, initially intending to specialize in Ottoman architecture, but Eyice’s structured and engaging lectures drew her into Byzantine studies. After a Fulbright-supported master’s at the University of Chicago under Byzantinist Herbert Kessler, she returned to Istanbul only to be denied an assistantship by Eyice—partly due to the absence of available posts. This rejection became a turning point: rather than remaining in Eyice’s orbit, she redirected her career toward ITU under Kuban, where she completed her PhD on Ottoman architecture in 1976.⁴⁴⁸ Her subsequent achievements underscore how Eyice’s reluctance or inability to retain promising students weakened the continuity of his chair and redirected Byzantinists into other institutions.

The pattern continued with another of Eyice’s students, Ebru Parman (1945–), whose career offers a compelling case of indirect succession. A graduate of Istanbul University’s Department of Art History, she earned certificates in Classical Archaeology (1968) and Byzantine studies (1969).⁴⁴⁹ Like many of her peers, she was drawn into Byzantine studies by Eyice’s dynamic teaching: “We really took Semavi Bey as a model. At least I did. His discipline, wit, energy—plus the way he took us around Anatolia—all of this left a deep impression on me.” She added that she later tried to follow his example in her own teaching: “My students say the same.”⁴⁵⁰

Parman hoped to remain at Istanbul University but found no assistantship positions. As she recalled, Eyice invited her to his house in Bostancı and told her: “Ebru, you are a good student. I trust you. I always wanted to bring you into the department, but there is no position.” Instead, he recommended her to Günsel Renda at Hacettepe University, where she was appointed in 1974 and completed her dissertation on Byzantine ceramics in 1978 under his supervision.⁴⁵¹ Her academic formation was enriched by study abroad in Germany and Italy, where she gained exposure to different methodological approaches. Aware of the limits of language training in Türkiye, she took the initiative to learn

⁴⁴⁸ For Ödekan’s detailed biography and bibliography, see Aslıhan Erkmen et al., eds., *Ayla Ödekan armağanı: Sanat tarihinde disiplinlerarası yaklaşımlar* (2022).

⁴⁴⁹ For Parman’s detailed biography and bibliography, see Alp A. Oğuz, ed., *Ebru Parman’a armağan: Sanat tarihi ve arkeoloji yazıları* (Ankara: Alter Yayınları, 2009).

⁴⁵⁰ Parman, interview. Parman also compared Eyice’s lecturing to that of Aslanapa.

⁴⁵¹ Parman, interview; Günsel Renda, “Cumhuriyet döneminde sanat tarihi bilimi” (paper presented at the Atatürk’ün Ölümünün 62. Yılında Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Bilimsel Gelişmeler Sempozyumu (8-10 Kasım 2000), 2001), 109.

German, Latin, and Greek—skills she deemed essential for serious engagement with Byzantine sources. Over time, her interests coalesced around minor arts and regional material culture, with an emphasis on fieldwork and teaching.

At Hacettepe, Parman quickly became a central figure. Students remembered her as rigorous yet empathetic. Sacit Pekak recalled: “Our professor was always very involved with us. She empathized, understood, guided us. She shared in our excitement. She was never distant.”⁴⁵² In 1990, she moved to Anadolu University, where she founded the Department of Art History. Former students such as Yelda Olcay Uçkan and Zeliha Demirel Gökalp emphasized her ability to nurture potential, guide without imposing, and support them as more than a teacher—“like a senior family member.”⁴⁵³ Through these relationships, Parman expanded Byzantine studies by embodying the collaborative leadership largely absent in Eyice’s institutional culture.

Eyice’s later recollections of Parman reveal ambivalence. In one interview, he recalled supporting her fellowships abroad and including her in fieldwork.⁴⁵⁴ In another, his tone turned resentful: “She’s publishing a book—on a topic I gave her! She distributes it to bookstores in Istanbul but doesn’t bring a single copy to her teacher.”⁴⁵⁵ He described her as one of the few students he had “trained” to become a professor but expressed discontent at what he saw as a lack of recognition or loyalty. In contrast, Parman consistently expressed gratitude, crediting his charisma, discipline, and classroom performance for shaping her academic direction and serving as a model for her own teaching.⁴⁵⁶ The divergence between their perspectives highlights the generational and emotional fault lines that marked Eyice’s mentorship and its legacies.

By the mid-1970s, when Parman joined Hacettepe, the Art History Department was emerging as a dynamic and interdisciplinary environment. Founded in 1965 by Suut

⁴⁵² Sacit Pekak, “Oral History Interview with Sacit Pekak,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 19 March 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/sacit-pekak/>.

⁴⁵³ Yelda Olcay Uçkan, “Oral History Interview with Yelda Olcay Uçkan,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 18 January 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/yelda-olcay-uckan/>; Zeliha Demirel Gökalp, “Oral History Interview with Zeliha Demirel Gökalp,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 13 April 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/zeliha-demirel-gokalp/>.

⁴⁵⁴ Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 269.

⁴⁵⁵ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 265-66.

⁴⁵⁶ Parman, interview.

Kemal Yetkin, it distinguished itself from traditional programs by adopting an Anglo-Saxon model emphasizing openness and critical inquiry.⁴⁵⁷ As Zeynep Mercangöz, one of its earliest students, recalled: “The department was shaped by exceptionally distinguished figures such as Günsel Renda and the late Bedrettin Cömert... The curriculum was strikingly different. Unlike most other programs in Türkiye, which were almost entirely focused on Turkish-Islamic art, we also had detailed courses in European art and a broader view of art history.”⁴⁵⁸ Young faculty like Cömert embodied a spirit of collegiality and intellectual engagement that contrasted sharply with the hierarchical culture at Istanbul University. His assassination in 1978 for his leftist stance left deep marks on students and faculty, strengthening their shared purpose and commitment.⁴⁵⁹ This intellectually ambitious and emotionally charged atmosphere offered fertile ground for Byzantine studies.

Shortly after Parman’s appointment at Hacettepe, Yıldız Ötüken (1945–2020) joined the department in 1975 as its second specialist in Byzantine art.⁴⁶⁰ The daughter of Adnan Ötüken, a pioneering librarian and founding director of the Turkish National Library, she had received her early education in Germany before completing high school in Ankara. Returning to Germany, she studied German Language and Literature at the University of Bonn, where she earned her BA and MA, and then pursued a doctorate under the Byzantinist, Horst Hallensleben and completed her dissertation in 1974.⁴⁶¹ On her return, she sought a post at Istanbul University but was turned away by Eyice.⁴⁶² Instead, she joined to Hacettepe University, where she would remain until her retirement in 2011.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁷ Renda, “Cumhuriyet döneminde sanat tarihi bilimi,” 109.

⁴⁵⁸ Mercangöz, interview.

⁴⁵⁹ Parman, interview; Pekak, interview; Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 256. Bedrettin Cömert served as Eyice’s assistant at Hacettepe University in the early 1970s. Although known for his anti-leftist stance, Eyice later described Cömert with great respect, calling him “very intelligent and proper,” and recalling how he “attended regularly, took notes, and submitted them neatly.” Upon requesting a reference letter, Cömert, Eyice noted, had traveled overnight from Ankara to Istanbul. “He wasn’t an anarchist leftist,” Eyice said, “but an intellectual one. He was killed for being a leftist. May God rest his soul.”

⁴⁶⁰ Zeynep Mercangöz, “Türkiye’deki Bizans sanatı tarihinin bir çınarı: Hocam Prof. Dr. Yıldız Ötüken,” *Vakıflar Dergisi* (2019); Sema Doğan, “Değerli hocam Prof. Dr. S. Yıldız Ötüken’in anısına,” *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, no. 30 (2021); Sema Doğan, “Prof. Dr. S. Yıldız Ötüken (1945-2020),” *Selçuklu Medeniyeti Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 5 (December 2020).

⁴⁶¹ S. Yıldız Ötüken, “İsa Kapı Mescidi und Medresesi in İstanbul” (PhD, 1974).

⁴⁶² Akyürek, interview; Pekak, interview.

⁴⁶³ Mercangöz, “Yıldız Ötüken,” 311; Mercangöz, interview. Ötüken’s entry into the department, as Mercangöz recalled, coincided with her own graduation year, and the early years of Byzantine art at Hacettepe were shaped collectively by Ötüken and Parman, who also briefly shared an apartment.

Her arrival, soon after Parman's, was crucial in establishing Byzantine art history as a distinct specialization at Hacettepe. From the mid-1970s onward, the two scholars shaped the department into a central node, attracting colleagues and students and fostering a vibrant scholarly community. This marked a pivotal moment in the "networking stage" of Byzantine studies in Türkiye: sustainable frameworks of colleagueship, apprenticeship, and co-authorship began to take root. Within this ecosystem, both Ötügen and Parman acted as socially embedded institutional entrepreneurs, investing in the discipline's social fabric while training new scholars. Eyice, who had occasionally lectured at Hacettepe, remained distant, and his later criticism of Ötügen's dissertation underscored the lack of collaboration.⁴⁶⁴ Eyice's solitary model contrasted sharply with the collaborative ethos at Hacettepe. Publication patterns highlight this divergence: 32% of Parman's and 20% of Ötügen's works were co-authored—often with students—while only 1.75% of Eyice's 398 publications were.⁴⁶⁵ His single co-authored student work, *Fatih Monuments in Photos* (1988), was a municipal catalogue. Whereas Eyice retained a vertical, author-centered model, Ötügen and Parman embraced horizontal, networked scholarship.⁴⁶⁶

Trained in Germany, Ötügen brought a rigorous, demanding, yet deeply supportive pedagogy. As her first doctoral student Mercangöz recalled: "We grew together

⁴⁶⁴ Sema Doğan, "Oral History Interview with Sema Doğan," interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 9 February 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/sema-dogan/>.

⁴⁶⁵ Şahin Kılıç and Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, eds., *Byzantine Studies in Turkey: A Bibliography (19th Century-2020)*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Istanbul: Vehbi Koç Foundation, 2021), 831-34. Parman co-authored with students and colleagues including Byzantinists Yıldız Ötügen, Sema Doğan, Muradiye Bursalı, Yelda Olcay Uçkan as well as art historians and archaeologists/archaeometricians Canan Parla, Ömür Bakırer, Şahinde Demirci, Sümer Atasoy, Orhan Atvur, and Nuran Ay. Kılıç and Kitapçı Bayrı, *Bibliography 2*, 771-80. Ötügen's publications are co-authored with students and colleagues including Byzantinists Ebru Parman, Sema Doğan, Sacit Pekak, Nilay Çorağan, Ayşe Çaylak Türker, Özgü Çömezoglu, Muhsine Eda Armağan, Ebru Fındık, Vera Bulgurlu, Sercan Yandım, Nilüfer Peker, Robert Ousterhout, and also with historians and archaeologists/archaeometricians Hakkı Acun, Aynur Durukan, Ali Akın Akyol, Yusuf Kağan Kadioğlu, and Şahinde Demirci.

⁴⁶⁶ Kılıç and Kitapçı Bayrı, *Bibliography 1*, 483-507. There is a record of co-authored publication of Eyice in Mehmet Cavit Baysun, Semavi Eyice, and Adnan Pekman, "Tarih Dergisi 7. Sayı / Haberler," *Tarih Dergisi* 4, no. 7 (May 1953). However, Eyice's contribution in it are two independently authored pieces in the "News" section; one of them is on the death of Alexander Alexandrovich Vasiliev and the other one is about the Ninth International Congress of Byzantine Studies that Eyice attended in Thessaloniki. Other co-authored publications of Eyice are dated after his retirement and aimed at general audience: *Once Upon a Time in Kağıthane* with Ayşenur Erdoğan for the Kağıthane Municipality in 2018 shortly before his passing; a panel discussion on Byzantine Constantinople with Nezih Başgelen and Erdem Yücel in 1996; and an introductory book on Istanbul with Metin Sözen and Murat Belge published by the Ministry of Culture in 1993.

academically, brought out research together. Professor Ötüken also matured with us. Her remarkable intellectual acumen and rigorous German discipline were daunting at times, yet they provided us with an unparalleled education.”⁴⁶⁷ Similarly, Sema Doğan, another doctoral student, emphasized her mix of challenge and care: “Her profession was her life, her way of living. She valued her students, devoted a lot of time to them, and was patient, yet very challenging.”⁴⁶⁸ Ötüken’s sense of responsibility extended beyond the classroom. When Hacettepe moved to the remote Beytepe campus, she held classes in her home after working hours for graduate students working in the city center.⁴⁶⁹ Her house became a collaborative hub, where even her own projects, such as her associate professorship thesis, were completed with students and young colleagues. As Doğan recalls: “The house was bustling with young faculty and us, the students, helping with the thesis. One typewriter had Aynur Durukan typing, another Professor Ötüken, and I was tasked with attaching photos. What an honor it was for me!”⁴⁷⁰ Ayşe Çaylak Türker likewise remembered how these informal gatherings, both social and academic, strengthened bonds among students and cultivated a sense of shared identity.⁴⁷¹ Attentive to her students’ lives beyond coursework, Ötüken became a central, stabilizing figure in their academic and personal development. This inclusive, hands-on model not only enhanced training but also built a strong sense of community. In sharp contrast to Eyice’s utilitarian approach—where assistants often served primarily as aides to his individual research—Ötüken embraced a relational and collaborative style that prioritized shared growth, mentorship, and collective scholarly development.

In addition to her community-centered approach, Ötüken made major contributions to fieldwork-based research in Byzantine art. From 1989 to 2009, she directed the excavations at the Church of St. Nicholas in Demre (ancient Myra), a long-term project that yielded important insights while also serving as a formative, hands-on environment for her students. She often steered them toward underexplored topics: Olcay Uçkan, one of her doctoral students, recalled how Ötüken encouraged her to write on Byzantine

⁴⁶⁷ Mercangöz, interview.

⁴⁶⁸ Doğan, interview.

⁴⁶⁹ Mercangöz, interview.

⁴⁷⁰ Doğan, interview.

⁴⁷¹ Ayşe Çaylak Türker, “Oral History Interview with Ayşe Çaylak Türker,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 14 December 2022, 2022, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/ayse-turker-caylak/>.

glass—a scarcely studied field in Türkiye—offering to “learn together” as they explored it.⁴⁷² She treated publication as training, involving students in excavation reports and symposium volumes to give them practical experience and a sense of ownership in producing knowledge.⁴⁷³

In later years, Ötüken contributed to the institutional consolidation of the field as a long-standing advisory board member of the Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposia.⁴⁷⁴ Yet her most enduring legacy lies in her ability to translate personal academic excellence into collective scholarly capacity. Rather than working in isolation, she built sustainable structures—field projects, mentorship networks, publication pipelines—that enabled others to thrive. In this sense, Ötüken embodied the traits of a socially embedded institutional entrepreneur and functioned as an organizational leader, marking a decisive shift from the founder-centered model of the early stage to a more collaborative culture grounded in continuity, shared authorship, and the co-production of knowledge.

Shortly before Parman and Ötüken took up positions at Hacettepe in the mid-1970s, Eyice finally secured an assistantship at Istanbul University. Instead of nominating one of his recent female students—such as Parman, who remembered being told no posts were available—he chose a male candidate from the museum world: Mehmet İhsan Tunay (1941–2023). A graduate of Istanbul University’s Department of Archaeology (1965), Tunay had completed certificates in prehistory, ancient history, modern history, and Byzantine art.⁴⁷⁵ After short appointments at Izmit and Istanbul Archaeological Museums, he transferred to the Byzantine Art Chair in 1973 as its first official assistant.

Eyice soon grew deeply frustrated with the appointment, accusing Tunay of acting independently, skipping his lectures, and failing to show the expected loyalty and

⁴⁷² Olcay Uçkan, interview.

⁴⁷³ Demirel Gökalp, interview; Nilay Çorağan, “Oral History Interview with Nilay Çorağan,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 21 January 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/nilay-coragan/>. Gökalp recalled, “Professor Parman trusted the younger generation, believed in them, and wanted them to be involved. Professor Ötüken was very excited at that time. I remember she insisted a lot on us presenting papers saying, ‘You are the young scholars of Byzantine art history working in Türkiye, you should be present there.’” Another of her graduate students, Nilay Çorağan also recounted attending the congress with Ötüken’s encouragement and noted, “In our session, we were four participants, all of us Yıldız Ötüken’s students. Being together touched both our professor and us.” Both testimonials highlight how Ötüken and Parman not only trusted in the abilities of their students but actively propelled them into the academic spotlight, advocating for their presence and contributions at international forums.

⁴⁷⁴ Mercangöz, “Yıldız Ötüken,” 314.

⁴⁷⁵ Ayça Tiryaki Türkmenoğlu, “Mehmet İnsan (İhsan Hoca) Tunay,” *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, no. 33 (2024).

deference.⁴⁷⁶ Although Tunay completed his doctorate in 1984 on dating Byzantine architecture in Türkiye by masonry techniques, and worked as an assistant professor from 1987 until his retirement in 1998, his career stalled.⁴⁷⁷ As Engin Akyürek, who briefly overlapped with them, observed, Eyice's persistent pressure left Tunay with little room to advance, making it "hard for him to even breathe."⁴⁷⁸

Tunay's legacy, however, was marked by teaching and public engagement rather than academic rank. Beloved by students, he taught courses at Istanbul University, lectured at Galatasaray High School, and contributed for years to the Ministry of Tourism's certified guide training programs.⁴⁷⁹ Renowned for his encyclopedic knowledge of Istanbul—especially its underground structures—he favored on-site education, leading students to monuments across the city and even on study trips abroad. Although he declined repeated invitations to participate in the oral history project, his story nonetheless became part of the field's collective memory through the accounts of those who worked with him.

Aside from the doctoral theses of Demiriz, Parman, and Tunay, Eyice supervised six others between 1983 and 1990, four of them on Byzantine topics. Hülya Tezcan, then at the Topkapı Palace Museum, completed her dissertation in 1983 on the Byzantine archaeology of Sarayburnu. Her work provoked controversy: "One of my students was doing her dissertation on the underground Byzantine remains in the Sarayburnu area. A high-ranking official scolded her, saying, 'Are you trying to Christianize the Topkapı Palace?' and removed her from her post," Eyice recalled.⁴⁸⁰ Tezcan nonetheless pursued a long museum career until the mid-2000s and later taught Ottoman art and textiles at Istanbul University and elsewhere. Tayfun Akkaya's 1984 dissertation examined the monuments of Selymbria (Silivri); he went on to teach at Marmara University's Faculty of Fine Arts. Siavash Ghandi completed a 1983 dissertation on Sasanian motifs in

⁴⁷⁶ In interviews, Eyice criticized Tunay for disengagement, recalling an episode where he requested leave with a note left on the professor's desk—an act Eyice saw as disrespectful. By contrast, Erdem Yücel remembered Tunay as hardworking and loyal, noting that he gathered sources abroad for Eyice's publications and set aside a promising public career to avoid departmental tensions. Despite completing his doctorate and becoming assistant professor, his further advancement was blocked; as Yücel remarked, "He couldn't win over certain figures... and those who know the events closely understand who they were." For details, see Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 268; "İhsan Tunay hocayı da kaybettik," 2023, <https://mobil.datcahavadis.com/yazarlar/erdem-yucel/ihsan-tunay-hocayi-da-kaybettik/232/>.

⁴⁷⁷ Mehmet İhsan Tunay, "Türkiye'de Bizans mimarisinde taş ve tuğla duvar tekniğine göre tarihlendirme" (PhD diss., İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1984).

⁴⁷⁸ Akyürek, interview.

⁴⁷⁹ The present author was among his students in one such course for tourist guide certification in 1989–90 and remembers Tunay's lectures and field trips with great appreciation and admiration.

⁴⁸⁰ Eyice, "Bizans çalışmaları ve arkeoloji," 37.

Byzantine art, though little is known of his subsequent career. Özkan Ertuğrul earned both his master's (1984) and doctorate (1989) under Eyice with a focus on Byzantine water architecture in Istanbul, later joining the new Department of Archaeology and Art History at Trakya University, where he taught for three decades before retiring as an assistant professor. Two further dissertations—Ahmet Vedat Çelgin (1990) and Baha Tanman (1990)—were on non-Byzantine topics. Çelgin pursued philology and ancient Greek at Istanbul University, while Tanman specialized in Ottoman architecture in the Turkish and Islamic Arts division.

Eyice also supervised several master's theses during the later part of his career at Istanbul University, following the reorganization of graduate education under the 1982 Higher Education Law.⁴⁸¹ Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger completed her MA in 1985 under his supervision before relocating to Germany, where she earned her doctorate in 1993 at the University of Bonn with Horst Hallensleben—who had earlier supervised Ötügen—and went on to pursue a scholarly career in Byzantine studies. Ferudun Özgümüş (1987) and Yılmaz Büktel (1989) began their doctorates with Eyice but, after his retirement, completed them under Tunay in 1994 and 1995 respectively. Özgümüş taught in the Department of Fine Arts at Istanbul University from 1985 to 2022 and is now associate professor in the Department of Museology; Büktel has been on the faculty at Trakya University since 1985 and became an associate professor in 2020.

Beyond his direct supervision, Eyice's influence extended indirectly to scholars whose graduate training occurred elsewhere. A particularly instructive case is Gülgün Köroğlu, who recalled that her interest began during Eyice's Byzantine architecture lectures: "When he came to teach our second-year course on Byzantine architecture, I realized that I loved Byzantium the most. And I stayed with Byzantium ever since."⁴⁸² Yet Eyice discouraged her from pursuing graduate work in the field: "I told him I wanted to

⁴⁸¹ Mahmut Bozan, "Lisansüstü eğitimde nitelik arayışları," *Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi* 4, no. 2 (December 2012). Until the 1970s, graduate education in Türkiye operated as a single-tier system limited to doctoral programs, typically lasting three to four years. These followed a master-apprentice model and were reserved for future academics holding university assistantships, conducted under the close supervision of a professor and culminating in a dissertation. Between 1970 and 1982, inspired by the U.S. model, a two-tier system was introduced, adding the master's degree and requiring theses at both levels. The 1982 Higher Education Law (No. 2547) then formally institutionalized graduate education through newly created graduate schools, which assumed responsibility for master's and doctoral programs under regulations issued by the Interuniversity Council. Defined as academic units within universities or faculties, these institutes coordinated graduate-level teaching and research across related departments.

⁴⁸² Köroğlu, interview.

do a master's degree in this area, and he said, 'Byzantium will always put obstacles in your path. Better to work on something else, my girl.'" While meant as caution, the remark had the opposite effect. Determined to continue, she transferred to Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, where she completed her MA in 1989 and PhD in 1995 on Byzantine jewelry and the iconography of Iconoclasm.

Köroğlu later contrasted the "rigid and isolating culture" she had encountered under Eyice with the collaborative ethos she admired in the Hacettepe circle: "What I admired about that team [the Hacettepe Byzantinists] was how they worked together. There were so many Byzantinists together. It was very difficult to approach Professor Eyice. Maybe it was his age by then, but just getting near him was not easy."⁴⁸³ Eyice's retirement and the lack of new academic posts at Istanbul University ultimately pushed her to pursue her future at elsewhere: "After I started my master's, Professor Eyice retired. Around that time, I moved to Mimar Sinan. Istanbul University wasn't hiring anyone for a long time. There was a gap. That's when I saw my future at Mimar Sinan." Köroğlu became a central figure in Byzantine art history at Mimar Sinan, developing its curriculum and, since 2010, directing the excavation of Balatlar Church in Sinop. Her career illustrates how Eyice's powerful teaching left an imprint even when institutional pathways under him were blocked, producing legacies that matured outside his immediate school.

Akyürek offers another example of a scholar whose trajectory intersected with Eyice yet developed largely outside his mentorship. Trained in International Relations at ODTU, he later shifted to art history, completing both his MA (1991) and PhD (1995) at Istanbul University. During this period, Eyice was delivering all Byzantine art courses. Akyürek enrolled in Eyice's seminars, took his courses for both degrees, and even served as his assistant—preparing slides and managing classroom logistics. "I attended all his classes for two years. He had this long pointer stick, and I'd sit there by the primitive projector, changing the slides when he tapped. He was truly a powerful lecturer," he recalled.⁴⁸⁴ This formative exposure, however, never became a real mentorship.

Their relationship was strained from the outset. Akyürek recalled knocking on Eyice's office door to introduce himself: "He looked up from above his glasses and said: 'What do you want?' When I explained I hoped to pursue a graduate degree in Byzantine art, he

⁴⁸³ Köroğlu, interview.

⁴⁸⁴ Akyürek, interview.

told me bluntly, ‘You don’t belong here. Go elsewhere.’”⁴⁸⁵ Although Akyürek stood his ground and later submitted the best entrance essay in the Byzantine section, Eyice offered little support, and the tension endured.

Despite Eyice’s and Tunay’s opposition, Akyürek was eventually appointed assistant in Byzantine art through the initiative of Dean Burhan Atasoy. By then, the chair had stagnated: Köroğlu had already left, Tunay was the only other Byzantinist, and Eyice’s retirement was approaching. “He did not want me there, and he was never able to reconcile with that fact,” Akyürek reflected. “There was no one else. The chair consisted of two people. And yet they didn’t want me.”⁴⁸⁶

He nevertheless persevered, later heading the division at Istanbul University and, from 2014, teaching at Koç University, where he became the founding director of Koç University Sevgi Gönül Research Center for Byzantine Studies (GABAM). Looking back, he was blunt: “The chair at Istanbul never institutionalized properly because Eyice didn’t train anyone to succeed him. He didn’t retain Parman, or Demiriz, or even Ödekan. Only Tunay stayed, and even he couldn’t progress past assistant professorship. No continuity was built.”⁴⁸⁷ In later years, tensions continued within the department, with Eyice frequently criticizing Akyürek in public interviews—often focusing on his background in administrative sciences rather than art history, and his eventual leadership of the division.⁴⁸⁸

Akyürek’s career thus underscores the consequences of Eyice’s limited institutional entrepreneurship. Eyice’s brilliance as a scholar and lecturer was unquestionable, but his unwillingness to cultivate successors left a fragile legacy. “Had he brought in people like Parman or Ödekan,” Akyürek concluded, “we would have had a normal hierarchy. But there was no one. And that’s why the chair never took root.”⁴⁸⁹

Although not formally his student, Asnu Bilban Yalçın’s scholarly path intersected with Eyice’s legacy at several points.⁴⁹⁰ She completed both her undergraduate and

⁴⁸⁵ Akyürek, interview.

⁴⁸⁶ Akyürek, interview.

⁴⁸⁷ Akyürek, interview. Eyice himself repeatedly stated on various occasions that no one came after him—without, however, attributing any responsibility for this claim to himself, see Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 156 and 433; Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 286; Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 369-70.

⁴⁸⁸ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 259 and 65.

⁴⁸⁹ Akyürek, interview.

⁴⁹⁰ Doğanay and Akar, “Semavi Eyice ile Türk sanat tarihi,” 369; Asnu Bilban Yalçın, “Türkiye’deki Bizans çalışmalarının başlangıcı: Semavi Eyice,” *Mimarlık*, no. 402 (Temmuz-Ağustos 2018).

master's studies in Byzantine art at the University of Rome La Sapienza, defending her thesis in 1986 with Eyice serving as second advisor—a rare instance of his involvement in a graduate project abroad. After returning to Türkiye, she earned her doctorate at Istanbul University in 2005 under the supervision of classicist Erendiz Özbayoğlu, well over a decade after Eyice's retirement. She now heads the Byzantine Art History at Istanbul University.

Their first meeting occurred in the mid-1980s, when her advisor, Fernanda de Maffei, suggested she visit Eyice during a summer in Istanbul.⁴⁹¹ The encounter followed a pattern familiar to many: "Like everyone who went to see him, I first answered his questions, then listened to his valuable words." This visit to his Bostancı residence left a lasting impression and established a distant but enduring rapport. Though her academic formation unfolded largely outside Eyice's institutional orbit, Yalçın remained in occasional dialogue with him, including around 2010 when they discussed the future of Byzantine archaeology in Türkiye.

Her commemorative remarks capture both admiration and ambivalence: "It is not easy to describe Professor Semavi Eyice, the founder of Byzantine art history and archaeology in Türkiye. Each of his works is a first, a document, a value."⁴⁹² At the same time, she acknowledged the irony that, despite his foundational role, he was not always embraced by Byzantinists in Türkiye, particularly those outside his immediate circle. Her tribute underscores both the intellectual gravitas of his work and the tensions of his legacy—between institutional centrality and personal marginalization, pioneering vision and the solitude of being the first.

Institutional Continuity and the Kuban Cluster

Unlike Eyice—who, for various reasons, did not sustain a growing cohort of assistants—Kuban combined intellectual prominence with organizational capacity, drawing students into a vibrant academic environment at ITU.⁴⁹³ His Architectural History and Surveying

⁴⁹¹ Yalçın, "Semavi Eyice."

⁴⁹² Yalçın, "Semavi Eyice."

⁴⁹³ Kolay and Kuban, "İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi," 674. From 1958 to 1982, Kuban headed the Department of History of Architecture and Surveying, where he was joined by assistants Berge Aran, Orhan Bıçakçı, Afife (Emiroğlu) Batur, Bülent Özer, Feyyaz Kuğu, Selçuk Batur, Ayda Arel, Metin Sözen, Ayla (Alpöge) Ödekan, Metin Ahunbay, Zeynep (Nayır) Ahunbay, and Nur (Fersan) Akın. Some of these assistants remained at ITU and rose to professorships, while others moved to different institutions or shifted their focus. In 1982, the department was reorganized, splitting into separate units of History of Architecture and Restoration, with Kuban appointed chair of the latter.

Chair attracted a wide range of students. His charisma, openness, and ability to create institutional pathways—assistantships, restoration projects, fieldwork—fostered a cluster that enabled careers in architectural history, conservation, and Byzantine studies. What Eyice lacked in institutional entrepreneurship, Kuban consistently demonstrated: a commitment to continuity through people, networks, and structures.

Among the earliest figures in Kuban's cluster was Ödekan, who had once studied with Eyice but found her institutional home at ITU. Her early involvement in the Kalenderhane excavations was formative: "Right after I became an assistant to Professor Kuban, Kalenderhane was the focus. He made me excavation director of the site between the mosque and the walls. That experience—my encounter with a Byzantine church and the excavation process—was profoundly shaped by my training in the U.S. and the exposure to archaeological practice there."⁴⁹⁴ This hands-on work deepened her engagement with Byzantine material and underscored ITU as an overlooked center for Byzantine studies. "One can say that scientific research on Byzantium in Türkiye began at Istanbul Technical University... While Byzantine studies are usually narrated through Istanbul University or Hacettepe, the foundational role of Istanbul Technical University is often passed over too lightly."⁴⁹⁵

Beyond fieldwork, Ödekan described stark differences between the institutional cultures of Istanbul University and ITU during the 1950s and 1960s. The former emphasized textual learning and traditional lectures; the latter encouraged in situ experience and debate. This difference was shaped not only by institutional design but also by the personalities of their leaders. "There was distance between Professor Eyice and his students," she observed. "But Professor Kuban lived and worked with us—he was close to the students, and that made all the difference."⁴⁹⁶ She framed Kuban's approach as interpretive and synthetic, seeking meaning rather than mere formal description: "He looked at things globally, encouraging us to interpret, to reflect, to make sense of why something mattered. It wasn't about naming forms—it was about uncovering the thinking behind them."⁴⁹⁷ Later in her career, as head of ITU's Art History program, she opened the graduate curriculum to philosophy, law, and even students from physics and other

⁴⁹⁴ Ödekan, interview.

⁴⁹⁵ Ödekan, interview.

⁴⁹⁶ Ödekan, interview.

⁴⁹⁷ Ödekan, interview.

fields: “It wasn’t about disciplinary boundaries—it was about fostering conscious and curious students.” This openness stood in sharp contrast to Eyice’s restrictive model.

Her subsequent career spanned Istanbul University (1988–96), Mimar Sinan University (1996–99), and ITU, where she remained until her retirement in 2006. Although her doctorate was on Ottoman architecture and her later research broadened to other areas, she consistently integrated Byzantine topics through her teaching, supervision, and organizational work—notably her central role in founding the Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium. Renowned for her interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspective, she trained students who carried her methodological breadth across institutions, making her a key link between ITU’s cluster and the wider Byzantine studies network in Türkiye.

Finally, Ödekan pointed to the ideological climate that shaped the reception of Byzantium in mid-century Türkiye. “Even Kuban’s involvement in the Kalenderhane excavations provoked gossip. It wasn’t easy to work on Byzantium in that atmosphere—it carried a political charge, and many of us paid the price for it,” she remembered.⁴⁹⁸ Her reflections underscore both the structural differences between ITU and Istanbul University and the personal and ideological risks borne by those who sought to expand the scope of architectural history to include Byzantium.

Metin Ahunbay (1935–2014) was among the most distinguished figures to emerge from the Kuban cluster. After graduating from ITU’s Faculty of Architecture in 1961, he pursued a doctorate in archaeology at the Albert-Ludwigs University of Freiburg under Johannes Kollwitz, completing in 1969 a dissertation on free cross-plan churches of Cappadocia—an original and demanding topic that foreshadowed his lifelong dedication to underexplored Byzantine architecture. Returning to Türkiye, he joined ITU’s Architectural History and Surveying Chair in 1971, advancing to associate professor in 1979 with a study of late antique–early medieval structures in Southeastern Anatolia and to full professor in 1988 with a thesis on the necropolis basilica of Seleucia in Silifke.

Ahunbay’s scholarship combined rigorous training abroad with Kuban’s intellectual influence and a personal commitment to conservation.⁴⁹⁹ His projects ranged from Istanbul landmarks—Hagia Sophia, the Land Walls, the Pantokrator/ Zeyrek Mosque

⁴⁹⁸ Ödekan, interview.

⁴⁹⁹ Ahunbay, interview.

(with Zeynep Ahunbay and Robert Ousterhout)—to endangered sites across Anatolia such as Dara, Ayatekla (Silifke), and Binbirkilise (Karaman).⁵⁰⁰ As Zeynep Ahunbay recalled, “He sought out subjects that were unexplored yet intriguing... especially in the Southeast, where he eventually dedicated many years of research, Dara being one of such places.”⁵⁰¹ She also emphasized the challenges of this work: “In those days, getting to these places was not easy—transport, housing, local permissions, everything took time. But he believed it was essential work. He was never discouraged.”⁵⁰²

Equally influential was his teaching. Ahunbay stressed drawing and on-site learning as essential methods: “He would take students around so they could see with their own eyes, ask questions on site; that was his educational approach.”⁵⁰³ From 1971 until his retirement in 2002, he supervised numerous theses and field projects, training students to combine architectural history with conservation science and archaeology. His institutional legacy was strengthened by continuity: several of his doctoral students, including Yegan Kahya Sayar (PhD 1992) and Turgut Saner (PhD 1995), remained at ITU and trained their own students in Byzantine architecture and conservation. His quiet but firm mentorship ensured a durable lineage of Byzantine scholarship at ITU, carried forward by his students into teaching, conservation, and research.

From Individual Legacy to Institutional Lineage: A Concluding Reflection

While both Eyice and Kuban were foundational to Byzantine studies in Türkiye, their institutional trajectories diverged sharply—shaped as much by personal disposition and academic philosophy as by structural and disciplinary factors. Both shared a deep, almost obsessive commitment to scholarship and left behind prolific bodies of work that reshaped the study of Türkiye’s architectural heritage. Yet their contrasting approaches to mentorship, collaboration, and authority produced profoundly different outcomes.

Kuban consistently presented himself as a scholar guided by humility, tolerance, and cooperation. He avoided conflict, treated collegiality as a professional virtue, and prioritized institutional openness.⁵⁰⁴ Combined with the environment at ITU—a setting

⁵⁰⁰ Zeynep Ahunbay, “Ayatekla, Binbirkilise ve Dara’da korumaya yönelik çalışmalar,” in *Metin Ahunbay’ın izinden: Ayatekla, Binbirkilise ve Dara/Anastasiopolis araştırmalarından özel konular*, ed. Turgut Saner, Bilge Ar, and Gizem Mater, Mimarlık Tarihi Dizisi 1 (İstanbul: İTÜ Vakfı Yayınları, 2017).

⁵⁰¹ Ahunbay, interview.

⁵⁰² Ahunbay, interview.

⁵⁰³ Ahunbay, interview.

⁵⁰⁴ Baykal, “Doğan Kuban,” 25 and 29.

receptive to interdisciplinarity and fieldwork—this temperament enabled him to mentor a new generation of scholars. His students carried forward both his intellectual interests and his institutional frameworks, creating a sustainable cluster of academic activity.

Eyice, by contrast, repeatedly described himself as “quick-tempered,” irritable, and fiercely independent.⁵⁰⁵ Though he never denied his brilliance, he acknowledged the difficulty of working with him. In his own accounts, the chair of Byzantine art was not a collective enterprise but an extension of his solitary labor. Distrust, resentment, and a tendency to cast colleagues and students as disappointments rather than successors marked much of his commentary. This created a high-achieving yet isolated model that limited the long-term institutionalization of Byzantine studies at Istanbul University. Kuban’s collaborative milieu with institutional backing thus stands in sharp contrast to Eyice’s solitary leadership, underscoring Kuban’s institutional entrepreneurship.

Despite these differences, both men shared relentless drive and remarkable scholarly productivity. Kuban’s sweeping syntheses and architectural histories, like Eyice’s meticulous studies of monuments and topographies, remain indispensable. Yet only one transformed intellectual brilliance into durable lineage. Kuban’s ability to mentor, delegate, and embed his vision institutionally ensured continuity; Eyice’s legacy, though rich in publications, proved fragile in transmission.

This divergence also reflects broader disciplinary and geographic patterns. The clusters that formed in Istanbul—around Eyice and Kuban alike—were shaped by the city’s material richness and the scholarly opportunities its Byzantine heritage offered. Monuments, archaeological sites, and international research made Istanbul a natural hub for material culture-based Byzantine studies.

Yet this intense focus on architecture and visual heritage left a gap: philology, textual study, and historical analysis remained peripheral. These fields instead found a foothold in Ankara, particularly at DTCF, where figures like Kurat and Baştav developed a parallel tradition rooted in source criticism, historical linguistics, and diplomatic studies.

Succession in Byzantine Textual and Historical Studies

Although early Byzantine scholarship in Türkiye largely centered on material culture, a parallel tradition grounded in textual scholarship began to take shape in Ankara. Anchored at DTCF, this tradition was spearheaded by figures such as Kurat and Baştav.

⁵⁰⁵ Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 433; Eyice, interview.

They did not establish lasting lineage within DTCF, but their work laid the groundwork for later Byzantine history studies.

One of the most significant obstacles was the severe linguistic barrier. Baştav repeatedly underscored that serious scholarship required knowledge of “at least six or seven ancient and modern languages.”⁵⁰⁶ This daunting requirement—including Byzantine Greek, Latin, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Persian, modern scholarly languages like French, German, and English—deterred many potential students. As İlber Ortaylı noted, “What we achieved in archaeology, we failed to do in linguistic fields... We could not teach these languages.”⁵⁰⁷

An instructive example is the case of İbrahim Kafesoğlu who was sent to Hungary alongside Baştav in the early 1940s. Yet, unlike Baştav, Kafesoğlu returned early due to war conditions and never resumed any engagement with Byzantinology. Ortaylı recalled, “Kafesoğlu was sent to Hungary for Byzantine studies, but he couldn’t succeed. He came back and turned to Seljuk history.”⁵⁰⁸ Kafesoğlu later became a central figure in the historiography of Turkish-Islamic synthesis and a leading ideologue of nationalist-conservative thought in the 1970s. His turn suggests that Byzantium’s fraught place in Turkish nationalism may have contributed to his rejection of the field.

A different kind of marginalization appears in Mahmut Şakiroğlu’s review of Eyice’s book on late Byzantine architecture. Şakiroğlu—himself a product of DTCF—sought to preempt nationalist anxiety that studying Byzantium meant “reviving a dead civilization.”⁵⁰⁹ He refuted this, arguing that the field’s value lay in clarifying obscure aspects of Turkish history. Yet his portrayal of Eyice as the sole authority, with no mention of scholars like Baştav or Kurat, underscores the fragmented recognition of the field.⁵¹⁰ It also highlighted the absence of a comprehensive Byzantine history in Turkish, only partly addressed by Baştav’s late publications and his posthumous textbook.

⁵⁰⁶ Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu*, 16.

⁵⁰⁷ İlber Ortaylı, “Oral History Interview with İlber Ortaylı,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 13 December 2022, 2022, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/ilber-ortayli/>.

⁵⁰⁸ Ortaylı, interview.

⁵⁰⁹ Mahmut H. Şakiroğlu, “Prof. Dr. Semavi Eyice. Son devir Bizans mimârisi,” *Belleten* 46, no. 184 (1982).

⁵¹⁰ An interesting account of Eyice exists in his memoirs. He criticizes Baştav for his lack of scholarly output and lengthy fellowships abroad comparing with himself, see Erdem, *Yaşayan efsane*, 432-32.

In this context, Melek Delilbaşı (1947–2022) stands out as a rare example of academic succession. She met Kurat during her high school years through family connections and recalled his early encouragement: “He would come to our home and look at the history books I was reading. He would say, 'Well done,' and cheer me on.”⁵¹¹ Kurat’s influence, coupled with the intellectual climate shaped by Baştav and others, guided her decision to join the Department of Medieval History. However, Kurat’s unexpected death in 1971 meant that she lost her mentor just as she was embarking on her academic career. Ortaylı notes: “Apart from the efforts during the imperial era and the early years of the Republic, the only person I know of who...developed an interest in Byzantium—and thus continued studying classical Greek as if she were a student again and even went further to obtain a scholarship to study in Greece—is Melek Delilbaşı.”⁵¹²

Delilbaşı’s career reflects a remarkable integration of textual analysis, socio-economic history, linguistic rigor, and international engagement. After joining the department in 1968, she completed her PhD in 1973 under Baştav. Her doctoral research was enriched by a fellowship at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, where she studied Byzantine Greek and attended seminars by prominent Byzantinists.⁵¹³ She later received fellowships from Dumbarton Oaks and conducted research at King’s College London and the British Museum. Following Halil İnalcık’s advice, she worked on Ottoman survey registers to compare Byzantine and Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Delilbaşı also played a major role in institution-building: chair of the History Department (1989–94), founder of the Department of Modern Greek Language and Literature (1990), and dean of DTCF (1995–2001). Internationally, she collaborated with Angeliki Laiou and Nikolaos Oikonomides, and served as president of the National Committee for Byzantine/East Roman Studies, overseeing preparations for the Twenty-fourth ICBS until its relocation.

According to her students, Delilbaşı stressed mastery of both source and modern languages. Şahin Kılıç recalled: “She had a principle that without knowledge of Greek and Ottoman Turkish, one could not pursue doctoral studies in Byzantine history.”⁵¹⁴ Murat Keçiş added: “She insisted on international training because that was her own path. Melek Delilbaşı was my greatest fortune in academic life because all the doors opened

⁵¹¹ Delilbaşı, interview.

⁵¹² Ortaylı, interview.

⁵¹³ Delilbaşı, interview.

⁵¹⁴ Kılıç, interview.

for me with her.”⁵¹⁵ Delilbaşı thus created a cluster at DTCF, though her students later dispersed to other universities.

Despite limits in continuity at DTCF itself, Delilbaşı bridged the field’s founders and its institutionalization. Her career shows how commitment to sources, leadership, and international ties could overcome barriers. As Keçiş put it, “The flag was picked up by Delilbaşı, but it never turned into institutional continuity.”⁵¹⁶ Still, her intellectual tradition endures through a dispersed network of students—Keçiş, Kılıç, Ferhan Kırıldökme Mollaoğlu, Nilgün Elam—who continue Byzantine history in Türkiye today.

Istanbul’s richness in Byzantine cultural heritage and its enduring magnetism for both Turkish and international scholars—including pioneering figures at Istanbul University and ITU—have long positioned the city as a natural center for the study of Byzantium. Yet Byzantine historical studies never developed in proportion to this potential at Istanbul University. Although both Steven Runciman—a historian—and Philippe Schweinfurt—an art historian—were invited to teach at the Byzantine Art Chair, they also offered courses on Byzantine history. These efforts, however, remained isolated. As Eyice would later observe with resignation, “No one came after them to continue with Byzantine history.”⁵¹⁷ Eyice himself was once urged to step into this gap by none other than Mükremin Halil Yinanç—the head of Medieval History Chair—who, just weeks before his death in 1961, said to him: “‘Semavi, why don’t you take on Byzantine history?’” Eyice declined: “‘That’s not my domain,’ I told him.” He explained that the field required mastery of sources: “You have to actually know the sources. Fikret Işıltan devoted himself to this work—he translated a few things at least. But we still don’t really know how to use Byzantine sources.” In fact, as early as 1948, Eyice had turned down an assistantship in the History Department, choosing instead to pursue art history.⁵¹⁸

This lacuna was never filled, even as occasional efforts emerged. In February 1939, Cavit Baysun—then an acting lecturer in Western medieval history—wrote his associate professorship thesis on the Paulicians, reflecting a rare and serious engagement with early Byzantine history. He passed his exams with distinction, demonstrating unusual depth in

⁵¹⁵ Murat Keçiş, “Oral History Interview with Murat Keçiş,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 10 November 2022, 2022, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/murat-kecis/>.

⁵¹⁶ Keçiş, interview.

⁵¹⁷ Eyice, “Bizans çalışmaları ve arkeoloji,” 36.

⁵¹⁸ Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 263.

early Byzantine history.⁵¹⁹ Shortly after, his trajectory shifted abruptly. By June 1939, Baysun was officially assigned, by Rector Cemil Bilsel, to conduct archival research on the Tanzimat era for a new commemorative publication marking its centenary. From that point forward, he was redirected into Turkish and Ottoman history. It is especially telling that both Runciman and Schweinfurth were later invited to Istanbul University in the early 1940s to teach Byzantine history—despite a Turkish scholar having already qualified in the field only a few years earlier.

Fikret Işıltan (1915–1997) was among the few who tried to sustain Byzantine history at Istanbul University after the early period. Trained in the German academic tradition, he translated key works, most notably Georg Ostrogorsky’s *History of the Byzantine State*. Yet his translations were based on modern European editions rather than original Greek or Latin, reflecting a broader limitation in the field: the lack of scholars trained in source languages. His most prominent student, Işın Demirkent (1948–2006), followed a similar path. A respected scholar of the Crusades, she translated major late Byzantine texts, including the chronicles of Michael Psellos and Niketas Choniates, but again often worked through French, Latin, or other modern editions rather than directly from Byzantine Greek. She was fully aware of these limits. Ebru Altan recalled that she would “base her translations on the original texts, compare them with German and English versions, and consult classicists for final verification.”⁵²⁰ While her publications and translations provided critical scaffolding for the field, her scholarship remained anchored more in Latin-oriented Crusader studies than in Byzantine historiography.⁵²¹

Both Işıltan and Demirkent faced skepticism, even within academia. Altan recalled them saying that in those years, studying Byzantium or the Crusades was likened to

⁵¹⁹ Münir Aktepe, “Ord. Prof. M. Cavit Baysun,” *Belleten* 33, no. 129 (January 1969): 100. Aktepe noted that Baysun’s three-hour colloquium on his proposed topic on iconoclasm and subsequent trial lecture on the sixth-century Byzantine military organization demonstrated his scholarly competence and fully justified his appointment as associate professor.

⁵²⁰ Ebru Altan, “Oral History Interview with Ebru Altan,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 10 January 2023, 2023, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/ebru-altan/>.

⁵²¹ See Fahameddin Başar, “Prof. Dr. Işın Demirkent’in hayatı ve eserleri,” in *Prof. Dr. Işın Demirkent anısına*, ed. Abdülkerim Özaydın et al. (Dünya Yayıncılık, 2008); Melek Delilbaşı, “Işın Hoca görevini tam anlamıyla yerine getirmişti,” in *Prof. Dr. Işın Demirkent anısına*, ed. Abdülkerim Özaydın et al. (Dünya Yayıncılık, 2008); Nevra Necipoğlu, “Prof. Dr. Işın Demirkent: Türkiye’de haçlı seferleri tarihi alanındaki çalışmaların ilk temsilcisi,” in *Prof. Dr. Işın Demirkent anısına*, ed. Abdülkerim Özaydın et al. (Dünya Yayıncılık, 2008).

“selling snails in a Muslim neighborhood.”⁵²² In Demirkent’s case, this sometimes took gendered forms; admired for her elegance, she was told she should “be a model instead” rather than pursue Byzantine history. Yet both scholars firmly argued that Byzantine history was integral to understanding Anatolian Turkish history, and they worked to make Byzantine sources accessible in Turkish. As Altan emphasized, this perspective shaped the department from the start: Byzantine and Crusader history were treated as essential components of medieval history, always taught as independent courses. Demirkent often underlined the point with her refrain: “We are the heirs of Byzantium—not only through wars, but also through cultural, economic, and social interactions.”

One of the most revealing personal accounts of the challenges surrounding Byzantine studies at Istanbul University comes from Kılıç, who later completed his doctorate under Delilbaşı at DTCF. As a young graduate student, he was assigned a topic on earthquakes in Byzantine-era Bursa, which required consulting primary sources. Lacking familiarity with the corpus and unable to locate appropriate materials, he sought help from Demirkent. As he recounted, she pointed to her private library—comprising nearly the entire *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*—but discouraged him from continuing in the field, citing the difficulty of accessing sources without Latin or Greek. “She told me, quite bluntly, that I wouldn’t be able to manage this field and should consider giving it up,” he recalled.⁵²³ Though disheartening, Kılıç described the encounter as a turning point in his academic path. The episode reflects a larger structural issue: the persistent gap between interest in Byzantium and the practical tools needed to study it. Demirkent’s response, while rooted in an insistence on rigorous philological preparation, reflects the limited institutional pathways available to students at the time. For many aspiring Byzantinists, the absence of mentorship, language training, and access to sources served as formidable barriers—often reinforced rather than alleviated by the very figures positioned to lead the field.

3.6 Conclusion to Chapter 3

This chapter has examined the formative phase of Byzantine studies in Türkiye through the lenses of institutional theory and the Four-Stage Model. Despite individual excellence

⁵²² Altan, interview.

⁵²³ Kılıç, interview.

and scholarly production, the field remained in a prolonged state of “normal stage,” lacking the organizational structures necessary for disciplinary consolidation.

Semavi Eyice exemplified the intellectual leader whose influence in Byzantine art history was unmatched, yet whose mentorship style and institutional approach hindered generational continuity despite decades of teaching. His legacy is not entirely void of succession, however. Ironically, the few students he distanced or discouraged later became influential figures elsewhere, contributing to the field beyond the institutional confines of Istanbul University. This paradox highlights the disconnect between intellectual centrality and organizational leadership in Eyice’s career.

In contrast, Doğan Kuban combined intellectual and organizational leadership, fostering a collaborative academic environment at ITU that enabled the emergence of a scholarly cluster in Byzantine architectural studies. His case highlights the importance of institutional entrepreneurship in sustaining disciplinary growth.

In Byzantine history, the contributions of Akdes Nimet Kurat and Şerif Baştav at DTCF were foundational but constrained by nationalist paradigms and institutional instability. Meanwhile, at Istanbul University, Byzantine history never evolved into a distinct academic field, remaining largely embedded within broader narratives of the Crusades. The absence of structural development was compounded by the lack of training in ancient languages, which prevented sustained engagement with primary sources and limited the field’s institutional autonomy.

As the next chapters will demonstrate, social network analysis (SNA) not only helps visualize these patterns of influence, rupture, and continuity, but also provides a quantitative framework to compare scholarly positions, hierarchies, and centralities within the field. By mapping academic lineages, institutional affiliations, and network measures, SNA offers an empirical lens on the trajectories first traced here.

In sum, the pioneering figures’ ability to provide lasting continuity and foster organizational leadership was uneven, deeply intertwined with personal attitudes, institutional circumstances, and broader academic climates. The students of these pioneers—together with a new generation of scholars who pursued Byzantine studies abroad—carried the field forward, laying crucial groundwork for the subsequent emergence of structured, collaborative disciplinary networks in Türkiye, as will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 – Charting the Field: Dissertations as Cognitive, Social, and Institutional Artifacts

The previous chapter traced the pioneering scholars who laid the foundations of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, while also highlighting the structural, ideological, and institutional limits that constrained the discipline's consolidation.

This chapter shifts from individual trajectories to systemic patterns, using the corpus of master's and doctoral theses produced since the 1930s as its primary lens. These dissertations are treated not as isolated outputs but as cognitive, social, and institutional artifacts that reflect research paradigms, mentorship practices, and academic affiliations. Viewed collectively, they illuminate genealogies, thematic priorities, and evolving infrastructures of scholarly production—revealing patterns of continuity, diversification, and constraint that extend beyond the influence of individual pioneers.

The chapter is organized into four sections: 4.1 outlines the conceptual framework for interpreting theses as embedded academic products; 4.2 provides a quantitative overview of disciplinary and institutional trends; 4.3 offers an interpretive analysis of themes, mentorship, and institutional dynamics; and 4.4 synthesizes the patterns and tensions that shaped the field's development.

4.1 Dissertations as Data: Conceptual and Analytical Framework

This section outlines a framework for analyzing graduate theses not as isolated works but as products of academic systems. Master's theses often reflect exploratory or formative engagements with Byzantine studies, while doctoral dissertations represent sustained, original research that establishes scholarly standing. The analysis rests on three interrelated dimensions:

- i. **The cognitive dimension** addresses the content of the theses—their research topics, methodological orientations, chronologies, and theoretical frameworks.
- ii. **The social dimension** highlights the relational structures of thesis production, including patterns of supervision, co-supervision, jury participation, and academic lineage.
- iii. **The institutional dimension** examines the university settings, disciplinary affiliations, and conditions that shape where and how theses are produced.

To analyze these dimensions systematically, the chapter applies a two-tiered framework. The first tier, thematic centrality, gauges how directly a thesis engages with Byzantine studies, distinguishing between core, heritage, and contextual topics. The second, disciplinary orientation, situates theses within two main epistemic formations: material and visual culture studies (MVCS) and historical and textual Studies (HTS). This scaffolding underpins the analysis that follows, providing tools to assess differentiation, coherence, and fragmentation in the field.

4.1.1 Operational Methodology: Clustering, Coding, and Classification

The coding and classification processes underpinning this chapter's interpretive framework were developed inductively through manual review and categorization of 1,478 thesis records, covering the period from the 1930s to April 2025. Three distinct procedures structured the operational methodology:

1. Thematic Categorization (Categories 1–9):

Each thesis was assigned to one of nine categories based on its central focus, as reflected in its title and abstract (when available).⁵²⁴ Core and Comparative Theses (Categories 1–6) engage directly with Byzantine civilization; Heritage and Technical Theses (Category 7) focus on documentation and conservation; and Contextual or Peripheral Theses (Categories 8–9) use Byzantine material or frameworks to analyze later or adjacent historical phenomena.

2. Disciplinary Orientation (MVCS vs. HTS):

Disciplinary affiliation was coded according to department and methodology, yielding a broad bifurcation between MVCS (e.g., art history, archaeology, architectural history) and HTS (e.g., history, philology, theology, etc.).⁵²⁵ In hybrid cases, dominant emphasis determined coding.

⁵²⁴ Theses were categorized by primary focus, interdisciplinarity, and the degree to which Byzantine studies were integral. Theses discussing Byzantium as part of a broader analysis were included if they contributed meaningfully. Highly technical works with little relevance to Byzantine studies were excluded. Interdisciplinary theses where Byzantium was secondary were retained to reflect the field's integrative scope. Introduction and conclusion chapters were consulted where necessary.

⁵²⁵ Each thesis was tagged with a disciplinary affiliation using the first topic (konu) assigned in the YÖK database. For theses with multiple tags, only the primary field was used; where data were missing, disciplinary context was inferred from the title and content.

Material and Visual Culture Studies (MVCS): Anthropology, Archaeometry, Archeology, Architecture, Art History, Civil Engineering, Crafts, Earthquake Engineering, Energy, Fine Arts, Forensic Medicine, Geodesy and Photogrammetry, Geological Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Marine, Museology, Performing and Visual Arts, Tourism, Urban and Regional Planning.

3. Content Analysis and Keyword Clustering:

To explore the cognitive dimension, 130 high-frequency root keywords were manually extracted from thesis titles and standardized across linguistic variations.⁵²⁶ These keywords were grouped into eleven thematic clusters capturing recurring research patterns. Frequency data by decade, thesis category, and disciplinary home enabled temporal and thematic mapping across the dataset.

Together, these coding layers render the dissertation corpus a multidimensional dataset—capturing not only what is studied, but also how, by whom, and under what conditions.

4.2 Overview of the Dissertation Corpus

4.2.1 Scope and Limitations of the Data

This subsection outlines the scope, construction, and limitations of the dataset underpinning this study. Compiled through automated searches and manual review, it provides the empirical foundation for statistical and interpretive analyses, illuminating the cognitive, social, and institutional evolution of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

Sources and Construction of the Dataset

The dataset was built through keyword searches in the Council of Higher Education's (YÖK) National Thesis Center database (hereafter YÖK database) using terms such as “Byzantium,” “Byzantine,” “East Rome/Roman,” and “Late Antique,” across titles, keywords, and abstracts. These searches initially produced nearly 3,000 records, which were cross-checked against additional sources such as academic CVs, university websites, the YÖK Academic Search Engine, and the Bibliography Project. After removing duplicates and errors, 3,159 valid records remained for review.

Each thesis was then manually assessed for relevance by consulting abstracts, tables of contents, and introductions or conclusions. 1,000 theses were excluded as Byzantine

Historical and Textual Studies (HTS): Ancient Linguistics and Cultures, Bibliography, Biography, Comparative Literature, Economics, Education and Training, Folklore, History, International Relations, Law, Linguistics, Philosophy, Psychology, Public Administration, Public Relations, Religion, Sociology, Turkish Language and Literature.

⁵²⁶ Content analysis focused on thesis titles, which usually distill theme, object, period, or method.

Keywords were compiled manually, standardized (e.g., *Bizans*, *Byzantine*, *Byzantinischen*), and clustered by function—object of study (coin, church), temporal/geographic setting (13th c., Cappadocia), or interpretive frame (political, Christian). The dataset includes 5,000+ keyword occurrences grouped into eleven thematic clusters (see Appendix 7).

content was negligible, incidental, or merely used as a chronological marker.⁵²⁷ In addition, 681 theses were also excluded for adopting a long-durée perspective where the Byzantine component was marginal—such as archaeological catalogues covering multiple eras with only limited Byzantine material.⁵²⁸ Borderline cases were judged according to the extent to which Byzantine studies formed a sustained and substantial part of the research. The final dataset comprises 1,478 theses that engage meaningfully with Byzantine history, art, architecture, archaeology, culture, or historiography.⁵²⁹

A distinctive feature of this dataset is the inclusion of supervisor and jury information, compiled manually. Of the 1,478 theses, 1,470 list supervisors and 57 list co-supervisors. Jury composition is available for 949 theses (65%), yielding 2,431 identified jury members—an average of 3.6 committee members (including supervisors) per thesis.⁵³⁰ The remaining 529 theses (35%) lack jury data, primarily due to post-2020 policy changes that removed approval pages from the YÖK database or restrictions on older theses.

Institutional affiliation was also entered manually. Graduate students who later joined academia were recorded with both their thesis institutions and subsequent professional posts, while supervisors and jury members with multiple appointments were linked to the institution relevant to the thesis date. Finally, to support analysis and accessibility, a repository of 1,262 theses (about 85% of the dataset) was assembled from the National Thesis Center database and other open-access sources.

Classification and Categorization

As outlined in 4.1.1, theses were grouped into nine thematic categories developed through close review of titles and abstracts. These range from core and comparative studies

⁵²⁷ Some abstracts included only generic references, such as: “Karaman, formerly known as Laranda, is a settlement with a long history, having hosted many civilizations such as the Phrygians, Lydians, Persians, Romans, and the Byzantine Empire,” in a thesis on contemporary craftspeople in Karaman (Thesis No. 544796). Another case is a thesis on adultery laws (Thesis No. 97386), which claimed: “Following the establishment of relations between the Ottoman and Byzantine empires, changes occurred in the status of women, most clearly reflected in the introduction of the harem concept to Turkish society”—a recurring but superficial trope of Byzantine influence.

⁵²⁸ Such works often span broad timelines—like geography studies of settlements—or focus on archaeological catalogues where Byzantine material is marginal. For instance, a doctoral thesis on Patara (Thesis No. 489020) catalogued architectural ornamentation from multiple eras, with less than 15% from the 4th–5th centuries CE, labeled simply as “East Roman” rather than situated in a Byzantine context.

⁵²⁹ Theses that were retrieved by the selected keywords and dealt with post-Byzantine research topics were also included in the study as they required knowledge of Byzantine civilization.

⁵³⁰ The required number of jury members is three for master’s theses (including the supervisor and at least one external member) and five for doctoral dissertations (including the supervisor and external members). These rules, however, have varied over time.

(Categories 1–6) to heritage and technical analyses (Category 7) and more peripheral contextual applications (Categories 8–9) (Table 4.1). Each thesis was also tagged by disciplinary affiliation, broadly divided into MVCS and HTS.

Table 4.1: Graduate theses by thesis category, group and type

No	Category	Group	Master's	PhD	Total
1	Primary Focus on Byzantine or Late Antique Civilization	Core, Comparative, and Cross-Cultural Theses of Late Antique and Byzantine Studies	643	220	863
2	Studies of Byzantine Influence on Neighboring or Related Cultures		27	10	37
3	Comparative Studies of Byzantine Themes to Other Civilizations or Periods		27	10	37
4	Studies of Relations and Interactions with Byzantium		88	20	108
5	Studies of Neighboring Civilizations Geographically or Thematically Close to Byzantium		80	26	106
6	Modern Interpretations or Uses of Byzantium in Contemporary Contexts		35	13	48
7	Technical Studies of Byzantine Heritage Documentation, Conservation, Restoration	Heritage and Technical Theses of Late Antique and Byzantine Studies	116	19	135
8	Byzantine Sources Supporting Turks/Ottomans or Other Periods/Cultures	Contextual or Peripheral Theses (Byzantine Studies as Contextual Support)	27	13	40
9	Byzantium-to-Turks/Ottomans Transition Studies		79	25	104
	Total		1,122	356	1,478

Table 4.2: Graduate theses by disciplinary affiliation and type.

Disciplinary Affiliation	Master's	PhD	Total
Historical and Textual Studies	432	116	548
Material and Visual Culture Studies	690	240	930
Total	1,122	356	1,478

Limitations and Challenges

The YÖK database records keywords in two ways: (1) an active search field (*dizin*) and (2) terms listed in abstracts but not indexed. The search field is often blank or inaccurate,

even in recent theses, and keywords in abstracts do not always match. As a result, relying on this field alone proved unreliable. Broader searches across all fields (title, keywords, and full abstracts) produced more comprehensive results but also many irrelevant records, making the process highly labor-intensive.

Post-2020 privacy rules removed approval pages from many theses, eliminating jury data for a large portion of recent work. Some still include names but without signatures; others list only the author and supervisor. Where possible, acknowledgment pages were checked to identify jury members, since such data are not stored in YÖK.

Name variations (e.g., marriage, transliteration, abbreviations) caused occasional duplication or ambiguity. Supervisor and jury affiliations also required manual correction to reflect the institution at the time of thesis completion.⁵³¹ Finally, gender analysis could not be undertaken due to the absence of consistent and reliable data.

Future Refinements

Further keyword searches in the YÖK database—for terms such as “church,” “Armenia/Armenian,” “Georgia/Georgian,” and “Crusades”—may reveal additional relevant theses. Incorporating gender data through name disambiguation and external verification would enable analysis of gendered access and recognition. Theses completed abroad were included where possible, but the absence of a central repository means this remains incomplete. Expanding coverage of foreign dissertations and enriching metadata (e.g., citation counts, distribution of primary and secondary sources, language of writing, abstract content) would deepen the dataset’s analytical potential.

This project advances earlier studies by combining extensive manual review with validation beyond keyword reliance. With 1,478 theses—including 863 core Byzantine studies—it surpasses previous datasets in scope and granularity, while offering a networked view of mentorship and institutional collaboration.⁵³² By also capturing theses where Byzantium figured within interdisciplinary inquiries, the dataset supports both macro-level trend analysis and fine-grained interpretation.

⁵³¹ There were several instances of scholars/students who shared the same name and surname yielding to awkward situations such as graduate students supervising theses before completing their own theses. These were identified and their names in the database were slightly changed to create a distinction among them.

⁵³² Kitapçı Bayrı, “Growing Interest”; Kılıç, “Byzantine Studies in Turkish Universities.” Theses analyzed as Byzantine studies by Kitapçı Bayrı and Kılıç (480 and 562) also include theses from non-core categories in this analysis, thus the comparable number is 1,478 rather than 863.

4.2.2 Quantitative Observations

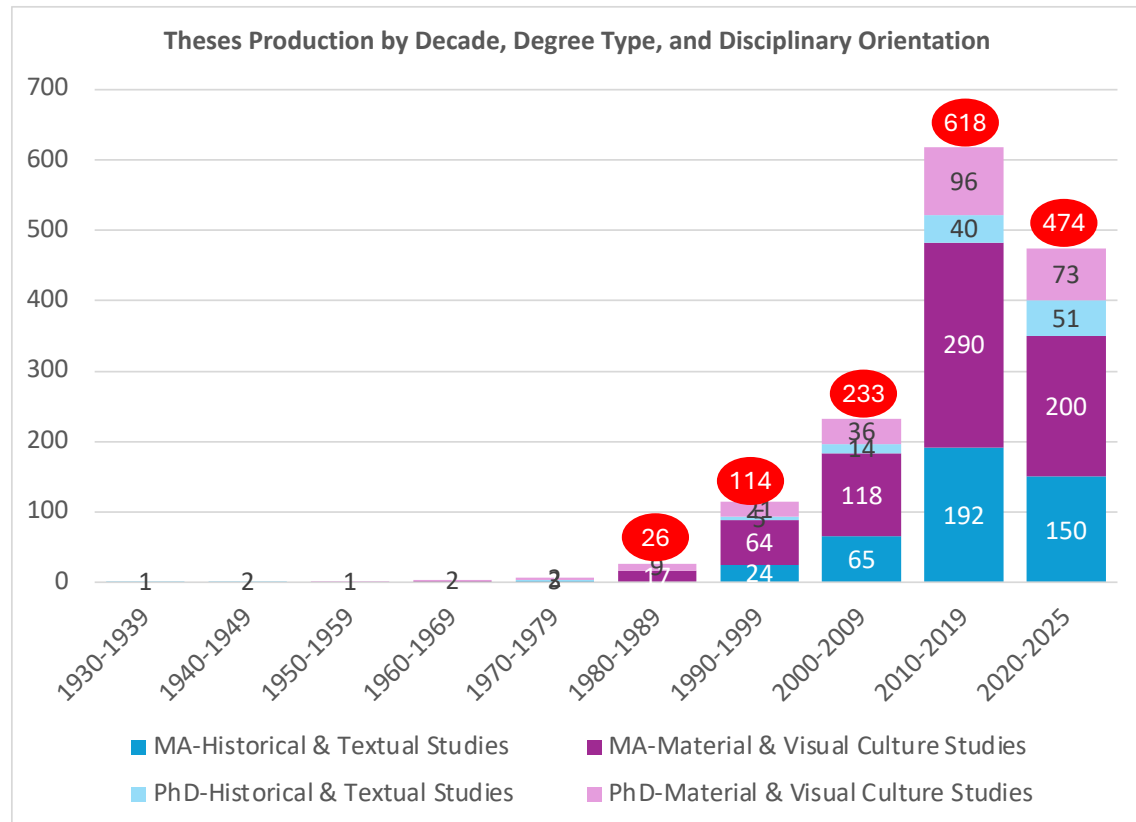
Thesis Production by Decade

Figure 4.1: Thesis production by decade, degree type, and disciplinary orientation.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the evolution of Byzantine studies in Türkiye across nearly a century, analyzing thesis output by decade, degree level (master's vs. doctoral), and disciplinary orientation-between MVCS and HTS. Several key patterns emerge:

- Thesis production remained modest until the early 2000s, after which it rose steeply. In the 1980s, only 26 theses were produced; in the 1990s this number quadrupled to 114. The 2000s saw a further doubling to 233, while the 2010s witnessed an unprecedented surge with 618 theses in a single decade. By the midpoint of the 2020s, 474 had already been completed, showing that the momentum continues.
- MVCS accounts for 63% (930 over 1,478) of the corpus overall, but this dominance masks important shifts. In the 1980s, history theses virtually disappeared; before then, the small field had been more balanced, with six HTS theses against seven MVCS. History reemerged in the 1990s at under 20% of output, rose to about 30% in the 2000s, and rose above 40% in recent years.

- While the overall share of doctoral theses in the corpus is below 25% (356 over 1,478), there is a slight increase in recent years which is accompanied by a shift in disciplinary orientation. In the first decade of the 2000s, they accounted for 21% and 36 of 50 (72%) were MVCS. In the 2010s, they accounted for 22% and more than 70% were still MVCS, but since 2020 doctoral theses' share increased to 26% and MVCS share decreased to less than 60% marking a growth in HTS doctoral theses.

The persistently low number of HTS-focused theses reflects barriers of language training, source access, and institutional investment, while MVCS fields provide more accessible, field-based pathways tied to faculty hiring and heritage institutions. Yet these trends highlight both the consolidation of MVCS and the gradual rise of HTS.

Disciplinary Breakdown

Figure 4.2 presents the top fifteen primary disciplinary affiliations for graduate theses in Byzantine studies in Türkiye, broken down by thematic group: Core and Comparative, Heritage and Technical, and Contextual or Peripheral.

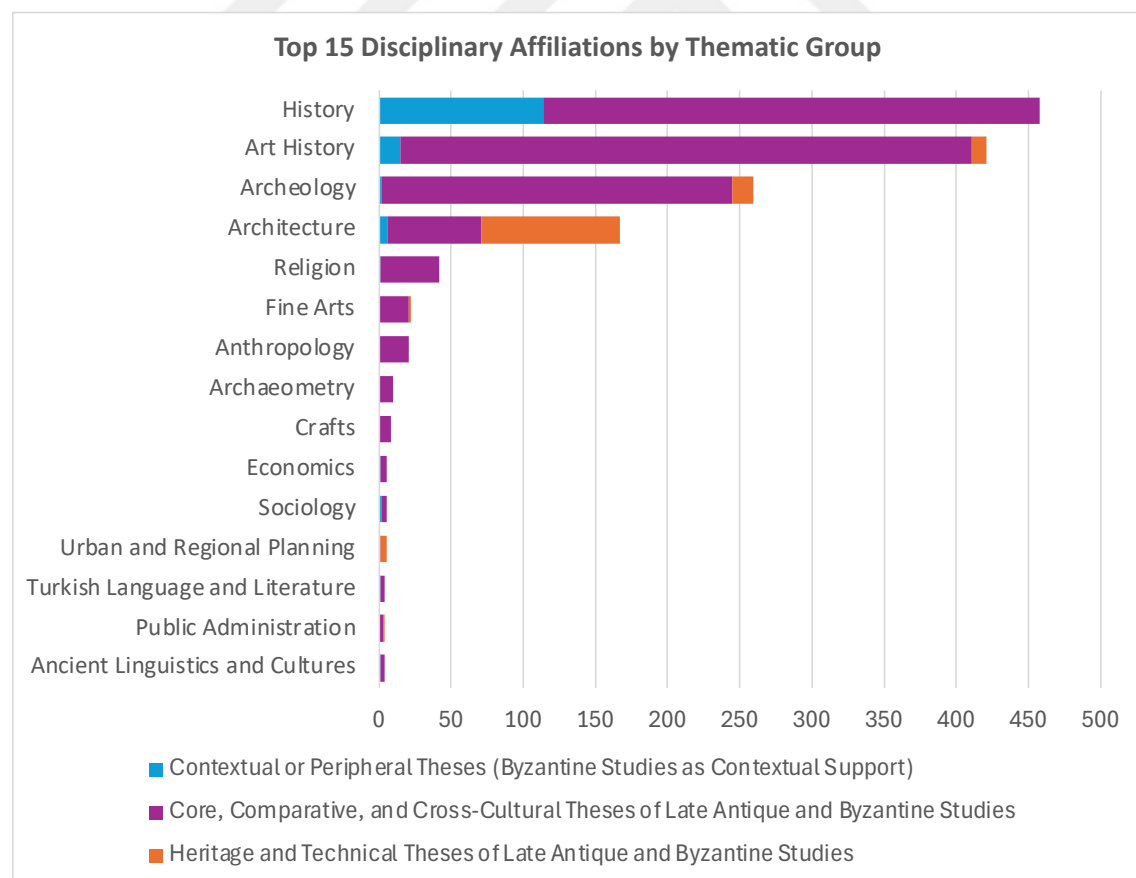


Figure 4.2: Top 15 primary disciplinary affiliations.

- History is the most frequently assigned affiliation, though many such theses fall into the Contextual or Peripheral group, often embedding Byzantium into broader Turkish, Seljuk, or Ottoman narratives.
- Art History, archaeology, and architecture dominate the Core and Comparative group, forming the backbone of Byzantine studies through analyses of monuments, artifacts, and visual culture.
- The Heritage and Technical group is most strongly represented by architecture, reflecting a robust tradition of conservation, documentation, and heritage-focused research. These frequently originate from architecture and engineering faculties and are often affiliated with major restoration or preservation projects.
- Disciplines such as religion, anthropology, and sociology appear in more modest numbers and contribute almost entirely to the Core and Comparative group. Religion theses tend to focus on patristic theology or interreligious dynamics; anthropology theses are rooted in bio-archaeological analysis of skeletal remains; and sociology theses support structured historical inquiries rather than reception-based or cultural memory frameworks.

The chart confirms how Byzantine studies in Türkiye has been anchored in material and visual culture, while historical and textual approaches remain more limited.

Institutional Contribution

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 offer a dual view of the institutional landscape of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Figure 4.3 groups universities by thematic focus—core, heritage, and contextual theses—while Figure 4.4 maps their orientation toward MVCS or HTS. They reveal uneven distributions in both thematic focus and disciplinary orientation, shaped by local traditions, departmental structures, and individual mentorship.

- Istanbul Technical University (ITU), Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, and Yıldız Technical University are strongholds of heritage and technical theses, consistent with their disciplinary emphasis on architectural history, documentation, and conservation. Their thesis output reflects the integration of Byzantine studies into broader institutional mandates for cultural heritage preservation.
- Figure 4.3 highlights further nuances. Istanbul University leads in total output, spanning core, heritage, and contextual theses, reflecting both its size and breadth. Hacettepe, by contrast, is overwhelmingly concentrated in core theses, underscoring

its art history department's specialization. ITU, Mimar Sinan, and Yıldız Teknik dominate in heritage and technical theses, consistent with their architectural and conservation mandates. Boğaziçi stands out for contextual theses, especially studies of Turkish–Byzantine encounters. Mid-sized universities such as Dokuz Eylül, Uludağ, Selçuk, and Anadolu show increasing activity after 2000, signaling the diffusion of Byzantine studies across Türkiye's expanding higher education landscape.

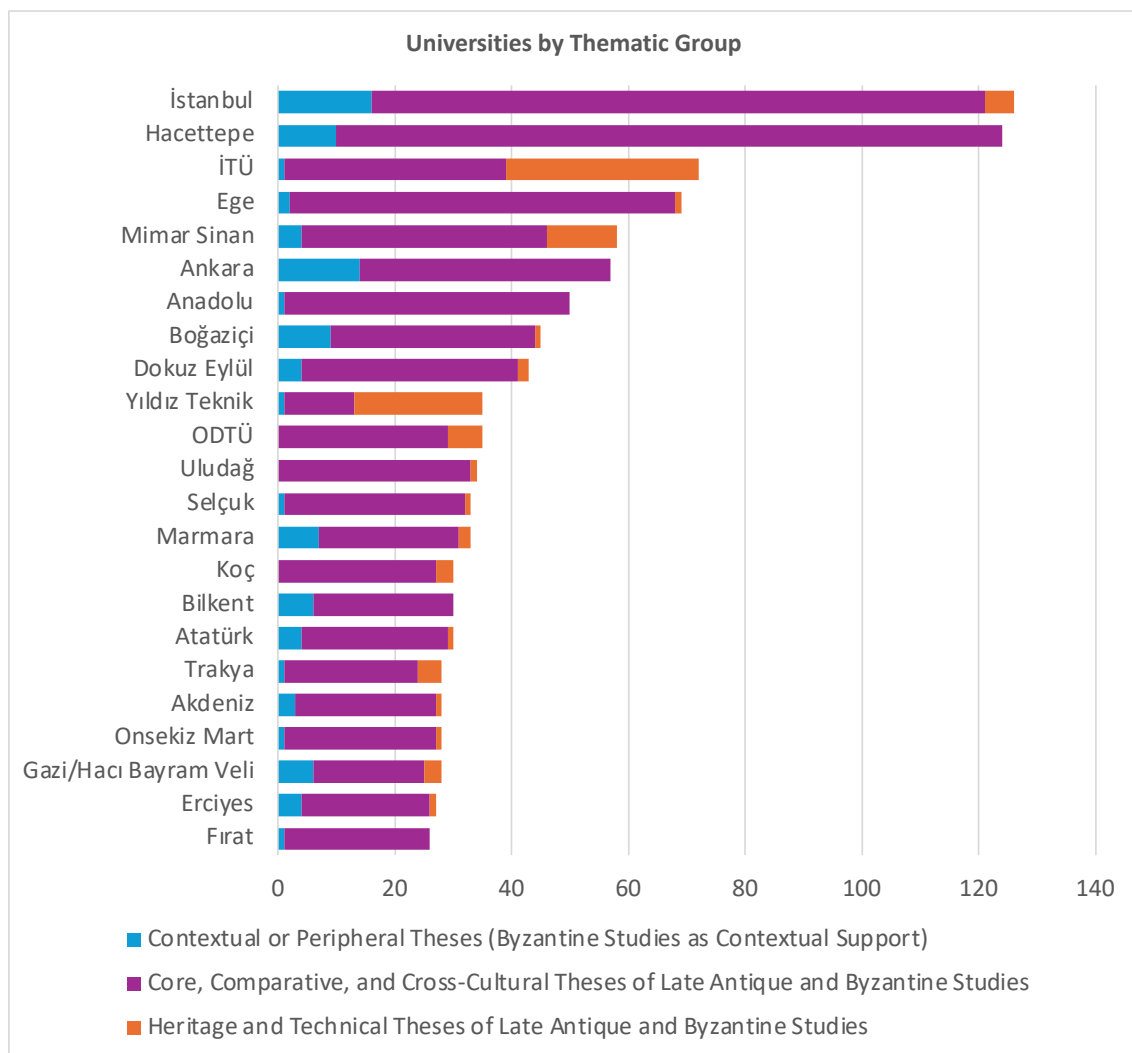


Figure 4.3: Top universities by thematic group.

- Most institutions fall on the material and visual culture side in Figure 4.4. Hacettepe (91% MVCS), ITU (97% MVCS), Mimar Sinan (69% MVCS), and Yıldız Teknik (94% MVCS) are strongholds of architectural history, art history, and conservation,

producing large numbers of heritage-focused theses. Ege, Uludağ, Selçuk, Atatürk, Akdeniz, Onsekiz Mart, Trakya, Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ), Anadolu, Koç, and Erciyes also skew heavily toward MVCS, with Byzantium primarily addressed through archaeology, restoration, or art-historical frames.

- A small group stand out for their relative focus in historical and textual studies. Fırat University is unique, with all 26 theses in HTS, though its overall output is modest. Boğaziçi (80% HTS) and Marmara (76% HTS) also lean strongly toward textual research, reflecting mentorship traditions in history and philology. Ankara University (58% HTS) sustains a more balanced but still HTS-leaning profile.
- Several institutions bridge the divide between textual and material approaches. Bilkent (50% HTS) is evenly split, while Istanbul University (45% HTS) and Dokuz Eylül (44% HTS) show nearly balanced portfolios, with both textual scholarship and material culture well represented. Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli (46% HTS) also fits this group, supporting cross-coverage despite a smaller overall volume.

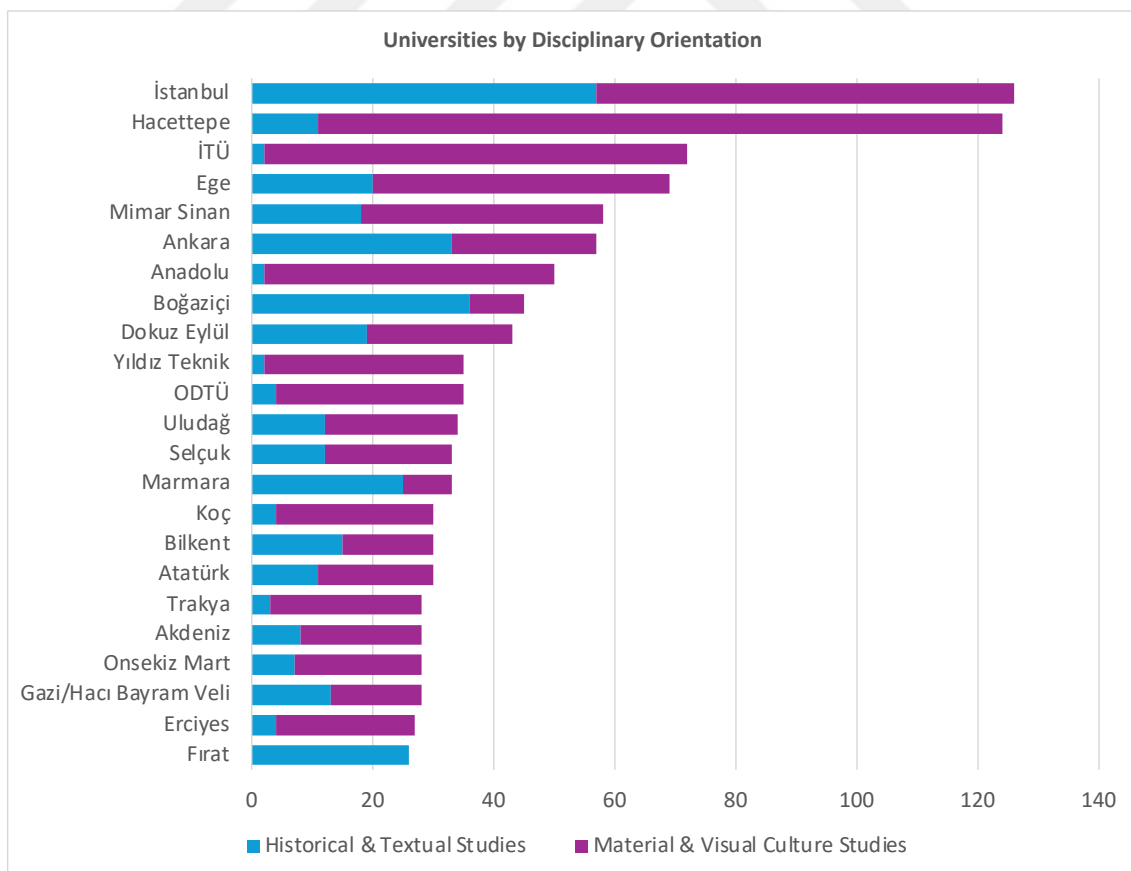


Figure 4.4: Top universities by disciplinary orientation.

Together, these patterns demonstrate that the institutional development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye has been uneven, with MVCS forming the dominant scholarly infrastructure. HTS remains secondary, both in terms of thesis output and institutional visibility. While a few universities have supported broader thematic or interdisciplinary work, the field's expansion has followed an asymmetrical trajectory, shaped by disciplinary availability, mentorship capacity, and university-specific traditions.

Supervisory Patterns

Figure 4.5 illustrates the top 30 supervisors in Byzantine studies in Türkiye by the number of graduate theses they have advised, separated by master's (purple) and PhD (blue) degree types. The data offers a snapshot of institutional mentorship capacity, disciplinary orientation, and generational turnover within the field.

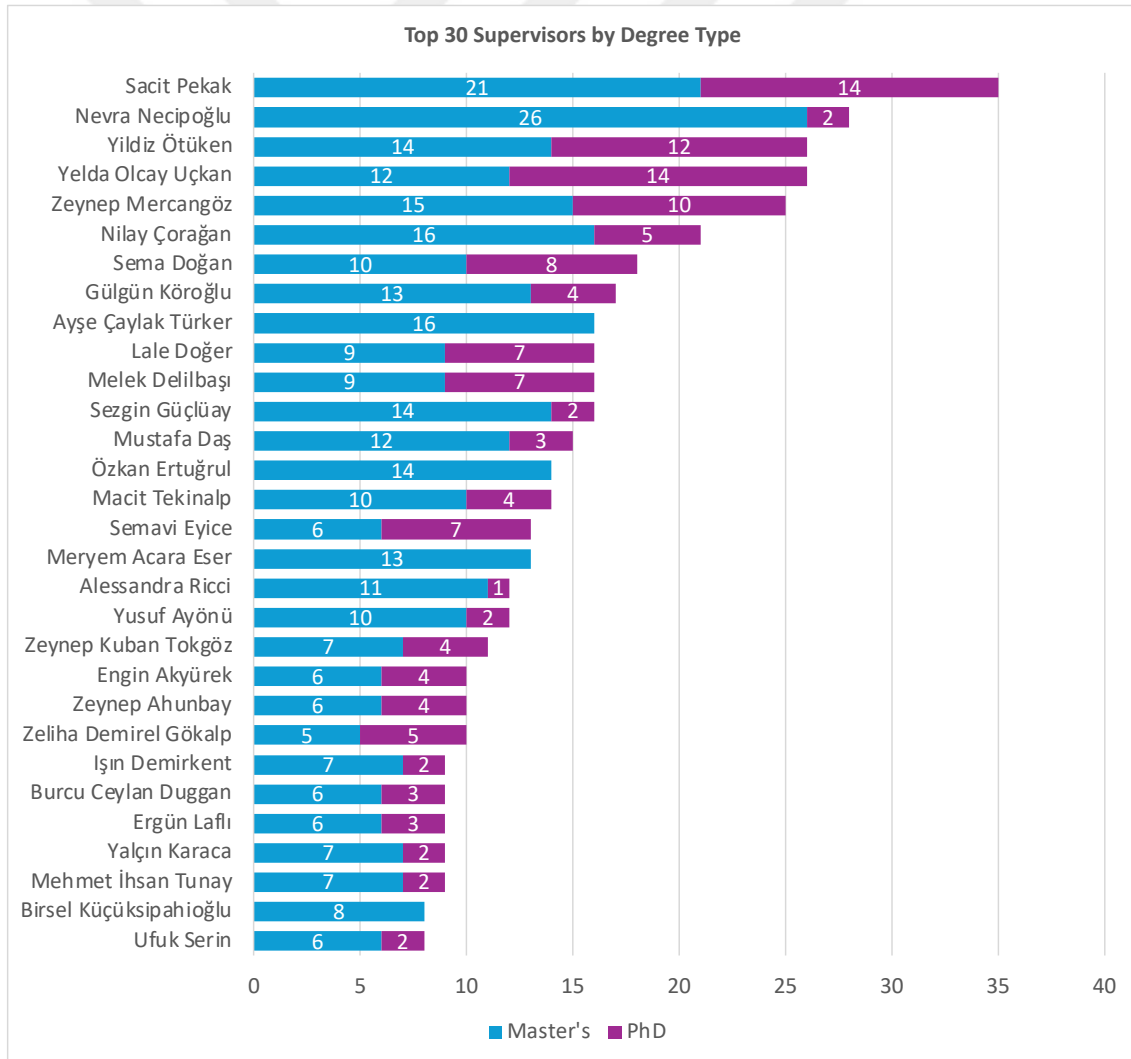


Figure 4.5: Top 30 supervisors by number of theses supervised and degree type.

- Sacit Pekak (Hacettepe) with 21 master's and 14 doctoral theses, reflecting the depth of the Hacettepe cluster and its consistent output in MVCS.
- Nevra Necipoğlu (Boğaziçi) has supervised a high number of master's theses but relatively few PhDs, a pattern tied not to limited engagement but a mentorship model channeling students abroad.
- Yelda Olcay Uçkan, Zeynep Mercangöz, and Sema Doğan show balanced master's and PhD supervision, contributing significantly to the post-2000 generational expansion of the field. Nilay Çorağan and Gülgün Köroğlu also contribute to this growth of the field predominantly by supervising master's theses.
- Among other contributors, Ayşe Çaylak Türker, Özkan Ertuğrul, and Meryem Acara Eser appear exclusively in master's supervision reflecting the lack of PhD programs.
- Yıldız Ötügen, Melek Delilbaşı, and Semavi Eyice stand out for sustained PhD supervision. As institutional leaders and field-builders, they helped establish the academic infrastructure and intellectual credibility needed for the development of Byzantine studies.
- Apart from Delilbaşı, only six of the thirty supervisors are historians: Sezgin Güçlüay, Mustafa Daş, Yusuf Ayönü, Işın Demirkent, and Birsal Küçüksipahioğlu. The chart is otherwise dominated by MVCS scholars, especially in art history, archaeology, and architecture. This imbalance highlights the scarcity of historians or philologists and the structural barriers that continue to limit HTS within Turkish academia.

This pattern reflects more than disciplinary identity: mentorship has also been shaped by faculty availability, institutional mandates, program structures, and academic pathways, all of which condition how and where Byzantine studies can be pursued. The quantitative analysis of graduate theses highlights three core patterns: the consolidation of MVCS alongside the fragile growth of HTS, the distinct institutional specializations shaping the field, and the geographic diffusion of output across Türkiye.

4.3 Interpretive Analysis: Cognitive, Social, and Institutional Dimensions

4.3.1 Cognitive Dimension: Intellectual Trajectories and Thematic Trends

The cognitive orientation of graduate theses reveals how Byzantine studies in Türkiye have been shaped by recurring thematic priorities. Using 130 high-frequency keywords

extracted from thesis titles and grouped into eleven clusters (Table 4.3), the analysis traces both enduring interests and shifting research agendas.

Table 4.3: Thematic clusters overview and frequency ranking comparison.

Clusters	Count of Keywords	Total Frequency (1940s-2025)	Frequency Ranking (1940s-2025)	Total Frequency (2020-2025)	Frequency Ranking (2020-2025)
Cultural and Religious Identity	10	901	1	277	2
Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors	18	832	2	284	1
Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts	16	589	3	185	3
Monumental and Architectural Focus	13	518	4	137	6
Geographic and Urban Contexts	16	508	5	139	5
Political Structures and Warfare	9	369	6	96	9
Chronology	8	336	7	121	7
Analytical and Interpretive Framing	14	334	8	157	4
Periodization	12	316	9	116	8
Visual Culture	7	214	10	62	10
Excavation Sites	7	94	11	22	11
Total	130	5,011		1,596	

Used as interpretive lenses rather than fixed categories, the clusters trace the field's intellectual shifts. Heatmaps of their frequencies over time highlight enduring interests, emerging directions, and the reordering of priorities.

1. Cultural and Religious Identity

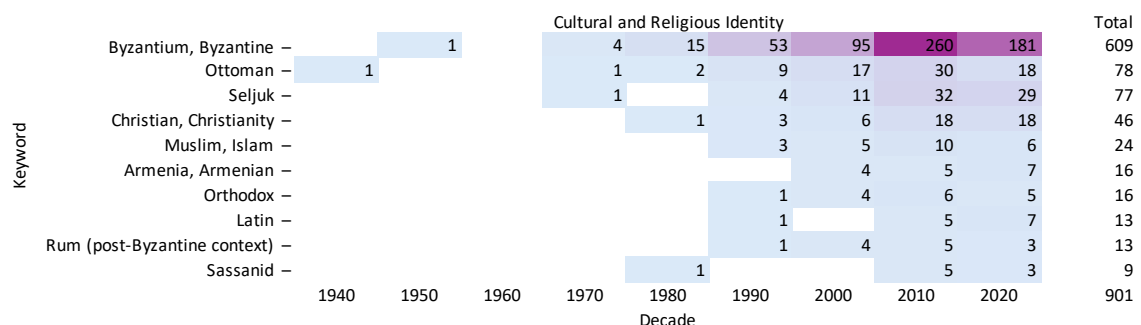


Figure 4.6: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 1.

Any analysis of the cognitive dimension must begin with the unsurprising fact that “Byzantium” or “Byzantine” appears in 609 of 1,478 theses (41%). This recurrence

signals more than terminology: it anchors the field's conceptual boundaries, defining both subject matter and epistemic frame.

Within this cluster, political identity emerges strongly. Ottoman keywords appear in 78 titles and Seljuk in 77, though Seljuk themes have grown more prominent in recent decades, often in comparative studies of Anatolia's transitional zones and artistic exchanges. Ottoman references, by contrast, focus on imperial transition, reception, and the reuse of Byzantine spaces and symbols.

Religious identity forms a parallel strand. Terms such as *dinî* (religious), *Hristiyan* (Christian), and *Ortodoks* (Orthodox) point to sustained interest in liturgy, sacred architecture, and Christian material culture. Many theses extend this inquiry through interreligious comparison, situating Byzantium within wider Mediterranean and Near Eastern contexts.

Other polities appear as points of contact. At least 15 theses address Armenian churches, iconography, and architectural exchanges, while nine examine the Sassanids, often in relation to artistic influence and geopolitical conflict. These comparanda expand Byzantium's position into broader civilizational networks.

Finally, the keyword *Rum* refers to post-Byzantine Orthodox communities under Ottoman rule. Theses in this line emphasize continuity of religious practice, memory, and heritage preservation, underscoring that Byzantine identity persisted beyond 1453 in reconfigured forms. Taken together, the cluster shows that identity—political, religious, and cultural—forms the conceptual core of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Byzantium serves as a frame for exploring how affiliations were articulated, transformed, and remembered.

2. Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors

The keywords in this cluster act as anchors—recurring terms such as *tarih* (history), *mimarlık* (architecture), *arkeoloji* (archaeology), *sanat* (art), and *etki* (influence)—that define the disciplinary identity of Byzantine studies. They rarely appear alone; instead, they are paired with references to monuments, regions, or periods, producing composite titles that embed disciplinary framing in concrete contexts.⁵³³

⁵³³ Examples include “Bizans siyasi ve sosyal tarihinde tasvir kırıncılık (ikonoklazma) hareketinin başlangıç dönemi” (Thesis No. 146822) and “Olympos Antik Kenti Erken Bizans Dönemi dini yapılarında malzeme ve teknik” (Thesis No. 415899). Here, disciplinary terms are fused with spatial or

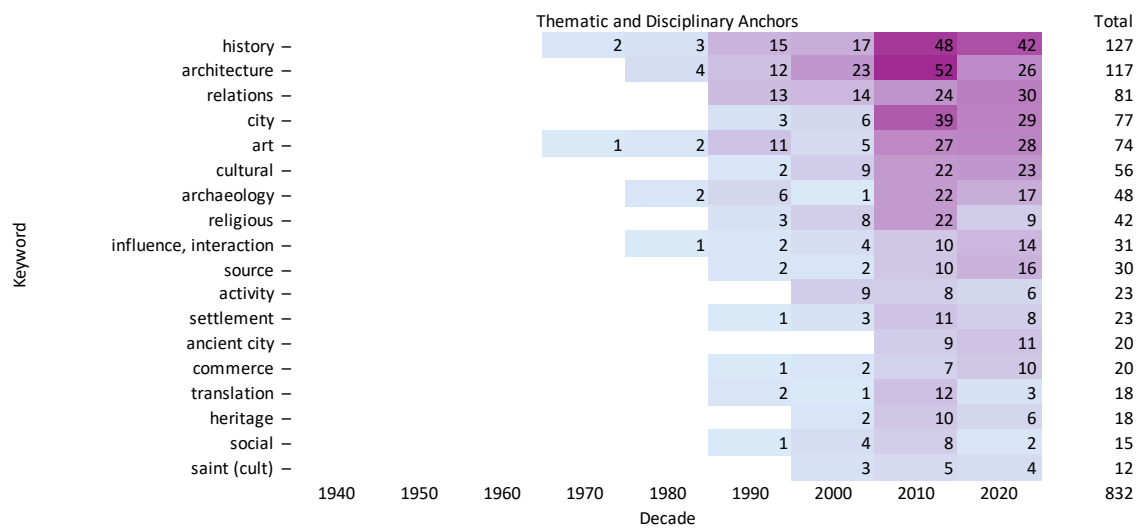


Figure 4.7: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 2.

Although few theses predate 1980, the prominence of this cluster rises sharply from the 1990s onward, peaks in the 2010s with 346 keyword occurrences, and remains strong in the 2020s (284, despite incomplete data). Within the cluster, history (127) has overtaken architecture (117), followed by relation (81), art (74), and archaeology (48). The growing use of source (*kaynak*) and influence in the 2020s points to an increasing emphasis on comparative and historical modes of analysis, while material and visual culture retain their weight. Most theses in this cluster fall within the Core or Cross-Cultural thematic group, with disciplinary orientation divided between HTS and MVCS. Anchoring terms serve as a shared cognitive infrastructure across methodological divides.

In sum, the Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors cluster reflects the growing tendency to explicitly frame research within recognized academic vocabularies. The persistence—and increasing intensity—of these anchors over time signals the field’s movement toward greater coherence and disciplinary articulation.

3. Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts

This cluster gathers keywords tied to fieldwork and conservation. Terms such as *kazi* (excavation), *buluntu* (find), *malzeme* (material), *koruma* (preservation), and *restorasyon* (restoration) signal an empirical orientation rooted in direct engagement with sites and objects.

chronological scope, signaling how anchoring vocabulary operates as a synthetic device linking methodology with evidence.

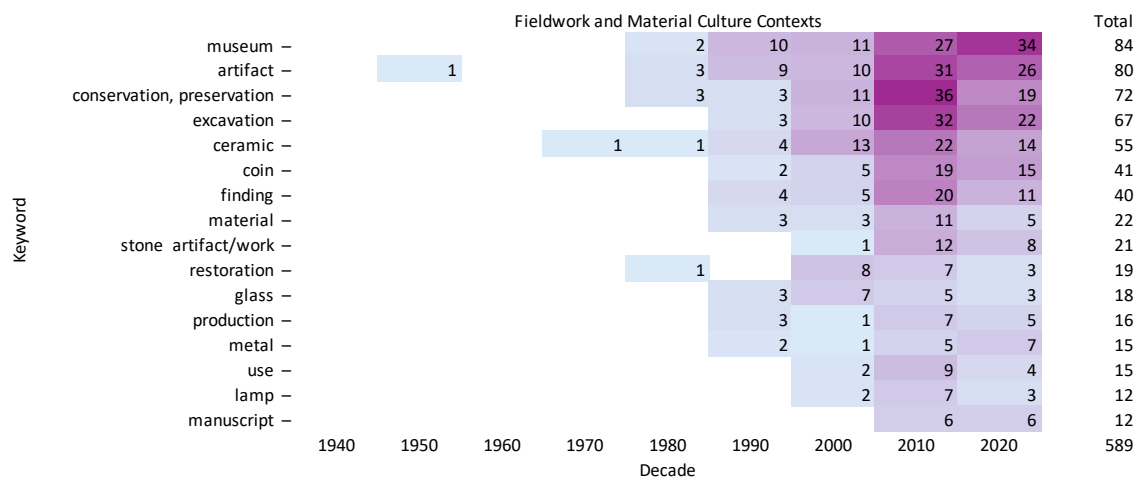


Figure 4.8: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 3.

Sparse in early decades, the cluster gains visibility in the 1980s, expands in the 1990s, and peaks in the 2010s with 256 occurrences. It remains strong in the 2020s (185 by April 2025), reflecting the growth of field-based research and the centrality of material culture in Byzantine studies. Since the 2010s, manuscript studies—especially on illuminated manuscripts and visual programs—have also emerged, though still limited by scarce collections and lack of specialized training.

Thesis titles often specify sites, monuments, or artifacts—churches, mosaics, fortifications, or urban remains—and combine empirical with thematic keywords, such as *kazı* and *mimari*. Most belong to the Core or Cross-Cultural group, with smaller numbers in Heritage/Technical or Contextual categories. Orientation is overwhelmingly MVCS, underscoring the dominance of art historical, archaeological, and conservation-based approaches.

In sum, this cluster maps the backbone of Byzantine fieldwork in Türkiye, showing how scholars build knowledge through direct engagement with material traces while contributing to heritage preservation.

4. Monumental and Architectural Focus

Closely linked to the Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts cluster, the Monumental and Architectural Focus group highlights the materiality, spatial organization, and physical legacies of Byzantium. Whereas the former emphasizes methods and conservation, this cluster centers on building types, site-based studies, and monumental complexes. Keywords such as *kilise* (church), *manastır* (monastery), *yapı* (structure),

cami (mosque), *Ayasofya* (Hagia Sophia), *sur* (wall), *plan*, and *spolia* indicate attention to typology, function, and symbolism.

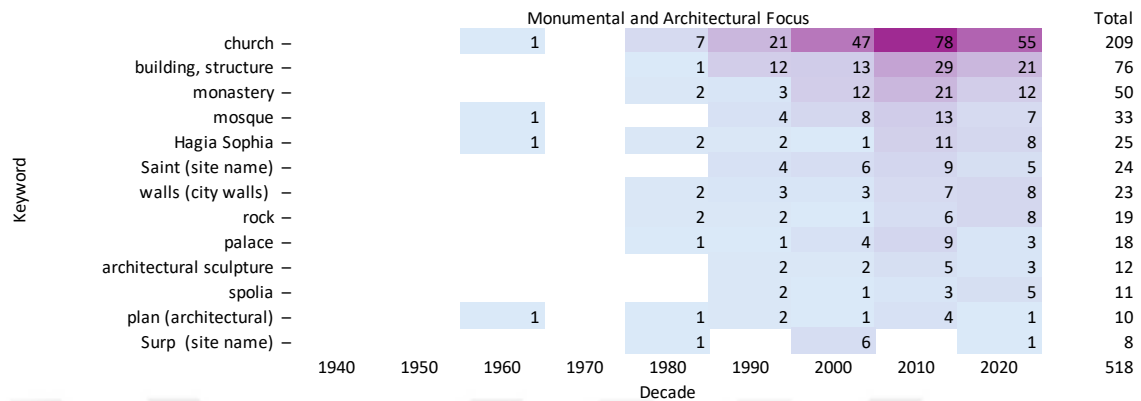


Figure 4.9: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 4.

This cluster ranked fourth in cumulative frequency through the 2010s and remains highly cited in the 2020s, though now sixth overall. The change signals diversification as analytical and comparative studies complement monument-centered work. Titles typically address specific structures—churches, monasteries, palaces, fortifications, or spolia—blending formal, archaeological, and historical analysis. Keywords such as *Ayasofya*, *Surp*, or *Aziz* highlight site-specific focus, while the recurring use of *kilisesi* (e.g., *Aziz Nikolaos Kilisesi*) underscores the emphasis on named monuments rather than generic types.

Nearly all theses fall under the Core or Cross-Cultural group with MVCS orientation, confirming the centrality of architectural study in the field. Together with the Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts cluster, this category maps a spatially anchored domain of Byzantine scholarship in Türkiye, privileging the close reading of monuments within both historical and heritage contexts.

5. Geographic and Urban Contexts

This cluster gathers named places—cities, regions, and landscapes—that anchor theses in geographically defined settings. Keywords include Istanbul, Constantinople, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Iznik, Kayseri, Konya, Bursa, Trabzon, and Göreme, as well as broader frames like Anatolia, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, and Türkiye.

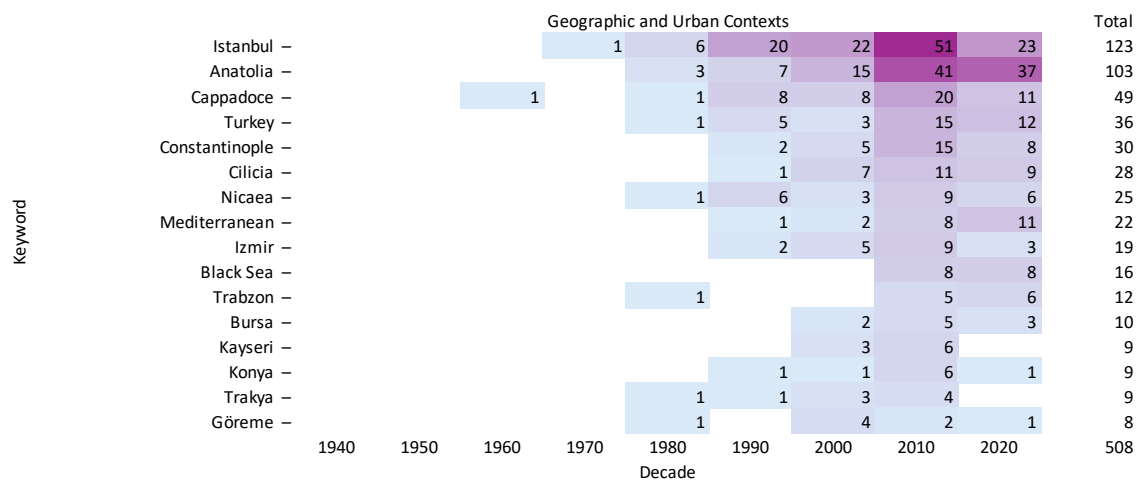


Figure 4.10: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 5.

At its core is the enduring focus on Constantinople/Istanbul, whose combined frequency places it at the top of the cluster. From the earliest theses, the city has served as both geographic focal point and cognitive anchor, framing discussions of political power, architectural innovation, religious authority, and urban continuity.

From the 1990s onward, place-based research expands, with theses centering on cities, provinces, or landscapes as primary units of analysis. Some emphasize regional artistic and architectural traditions (e.g., Cappadocia), while others trace continuities and ruptures across borderlands such as Cilicia or the Black Sea basin. Most theses here belong to the Core or Cross-Cultural group and are MVCS-oriented, though national terms like *Türkiye* or *Anatolia* reflect growing heritage and contextual frameworks.

In sum, this cluster highlights place as a structuring principle in Byzantine studies. Constantinople remains central, but regional studies have proliferated, paralleling the geographic decentralization of the field itself as universities beyond Istanbul and Ankara—such as Edirne, Kayseri, and Konya—contribute to this spatial turn.

6. Political Structures and Warfare

Unlike the Cultural and Religious Identity cluster, which highlights symbolic representation, the Political Structures and Warfare cluster examines Byzantium's functioning as a state and empire. Keywords such as *imparatorluk* (empire), *siyasi/politik* (political), *devlet* (state), *askeri* (military), *savaş* (war), *kale* (fortress), and *haçlı* (crusader) point to governance, strategy, and conflict.

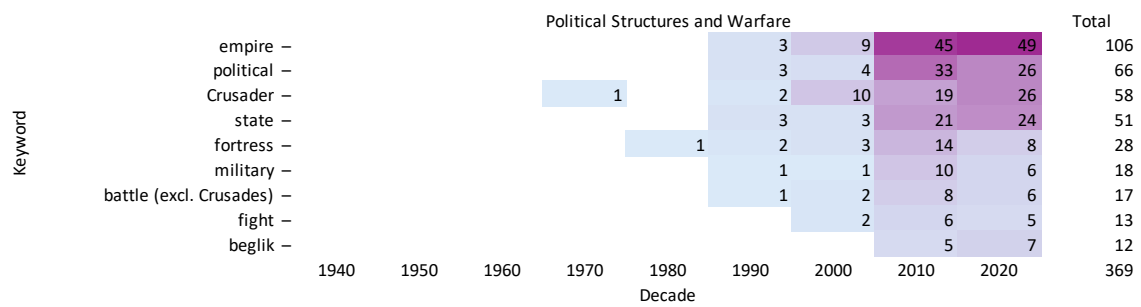


Figure 4.11: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 6.

Though smaller in scale, theses here often address state formation, dynastic struggles, campaigns, and inter-imperial encounters, situating Byzantium within wider regional dynamics that include Crusades, Seljuks, Ottomans, and Turkish principalities. Most belong to the Core group, with some in Cross-Cultural or Comparative categories, and rely heavily on HTS approaches grounded in chronicles, correspondence, and imperial treatises.

The cluster has declined in prominence, dropping from sixth to ninth overall, largely due to waning focus on fortifications and military history. This suggests a shift away from traditional warfare studies toward other analytical priorities. Yet the cluster defines a focused line of inquiry into imperial structures and geopolitical realities. While narrower than cultural or material approaches, it remains essential for understanding Byzantium's agency as both a political actor and a contested legacy.

7. Chronology

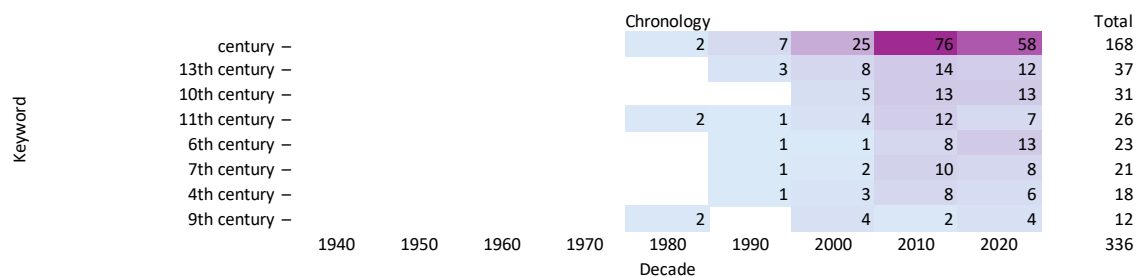


Figure 4.12: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 7.

Unlike clusters focused on objects, themes, or methods, this cluster consists of temporal markers—*yüzyıl* (century) or ordinal references like “13th” or *xiii*.—that situate theses within specific periods. These keywords serve less as thematic anchors than as scaffolds, delimiting case studies, marking change, or defining the scope of comparison.

Their widespread use highlights a pervasive but secondary role: chronological markers almost always appear alongside monuments, regions, iconographic programs, or texts (e.g., “tenth-century Cappadocian churches”). They rarely stand alone but remain essential for framing inquiry.

Appearing across thesis groups, categories, and disciplines, these terms cut across both HTS and MVCS. They function not as research endpoints but as entry points for exploring politics, identity, or visual form in period-specific contexts. In this sense, the Chronology cluster represents a cognitive substrate of Byzantine studies in Türkiye—a shared infrastructure for historicizing diverse inquiries and linking moments in time to broader frameworks.

8. Analytical and Interpretive Framing

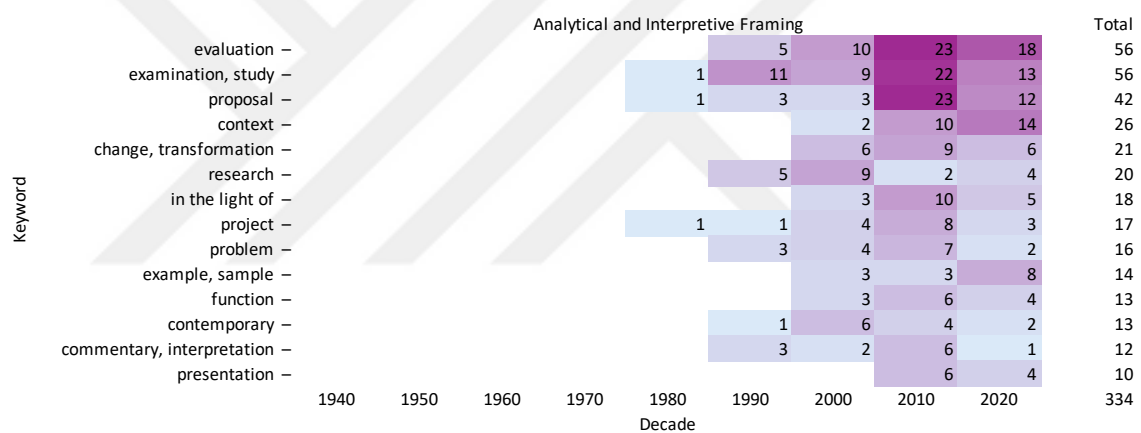


Figure 4.13: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 8.

This cluster captures the methodological language that frames theses rather than the subjects they study. Keywords such as *değerlendirme* (evaluation), *inceleme* (study), *bağlam* (context), *değişim* (change), *yorumlanma* (interpretation), *araştırma* (research), and *günümüz* (contemporary) mark a focus on how questions are posed, problems defined, and interpretive strategies deployed.

Titles often include formulations like “an evaluation of...,” “in the context of...,” or “a study on...,” indicating a shift from descriptive cataloguing toward problematized and interpretive inquiry. Such vocabulary signals conceptual framing, methodological awareness, or comparative scope.

What stands out is the cluster’s sharp rise in the 2020s: from 238 occurrences pre-2010 to 96 in just the first quarter of the decade. Its rank has jumped from eighth to fourth,

making it the fastest-growing cluster. This reflects a cognitive shift toward explicitly analytical framing and greater engagement with theoretical or historiographic debates.

Most theses here fall in the Core or Cross-Cultural groups, spanning both MVCS and HTS. The cluster is thus less about subject matter than about scholarly posture. It reflects growing reflexivity in Byzantine studies in Türkiye, as thesis authors increasingly foreground research design, interpretive frameworks, and conceptual vocabulary.

9. Periodization

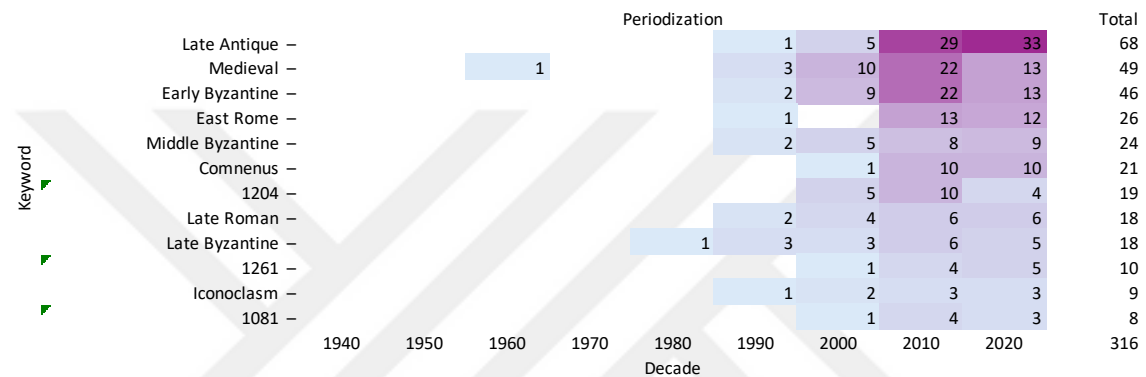


Figure 4.14: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 9.

The Periodization cluster gathers temporal descriptors that do more than mark time—they structure how Byzantine history is divided, narrated, and interpreted. Keywords such as *erken dönem* (early period), *geç dönem* (late period), *Orta Bizans* (Middle Byzantine), and other phase-based categories frame research within defined historical segments. These markers provide both chronological precision and historiographical positioning, allowing scholars to distinguish continuity, rupture, and transformation. Century-specific references (e.g., “10th century,” *XI. yüzyıl*, *VI. yy.*) also appear frequently, though these were treated more systematically in the Chronology cluster.

Descriptors in this cluster often delineate dynastic phases (Komnenian, Palaiologan), institutional changes, or moments of geopolitical transition. Many titles explicitly target turning points such as the seventh or thirteenth centuries, when imperial structures faced major transformation through internal developments and external threats. Such usage demonstrates temporal awareness and intentional framing of research within larger arcs of change.

A notable development since 2010, and especially after 2020, is the growing prominence of late antiquity. Theses using this term—predominantly MVCS—are often

tied to excavations, surveys, and field projects, signaling a methodological preference for empirical, material-based inquiry into previously understudied periods.

Equally significant is the increasing adoption of *Doğu Roma* (East Rome/Roman) in thesis titles. Appearing only once in the 1990s, the label rose to 13 uses in the late 2010s and 12 more in the early 2020s, often displacing or subordinating “Byzantine.” Concentrated in HTS, this shift emphasizes Roman continuity over Western historiographic conventions. It reflects unease with “Byzantine,” seen by some as an externally imposed or ideologically loaded term, and points to wider debates in Türkiye over naming and framing the empire. *Doğu Roma* thus repositions Byzantium within a Roman lineage while also signaling ideological alignments and responses to political or institutional pressures.

Certain turning points carry symbolic weight beyond their immediate context. Dates such as 1081 (Byzantine-Seljuk encounters), 1204 (the Latin conquest), and 1261 (the Palaiologan restoration) serve not only as chronological markers but as ideological pivots structuring narratives of rupture, resilience, and recovery.

In sum, the Periodization cluster illustrates evolving strategies for segmenting history, marking thresholds, and aligning terminology. Whether through classical labels like early and middle Byzantine, the expanding framework of late antiquity, or the ideologically charged East Rome/Roman, these theses reveal how temporal framing is inseparable from interpretive stance, scholarly identity, and historiographic allegiance.

10. Visual Culture

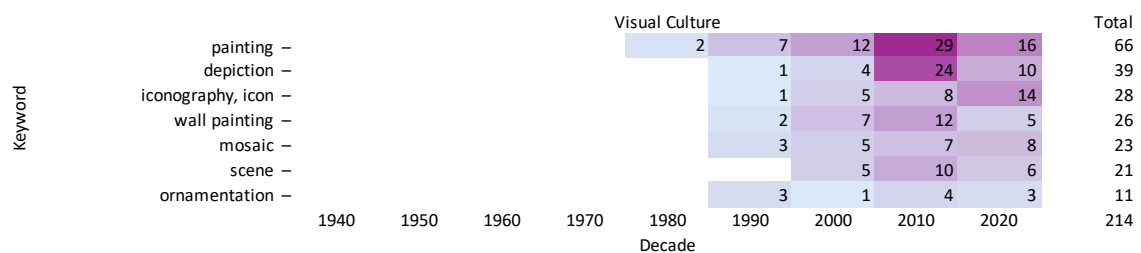


Figure 4.15: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 10.

The Visual Culture cluster includes keywords such as *resim* (painting), *ikonografi* (iconography), and *mozaik* (mosaic), reflecting an orientation toward representational forms, artistic media, and image-making practices. Closely tied to art-historical traditions, it often overlaps with iconographic and stylistic analysis.

Absent until the 1980s, the cluster grows modestly in the 1990s, expands sharply in the 2000s, and peaks in the 2010s. Its rise signals a major thematic shift coinciding with the broader expansion of graduate research.

Titles often focus on wall paintings, mosaics, and iconographic programs in religious architecture, especially in Cappadocia, Istanbul, and other key sites. These studies, largely situated in Art History, typically employ stylistic or comparative analysis of Byzantine visual material. Institutionally, the cluster is concentrated at a few universities. Hacettepe leads, followed by Istanbul, Anadolu, Ege, Erciyes, and Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. These centers have anchored visual culture research through art history programs and excavations. The next and final cluster turns to excavation sites, where visual, material, and spatial evidence converge within specific archaeological contexts.

11. Excavation Sites

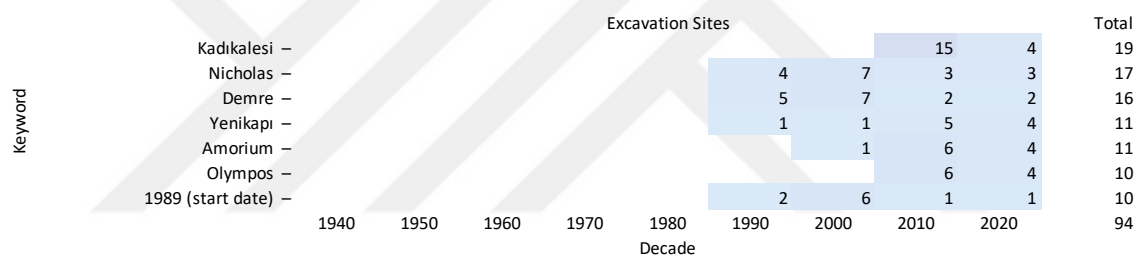


Figure 4.16: Heatmap of thesis titles in thematic cluster 11.

The Excavation Sites cluster highlights theses anchored in specific fieldwork locations tied to Byzantine remains. Keywords such as Kadıkalesi, Demre, Amorium, Olympos, and Yenikapı situate research in site-based archaeological contexts where architecture, material culture, and topography are examined in situ. These studies address urban continuity, ecclesiastical reuse, stratigraphy, and spatial organization, often within broader archaeological zones that enable diachronic interpretation.

The cluster is overwhelmingly MVCS, with most theses in the Core or Cross-Cultural Group and a smaller subset in Heritage and Technical, reflecting the dual role of excavation data in both scholarship and heritage presentation. Sites such as Demre and Kadıkalesi focus on ecclesiastical complexes, while Amorium and Yenikapı illuminate urban change, fortifications, and domestic architecture. Keywords like *Nikolaos* link material evidence with hagiographic traditions, particularly in Demre. The appearance of

“1989” as a keyword also signals the temporal depth of excavation campaigns and their institutional continuity.

Many of these projects have been led by scholars affiliated with the Hacettepe school of art history, whose students now continue this work. The Demre excavation of St. Nicholas Church, launched in 1989 by Yıldız Ötüken, was directed by Sema Doğan until 2022 and is now led by her student Ebru Fatma Fındık. Kadıkalesi, begun in 2001 by Zeynep Mercangöz, has been directed since 2022 by Suna Çağaptay. At Olympos, work initiated by Ebru Parman was later continued by Yelda Olcay Uçkan and, since 2022, by her student Gökçen Kurtuluş Öztaşkın. The Amorium excavation, once under foreign leadership, was transferred in 2013 to Zeliha Demirel Gökalp, also trained within this lineage.

These excavations illustrate a broader institutional pattern: leadership and expertise are transmitted across generations, reinforcing excavation as both a research method and a training platform. Thus, the Excavation Sites cluster underscores the spatial embeddedness and empirical grounding of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. By focusing on specific field sites, these theses provide localized insights into the Byzantine world while anchoring the discipline in its material landscapes—places where many of its intellectual trajectories begin and continue to evolve.

Summary of Findings and Insights

The cognitive analysis of graduate theses highlights several key trajectories in Byzantine studies in Türkiye:

1. **Identity as a Core Anchor:** Byzantium is consistently framed through religious, cultural, and political identities, including Ottoman, Seljuk, Armenian, and Sassanid comparanda.
2. **Disciplinary Anchoring:** Research is structured around keywords like history, architecture, archaeology, and art. MVCS dominate, though HTS are steadily growing.
3. **Expansion of Fieldwork:** Since the 1980s, empirical and material-driven research has surged, underscoring the infrastructural weight of archaeological and conservation practices.

4. **Monuments and Architecture:** Site- and monument-centered studies remain central, though recent diversification shows a gradual move toward comparative and theoretical framings.
5. **Geography and Place:** Place-based scholarship is strong, with Constantinople/Istanbul at the center, complemented by regional specializations that mirror the geographic diffusion of Byzantine studies across Türkiye.
6. **Politics and Warfare in Decline:** Studies on fortifications and military history have waned, reflecting shifting scholarly priorities.
7. **Periodization Frameworks:** Chronological markers remain foundational, with growing prominence of late antiquity and the rising use of East Rome/Roman as an ideological alternative to “Byzantine.”
8. **Interpretive Reflexivity:** A marked increase in analytical and methodological vocabulary signals greater theoretical self-awareness and disciplinary maturity.
9. **Visual Culture Studies:** Painting, mosaics, and iconography have emerged since the late twentieth century as a distinct and influential subfield.

These findings align closely with bibliometric analyses of published scholarship. Cem Almurat and colleagues report that HTS comprise 37% of journal articles—a near-exact match with the proportion of HTS theses in this study. Their work also confirms the dominance of Constantinople/Istanbul, the rise of late antiquity, and the growing role of interpretive and theoretical approaches.⁵³⁴ This convergence suggests a consistent disciplinary balance and shared thematic trajectories across both graduate research and published scholarship.

Taken together, these insights provide the cognitive foundation for the next stage of analysis, which integrates social and institutional dynamics to present a holistic account of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

4.3.2 Academic Lineages and Models of Mentorship

In the absence of strong institutional infrastructures, mentorship became the primary mechanism for sustaining Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Graduate supervision and apprenticeship ties shaped not only the training of scholars but also the reproduction of intellectual communities. Whether rooted in fieldwork, collaborative teaching, or

⁵³⁴ Almurat et al., “Articles on Byzantium,” 276-88.

philological training, advisor–student relationships served as key conduits for continuity in a field marked by marginality, limited funding, and uneven support.

This subsection analyzes models of mentorship and intellectual succession across institutionally anchored academic lineages. The discussion draws on multiple kinds of evidence: the dissertation dataset, which makes it possible to trace supervision patterns and academic reproduction over time; oral history interviews, which shed light on mentorship styles, institutional norms, and student experiences; and examples of co-authored publications and collaborative projects, which reveal where academic clustering occurred—or failed to occur.

The analysis begins with two contrasting figures—Semavi Eyice and Doğan Kuban—whose approaches yielded divergent outcomes: the former embodying solitary excellence with limited succession, the latter building an interdisciplinary school with sustained continuity. It then turns to the Hacettepe School, where Yıldız Ötügen and Ebru Parman developed a collaborative, multi-generational cluster through fieldwork and pedagogy. A third trajectory follows Byzantine historical studies, where Akdes Nimet Kurat, Şerif Baştav, and Melek Delilbaşı created a lineage grounded in philological rigor under difficult institutional conditions. Finally, the section examines the emergence of hybrid mentorship models in the 1990s–2000s, especially at Boğaziçi University, where Nevra Necipoğlu introduced collaborative practices shaped by international academic norms. These cases show how mentorship styles, institutional settings, and personal trajectories determined the sustainability—or fragility—of academic lineages, and set the stage for social network analysis, where these patterns will be visualized and quantified.

Semavi Eyice's Lineage: Individual Eminence, Generational Discontinuity

Despite his stature, Eyice's mentorship style—hierarchical, individualist, and non-reproductive—produced limited networks, as shown by thesis data, student trajectories, co-authorship, and oral histories.

Table 4.4 traces three generations of theses linked to Eyice, illustrating both the reach of his influence and the limits of institutional continuity. The first generation (1969–1990) produced 13 theses, almost all in art history at Istanbul University. They followed a descriptive-documentarian tradition, focused on ecclesiastical architecture and monumental art (Figure 4.17), centered on Istanbul and nearby sites, and spanned early Christian to late Byzantine periods—closely reflecting Eyice's own scholarly profile.

Table 4.4: Academic lineage of Semavi Eyice through graduate theses.

Generation	Time Period	Thesis Count	Supervisors/Co-Supervisors	Institutions	Fields/Disciplines
First (excl. Ebru Parman's PhD thesis)	1969–1990 (mostly 1983–1990)	13 (6 PhD, 7 MA)	Semavi Eyice <i>(incl. co-supervision for Asnu Bilban Yalçın's master thesis earned in Italy)</i>	Istanbul (13)	Art History (11) Archaeology (2)
Second	Post-1990s	32 (9 PhD, 23 MA)	Mehmet İhsan Tunay (9) Özkan Ertuğrul (15) Asnu Bilban Yalçın (7)	Istanbul (16) Trakya (14) Marmara (1) Ankara (1)	Art History (22), Archaeology (6), Biography, Fine Arts, Architecture (1 each)
Third	Post-2020s	1 (MA)	Zeki Böleken (supervised by Akkaya and Yalçın)	Marmara University	Art History

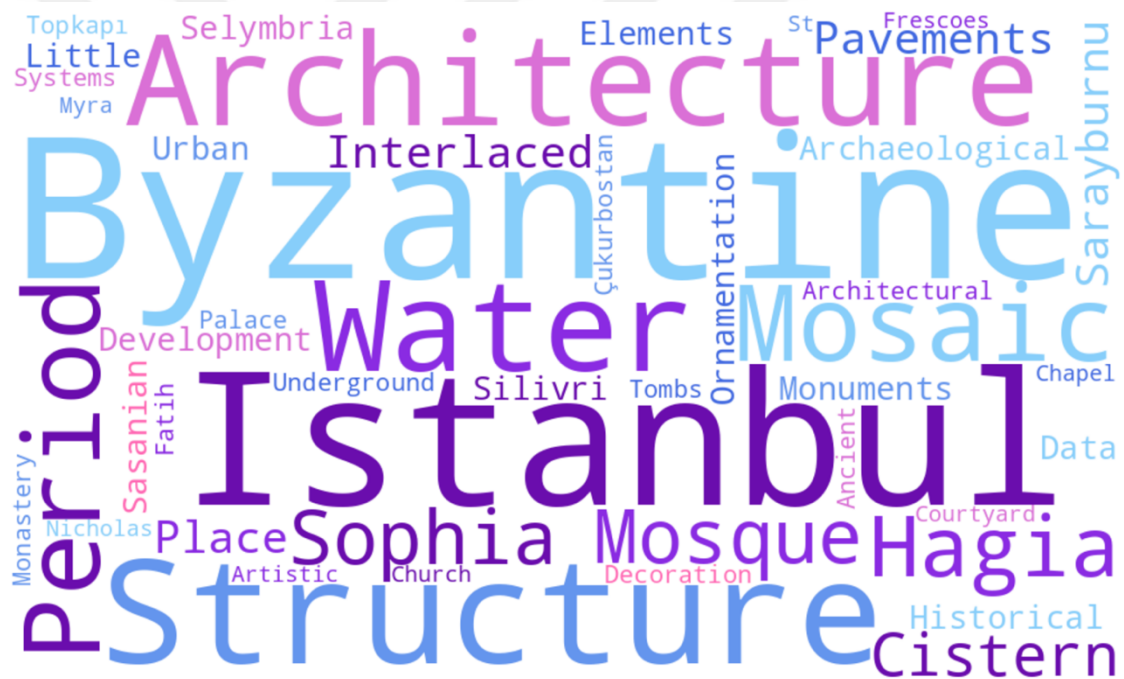


Figure 4.17: Word cloud of first-generation thesis titles supervised by Semavi Eyice.

(Generated by ChatGPT)

The second generation (post-1990s) produced 32 theses (9 PhD, 23 MA), supervised by Mehmet İhsan Tunay, Özkan Ertuğrul, and Asnu Bilban Yalçın—each connected to Eyice to varying degrees. Tunay and Ertuğrul, both trained at Istanbul University, had completed their theses directly under his supervision, while Yalçın's link was more distant, limited to his co-supervision of her master's thesis in Italy. Istanbul University remained central (16 theses), but Trakya emerged as a new hub (14), with smaller

contributions from Marmara and Ankara. Art history continued to dominate (22 theses), archaeology gained modest ground (6), and isolated cases appeared in biography, fine arts, and architecture. The third generation (post-2020s) is represented so far by only one MA thesis at Marmara University. Despite numerical growth and wider institutional reach in the second generation, the lineage never coalesced into a cohesive academic school. Instead, it remained a loosely connected, supervisor-dependent structure with limited mechanisms for succession or renewal. Eyice's influence shaped the early contours of Byzantine art and architecture studies in Türkiye, but by later generations it was largely indirect, confined to art history, and only marginally extended into archaeology. By the third generation, his legacy had dissipated, reflecting institutional contraction rather than sustained expansion or diversification.

Over three decades, Eyice supervised fourteen dissertations in Byzantine-related fields, including Parman's, yet only one student—Tunay—had a long-term position at Istanbul University. Even this trajectory stagnated at assistant professor rank, reflecting institutional bottlenecks and interpersonal friction. Eyice's nearly 400 publications were almost entirely single-authored, with few co-written pieces and almost none involving students (Table 2.2), underscoring a vertically structured, author-centered model.⁵³⁵

Most students dispersed to other institutions or left the field. Yıldız Demiriz turned to Turkish and Islamic art; Parman built her career at Hacettepe and Anadolu after being denied a post in Istanbul; Ödekan, similarly blocked, trained abroad before joining ITU. Others pursued careers in museums (Hülya Tezcan), fine arts education (Tayfun Akkaya), or regional universities (Özkan Ertuğrul at Trakya, who supervised 15 MA theses but no PhDs).⁵³⁶ These outcomes point to the absence of mechanisms for continuity, placement, or collaboration.

Oral history accounts corroborate this fragmentation. Students consistently recall Eyice as a brilliant, rigorous, and memorable teacher, but also describe him as distant, hierarchical, and at times dismissive toward potential successors. Direct succession from his undergraduate students was rare, with Parman a notable exception. Indirect paths were

⁵³⁵ Co-authorship ratios of Eyice and his students included in the co-authorship analysis are as follows: Semavi Eyice (2%), Yıldız Demiriz (0%), Mehmet İhsan Tunay (7%), Yılmaz Büktel (7%), Asnu Bilban Yalçın (6%). The two exceptions with higher ratios than the average are Ferudun Özgümüş (24%), who published co-authored reports of Istanbul Rescue Archaeology Project with long-time collaborator Kenneth R. Dark and Özkan Ertuğrul (15%), see Kılıç and Kitapçı Bayrı, *Bibliography 1*; Kılıç and Kitapçı Bayrı, *Bibliography 2*.

⁵³⁶ Trakya University lacked a doctoral program in art history and does not currently have one.

more common: Gülgün Köroğlu, after undergraduate studies with Eyice, moved to Mimar Sinan University and developed her own research and excavation trajectory; Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger completed undergraduate and master's work study him but pursued her PhD and career in Germany; and Zeynep Mercangöz, who admired Eyice during his visiting professorship at Hacettepe, chose to pursue graduate studies there rather than at Istanbul University. Eyice himself often discouraged students from entering Byzantine studies, warning of precarity and limited career prospects. Ironically, several of them—including Parman, Ödekan, Köroğlu, and Asutay-Effenberger—went on to lead major projects, mentor graduate students, and shape curricula, though always outside Eyice's institutional framework, which remained centered on his own scholarly productivity.

The result is a paradox: Eyice's intellectual authority shaped several generations, but his mentorship failed to produce durable networks or institutional succession. In Mullins' terms, his lineage remained at the "normal" stage—marked by distinction and thematic consolidation without evolving into a sustainable cluster. His influence is undeniable, but his legacy—measured in institutional continuity and collaborative structures—remains fragmented and discontinuous.

Doğan Kuban's Cluster: Institutionalized Mentorship and Disciplinary Reproduction

The Kuban cluster—Kuban, Ödekan, Metin Ahunbay, and Zeynep Ahunbay—produced a cognitive and institutional profile distinct from the lineage of Eyice (Table 4.5). Rooted in architectural history, conservation science, and interdisciplinary fieldwork, the first-generation theses (1986–2015) were concentrated at ITU, the cluster's institutional base. Of 19 theses, 13 were in architecture and 17 were completed at ITU, reflecting the centrality of structural analysis, preservation, and project-based inquiry.

Thematically, these works focused on monument restoration, structural preservation, and architectural documentation, with recurring references to conservation, restoration, and project proposals. Titles often cited specific sites such as the Zeyrek complex, Imrahor Monastery, Kariye, or the Istanbul land walls, embedding the research in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine fabric of the city (Figure 4.18). Chronologically, they spanned late antiquity to the Ottoman period, often addressing multi-phase building histories. Cognitively, they emphasized interpretation, spatial morphology, and applied conservation. Unlike the more descriptive approach of the Eyice lineage, this cluster favored solution-oriented outputs—restoration strategies, intervention frameworks, and

re-functionalization proposals—bridging architecture, art history, and heritage management. The result was a hybrid mode that combined historical insight with design reasoning and site-based problem-solving.

Table 4.5: Academic lineage of Kuban Cluster through graduate theses.

Generation	Time Period	Thesis Count	Supervisors/Co-Supervisors	Institutions	Fields/Disciplines
First	1986–2015	19 (9 PhD, 10 MA)	Doğan Kuban (1) Metin Ahunbay (4) Ayla Ödekan (4) Zeynep Ahunbay (10)	ITU (17) Istanbul (1) Mimar Sinan (1)	Architecture (13) Art History (5) Religion (1)
Second	Post-2000s	32 (8 PhD, 24 MA)	Engin Akyürek (11) Turgut Saner (6) Mine Esmer (3) Ayşin Özgül (3) Yegan Kahya Sayar (2) Ümmühan Melda Ermiş (2) Işıl Polat Pekmezi (2) Esra Güzel Erdoğan Uluhan (2) Ahmet Ersen (1)	ITU (11) Istanbul (10) Fatih Sultan Mehmet (3) Uludağ (3) Koç (2) Marmara (2) Yıldız Technical (1)	Architecture (14) Art History (12) Archaeology (4) History (1) Economics (1)
Third	Post-2010s	10 (MA)	Bilge Ar (5) Ayça Tiryaki Türkmenoğlu (2) Özgü Çömezoglu Uzbek (2) Lale Yılmaz (1)	ITU (4) Istanbul (4) Mersin (1) Onsekiz Mart (1)	Architecture (3) Art History (3) Archaeology (2) Fine Arts (1) Tourism (1)

The appearance of theses at Istanbul and Mimar Sinan Universities during this period reflects Ödekan’s academic appointments there. Her role was pivotal in extending the reach of this cluster. One of the most significant outcomes was the emergence of Engin Akyürek, who studied under Ödekan and went on to establish himself as a leading figure at Istanbul University. His subsequent supervisory activity and institutional leadership anchored the cluster’s ethos within a major academic center and reinforced its influence across generations. Later, Akyürek founded Koç University Sevgi Gönül Research Center for Byzantine Studies (GABAM), directing it for a decade and extending the cluster’s legacy into new institutional forms.



Figure 4.18: Word cloud of first-generation thesis titles supervised by Kuban cluster.
(Generated by ChatGPT).

The second generation (post-2000s, 32 theses) illustrates the cluster's vitality and diversification. ITU remained central (11 theses), followed by Istanbul University (10), where Akyürek supervised eight. Other institutions included Fatih Sultan Mehmet, Uludağ, Marmara, and Yıldız Technical Universities, reflecting broader diffusion while still tied to Istanbul. Thematically, this generation broadened from architecture (14 theses) and art history (12) into archaeology, history, and even economics. The influence of the cluster remained clear in the conservation- and fieldwork-driven orientation of these projects. Successors such as Akyürek and Turgut Saner demonstrate successful mentorship succession and capacity building.⁵³⁷

By the third generation (post-2010s), the Kuban cluster's legacy persisted across 10 master's theses at ITU, Istanbul, Mersin, and Onsekiz Mart Universities. The disciplinary scope expanded into architecture, art history, archaeology, fine arts, and tourism, while supervisors at ITU and Istanbul carried forward the cluster's pedagogical ethos. Unlike the contraction of Eyice's lineage, the Kuban cluster shows intergenerational continuity, disciplinary hybridity, and institutional depth—hallmarks of Mullins' "network" stage

⁵³⁷ Turgut Saner completed his doctoral dissertation titled "Hellenistic Masonry in Ionia and Caria" under the supervision of Metin Ahunbay in 1995. He participated in the archaeological research led by Ahunbay at the Byzantine settlements of Dara (Mardin), Binbirkilise (Karaman), and Ayatekla (Silifke).

with signs of transition into a durable cluster. Yet its growth remains concentrated in Istanbul, with limited diffusion beyond the metropolitan core.

The Kuban cluster marked a decisive shift in mentorship culture. Centered at ITU and Istanbul University, it emphasized long-term collaboration, pedagogical inclusivity, and institutional foresight. Research-based learning was embedded in departmental life, extending into archaeological sites and architectural surveys—especially the Kalenderhane excavations—where fieldwork and theory reinforced one another. Students were encouraged to develop their own methodological orientations within a shared ethos rather than simply replicate Kuban's style.

Assistantships and career planning were integral to this model. Figures such as Ödekan and Ahunbays flourished at ITU, later mentoring their own students and sustaining departmental continuity. This retention pattern, visible in both dissertation data and oral histories, demonstrates deliberate investment in permanence. Unlike Eyice's solitary model, the Kuban cluster evolved into a layered mentorship structure in which students transitioned into colleagues and collaborators. Fieldwork also served as professional training. Participation in excavations led to co-authored publications, restoration reports, and public presentations, giving students early visibility and embedding them in scholarly networks. This collaborative authorship, evident in the publication histories of Kuban and his students, counterbalanced the individualistic publishing norms prevalent elsewhere.⁵³⁸

The cluster's openness to diverse academic backgrounds—architecture, art history, and beyond—further broadened its reach. Admissions valued curiosity over disciplinary conformity, encouraging hybrid thesis topics that combined historical research with conservation strategies and spatial analysis. Akyürek's admission under Ödekan, and later his leadership roles at Istanbul and Koç Universities, exemplify how this flexibility shaped enduring careers and new institutional footholds.

Oral histories highlight the affective dimension of Kuban's mentorship: rigorous but supportive, intellectually generous, and invested in long-term student success. His aim was not only to train competent researchers but to cultivate institutional actors able to sustain and expand the field.

⁵³⁸ Co-authorship ratios: Kuban 50%, M. Ahunbay 24%, Z. Ahunbay 60%, Saner 78%, Akyürek 23% (see Table 2.2)

Finally, this model was reinforced by ITU's institutional scaffolding—research funding, graduate program design, and curricular openness—allowing the cluster to evolve from a localized community into a generative network. The continued presence of Kuban's students and successors at ITU, and their influence across other universities, demonstrates the scalability of this approach. In Mullins' terms, the Kuban cluster successfully moved from “network” to “cluster,” characterized by collaboration, distributed mentorship, and durable institutional embedding. It stands as a contrast to other lineages, underscoring the decisive role of mentorship style, fieldwork integration, and co-authorship in sustaining Byzantine studies.

The Hacettepe School: Collective Mentorship and Multi-generational Continuity

Hacettepe University emerged as a vital node in the institutionalization of Byzantine art history, marking a shift from solitary mentorship to collaborative academic cultures. While Eyice's legacy at Istanbul University was defined by intellectual brilliance but weak succession, the Hacettepe model—built by Parman and Ötüken—was grounded in teamwork, co-authorship, and generational continuity.

Table 4.6: Academic lineage of Hacettepe School through graduate theses.

Generation	Time Period	Thesis Count	Supervisors/Co-Supervisors	Institutions	Fields/Disciplines
First	1980–2011	32 (13 PhD, 19 MA)	Yıldız Ötüken (26) Ebru Parman (6)	Hacettepe (29) Anadolu (3)	Art History (24) Archaeology (8)
Second	Post-1990s	184 (57 PhD, 127 MA)	Sacit Pekak (35) Yelda Olcay Uçkan (26) Zeynep Mercangöz (25) Nilay Çorağan (21) Sema Doğan (17) Ayşe Çaylak Türker (16) Macit Tekinalp (14) Meryem Acara Eser (13) Burcu Ceylan Duggan (9) Muradiye Bursalı (5) Seçkin Evcim (3)	Hacettepe (71) Ege (25) Anadolu (24) Erciyes (21) Onsekiz Mart (16) Akdeniz (9) Cumhuriyet (8) Pamukkale (5) Ordu (3) Selçuk (2)	Art History (150) Archaeology (27) Fine Arts (3) Crafts (3) History (1)
Third	Post-2000s	54 (12 PhD, 42 MA)	Lale Doğer (16) Zeliha D. Gökalp (10) İlker M. Mimiroğlu (7) Şener Yıldırım (6) Emine Tok (5) Bülent İşler (3) Gökçen K. Öztaşkın (3) Fusun Tülek (2) Nilüfer Peker (1) Ceren Ünal (1)	Ege (21) Anadolu (10) Pamukkale (3) Necmettin Er. (7) Mersin (6) Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli (3) Kocaeli (2) Hacı Bektaş Veli (1) Celal Bayar (1)	Art History (36) Archaeology (14) Fine Arts (1) Crafts (1) Museology (1) Architecture (1)

[illegible]

Their lineage shows steady expansion over three generations (Table 4.6).⁵³⁹ The first (1980–2011) produced 32 theses, almost all at Hacettepe, concentrated in art history with some in archaeology. Thematically, they emphasized ecclesiastical architecture, iconography, and site-specific material culture within Byzantine art history. Dominant terms such as church, Byzantine, architecture, monastery, Demre, and Nikolaos highlight the centrality of religious structures and sacred topographies (Figure 4.19). A particular emphasis falls on the Church of St. Nicholas in Demre/Myra, where Ötügen directed major excavations, alongside broader work on Istanbul’s Byzantine heritage and monastic contexts. Titles also stress typological and morphological studies—basilicas, chapels, necropolises, commemorative structures—revealing a descriptive, site-based approach attentive to the visual and spatial logic of religious architecture. Chronologically, the

⁵³⁹ Subsequent generation scholars of Hacettepe lineage will be examined in the next chapter.

theses cover early Christian through late Byzantine periods, with some extending into post-Byzantine layers. Several works also examine regional material culture, such as in Tao, signaling the diffusion of Byzantine heritage studies into neighboring contexts. Overall, the cognitive profile blends formal analysis, iconographic interpretation, and fieldwork-driven documentation, grounded in the frameworks established by Ötüken and Parman. Their mentorship laid the foundation for later generations committed to rigorous, site-specific, and visually anchored study of Byzantine and post-Byzantine material culture in Anatolia.

The second generation (post-1990s) marked significant institutional and thematic expansion. A total of 184 theses (57 PhD, 127 MA) were supervised by 11 scholars trained by Ötüken and Parman. Hacettepe remained the core (71 theses), but new centers appeared at Ege, Anadolu, Erciyes, and Onsekiz Mart. Art history still dominated (150 theses), but archaeology (27) grew steadily, with smaller numbers in fine arts, crafts, and history, pointing to an increasingly interdisciplinary training culture.

The third generation (post-2000s) produced 54 theses (12 PhD, 42 MA) across an even wider institutional network, including Ege (21), Anadolu (10), Necmettin Erbakan (7), Pamukkale, Mersin, and Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli. Art history (36) remained central, but archaeology (14) gained further ground, while museology, architecture, and crafts also appeared. Supervisors such as Lale Doğer, Zeliha Demirel Gökalp, İlker Mete Mimiroğlu, and Şener Yıldırım emerged as new academic leaders, indicating the lineage's successful reproduction across institutions.

Unlike Eyice's solitary model, Parman and Ötüken built a participatory pedagogy rooted in shared authorship, horizontal networks, and field-based training. Parman was remembered for warmth and encouragement, Ötüken for rigor shaped by German academic norms. Students describe a balance of high expectations and personal investment, with Ötüken's home often functioning as a pedagogical hub. Co-authorship data reinforces this ethos: about 32% of Parman's and 20% of Ötüken's publications were co-written, often with students (Table 2.2).

Institutional entrepreneurship strengthened this approach. Parman founded the Art History Department at Anadolu University in 1990, while Ötüken's long-term leadership of the Demre excavations turned the site into a training ground for future scholars. These initiatives embedded mentorship within durable institutional and fieldwork structures.

In contrast to Eyice's fragmented outcomes, the Hacettepe School exemplifies Mullins' transition from "network" to "cluster." Its blend of rigorous scholarship, emotional investment, and institutional foresight created a multi-generational academic community that continues to anchor Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

Historical and Textual Studies: Lineages Rooted in Philological Training

Although visual and material approaches have long dominated Byzantine studies in Türkiye, a parallel lineage in historical and textual research persisted at Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography (DTCF) in Ankara. Rooted in philological traditions shaped by early Republican ideals and postwar humanist training, this lineage was led by Kurat and Baştav, who emphasized multilingual, source-based analysis. Their efforts laid the groundwork for Byzantine history in Türkiye but failed to establish durable institutional structures, constrained by limited faculty, nationalist barriers, and a narrow pool of trained students.

The trajectory begun by Kurat and Baştav gained continuity through their student Delilbaşı, who became central in consolidating this tradition (Table 4.7). Completing her doctorate at DTCF under Baştav in 1973, she combined philological rigor with comparative methods and international collaboration. The second generation (1997–2016) reflects her impact: Delilbaşı supervised 16 theses (7 PhD, 9 MA), almost all in history, with topics ranging from Byzantine–Ottoman transitions to diplomacy, religious institutions, and Balkan regional histories (Figure 4.20).

Table 4.7: Academic lineage of DTCF School through graduate theses.

Generation	Time Period	Thesis Count	Supervisors/Co-Supervisors	Institutions	Fields/Disciplines
First	1973	1 (PhD)	Şerif Baştav	DTCF	History
Second	1997–2016	16 (7 PhD, 9 MA)	Melek Delilbaşı	DTCF (16)	History (15) Religion (1)
Third	Post-2010s	19 (4 PhD, 15 MA)	Murat Keçiş (11) Hatice Oruç (4) Richard Dietrich (2) Levent Kayapınar (1) Şahin Kılıç (1)	Sıtkı Koçman (8) Ankara (4) Hacettepe (3) ODTU (2) Namık Kemal (1) Uludağ (1)	History



Figure 4.20: Word cloud of first-generation thesis titles supervised by Melek Delilbaş.

(Generated by ChatGPT)

The third generation (post-2010s) produced 19 theses (4 PhD, 15 MA), supervised by her students, most prominently Murat Keçiş (11), alongside Hatice Oruç, Richard Dietrich, Levent Kayapınar, and Şahin Kılıç. While Ankara University remained active (4 theses), new nodes appeared at Sıtkı Koçman (8), Hacettepe (3), ODTU (2), Namık Kemal (1), and Uludağ (1). Unlike earlier generations concentrated at DTCF, this phase marks a modest but geographically broader continuation. Though not yet a self-sustaining school like Hacettepe or ITU, the tradition shows growth potential, especially at Sıtkı Koçman University, where Keçiş appears to be building a new center of textual and historical scholarship.

This lineage differed markedly from the hierarchical models in material and visual culture. Under Kurat and Baştav, mentorship was defined by linguistic intensity and philological rigor, but its fragility stemmed from a scarcity of qualified students, lack of departmental support, and the marginalization of Byzantine studies within nationalist historiography. The first generation thus produced only one PhD. Delilbaş shifted the model by preserving rigorous multilingual training while adding institutional entrepreneurship. She founded the Department of Modern Greek Language and Literature and led the National Committee for Byzantine/East Roman Studies, while encouraging

her students to seek training abroad, especially in Greece. Over two decades, she supervised a critical mass of theses that anchored this lineage in both pedagogy and research, though without transforming DTCF into a lasting institutional base.

The third generation continues this tradition under more fragmented conditions. Scholars such as Keçiş inherit its methodological emphases but operate in dispersed settings, relying more on individual initiative than structural support. Shared practices of philological rigor, historical contextualization, and diplomatic history maintain a sense of coherence across institutions.

In short, the DTCF lineage is defined by selectivity, linguistic intensity, and dependence on individual mentors rather than stable institutions. Its persistence across three generations demonstrates resilience, but its consolidation into a permanent academic school remains contingent on institutional investment and the ability of current mentors to train successors.

Western-Style Mentorship and Cross-Disciplinary Bridges: The Boğaziçi Model

At its center stands Necipoğlu, a historian of Byzantine society, economy, and diplomacy whose scholarly formation and mentorship style left a lasting mark on historical-textual studies in Türkiye. Educated at Harvard, where she studied both economics and history, she combined social-scientific approaches with deep historical inquiry. As she recalls in her oral history, her economics training “taught [her] to think systematically and comparatively,” shaping her later research on governance, diplomacy, and cross-cultural interaction.⁵⁴⁰ She brought to Boğaziçi a research ethos rooted in Western academic practice—seminars, collaborative publication, conference participation, and rigorous source analysis—anchored by strong language training. Her doctoral work completed in 1990 and revised and published later, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins*, provided the scaffolding for her lineage: geopolitical attentiveness, multilingual source use, and comparative frameworks.⁵⁴¹

Necipoğlu’s supervision has produced a historically rigorous and coherent academic lineage spanning two generations (Table 4.8). Since 1995, she has overseen 30 theses (4

⁵⁴⁰ Nevra Necipoğlu, “Oral History Interview with Nevra Necipoğlu,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 28 May 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/arastirma/projeler/gabam-projeleri/turkiyede-bir-bizansci-olmak-sozlu-tarih-projesi/gorusme-videolari/nevra-necipoglu/>.

⁵⁴¹ Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins: Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Table 4.8: Academic lineage of Nevra Necipoğlu through graduate theses

Generation	Time Period	Thesis Count	Supervisors/Co-Supervisors	Institutions	Fields/Disciplines
First	1995 onwards	30 (4 PhD, 26 MA)	Nevra Necipoğlu	Boğaziçi (28) ITU (2)	History (28) Art History (2)
Second	Post-2020s	7 MA	Koray Durak Esra Güzel Erdoğan Uluhan	Boğaziçi (5) Marmara (2)	History (6) Economics (1)

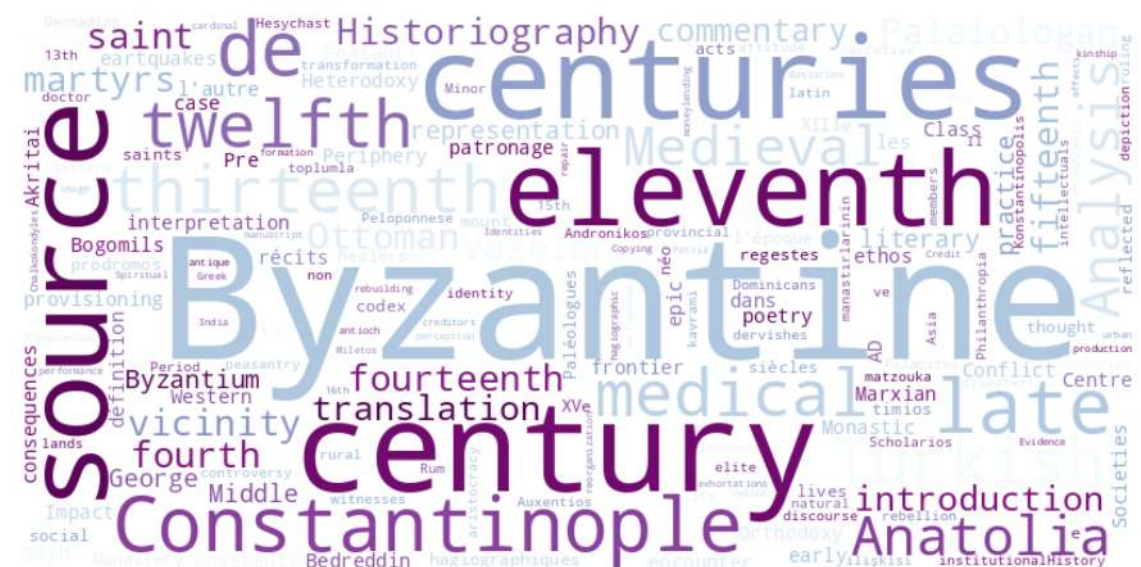


Figure 4.21: Word cloud of first-generation thesis titles supervised by Nevra Necipoğlu.

(Generated by ChatGPT)

The second generation, emerging in the 2020s, includes seven master's theses supervised by her students Koray Durak and Esra Güzel Erdoğan Uluhan. Five were completed at Boğaziçi, two at Marmara University, marking a modest diffusion of the lineage. The small number contrasts with the large first-generation cohort, many of whom pursued doctoral training abroad. Thanks to Necipoğlu's reputation and international network, a significant number of her students were admitted to leading programs in North America and Europe: four, including Durak, earned doctorates at Harvard; three studied at major U.S. and Canadian universities; one at Oxford; and two in a joint Boğaziçi–Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne program. Among these, Durak returned to Boğaziçi as a faculty member, Kitapçı Bayrı and Aslıhan Akışık continued as adjuncts or independent researchers, and others pursued careers abroad. Kitapçı Bayrı also served as academic coordinator of the Twenty-fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies (ICBS) until its relocation. At present, ten of Necipoğlu's master's students are enrolled in doctoral programs at leading international universities, attesting to the transnational reach of her mentorship model.

Necipoğlu's supervisory style stood out in Türkiye for its deliberate emulation of Western models and its focus on long-term intellectual development. She avoided hierarchical, personality-centered dynamics, instead fostering academic rigor, collegiality, and structured preparation for international scholarship. Central to her approach was an insistence on language proficiency—Greek, Latin, and Arabic—as essential tools for engaging Byzantine sources. Her seminars trained students not only in textual interpretation but also in historiographical critique, paleography, and contextual analysis, reinforced by assignments such as annotated bibliographies, comparative essays, and archival explorations. She also explicitly encouraged academic mobility, urging students to apply for fellowships, summer schools, and doctoral programs abroad, while using her own international network to facilitate these transitions. The result was an unusually high proportion of students who continued to advanced study at elite institutions, many of whom retained ties with Turkish academia through conferences, collaborations, and guest lectures. Importantly, this outward orientation did not preclude local investment: Durak's return to Boğaziçi and efforts to expand the field exemplify a model of transnational reciprocity rather than brain drain. Although smaller in scale than earlier clusters, the Boğaziçi model stands out for its coherence, intellectual precision,

and sustained international engagement. It remains a key contributor to the diversification and consolidation of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, bridging national scholarship with global academic networks.

4.4 Conclusion to Chapter 4

This chapter examined the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye through graduate theses, treated as cognitive, social, and institutional artifacts. Drawing on a large dataset of master's and doctoral work, it traced the field's evolution across research topics, disciplinary homes, mentorship, and institutional positioning. A two-tiered framework—distinguishing between core vs. contextual orientations and between visual-material (MVCS) vs. historical-textual (HTS) approaches—provided the scaffolding for mapping disciplinary boundaries, continuities, and transformations.

The cognitive analysis revealed the dominance of MVCS, rooted in archaeology, art history, and fieldwork methods, alongside a smaller but methodologically rigorous HTS branch focused on political thought, diplomacy, and ecclesiastical history. Thematic clusters around identity, urbanity, heritage, and periodization highlight both empirical depth and interpretive breadth, suggesting a field that combines dense specialization with growing cross-disciplinary engagements. In Whitley's terms, Byzantine studies in Türkiye resembles a "fragmented adhocracy," characterized by low mutual dependence and high task uncertainty.

Socially, the chapter applied Mullins' Four-Stage Model to trace how academic lineages shaped the reproduction of scholarly orientations. Mentorship emerged as a decisive factor: from Semavi Eyice's solitary and non-reproductive model, to Doğan Kuban's collaborative architectural cluster, to the Hacettepe School's multi-generational continuity, and Boğaziçi's globally embedded training. These trajectories confirm Zucker's insight that institutionalization depends less on age or volume than on the routinization and transmission of knowledge practices.

What emerges is not a cohesive discipline but a mosaic of clusters, mentorship traditions, and institutional asymmetries. Yet this fragmentation still rests on a web of relationships—formal and informal—that has enabled fragile but persistent consolidation. The next chapter visualizes this web through Social Network Analysis, deepening our understanding of how Byzantine studies in Türkiye has been reproduced, transformed, and sustained across generations.

Chapter 5 – Social Network Analysis of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye

5.1 Introduction: From Distribution to Structure

Following the macro-level mapping of thesis production in chapter 4, this chapter shifts from patterns of categorical classification to an investigation of the relational structures that underpin scholarly formation in Byzantine studies in Türkiye. While chapter 4 examined the distribution of research topics, disciplinary orientations, and institutional affiliations, it offered only a partial view of how scholars are connected, how knowledge is transmitted, and where structural cohesion or fragmentation emerges within the academic field. Chapter 5 addresses this analytical gap through the lens of social network analysis (SNA), foregrounding the role of relationships in shaping academic reproduction, marginality, and institutional embeddedness.

This chapter introduces a custom-built, two-mode (bipartite) network model that links individual scholars and universities through a range of thesis-related interactions: authorship, supervision, co-supervision, jury participation, and institutional affiliation. Unlike lineage charts or categorical breakdowns, the SNA framework captures relational asymmetries and structural configurations, revealing which scholars and institutions act as hubs of reproduction, which remain peripheral, and which become isolated or structurally obsolete. Network metrics such as degree centrality, betweenness centrality, and cohesion measures offer a systematic view of scholarly influence and institutional connectivity over time.

Equally critical is the integration of qualitative insight from oral history interviews. These testimonies allow us to interpret structural phenomena—such as disconnections, bottlenecks, or absence—not as mere data anomalies but as lived experiences of disciplinary exclusion, precarious career trajectories, and institutional inertia. The structural network is thus not only a map of relationships but a medium for understanding the conditions of scholarly belonging and constraint.

This chapter is organized to reveal multiple dimensions of network structure. It begins with an explanation of the model's construction and weighting logic, then proceeds to analyze patterns centrality and cohesion overlaid with institutional geographies. Taken together, this chapter argues that the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye cannot

be understood through thematic analysis alone. The relational architectures of the field—who trains whom, where they work, and how institutional and disciplinary structures shape those ties—are central to understanding how the field has evolved, and where it remains vulnerable. The chapter sets the stage for chapter 6, which turns from network patterns to the institutional infrastructures that support or undermine these scholarly relations: academic programs, research centers, conferences, journals, and professional associations.

5.2 Network Construction and Methodological Notes

5.2.1 Overview of the Network Model

The network model developed for this study reconstructs the academic field of Byzantine studies in Türkiye as a set of interlocking relationships between scholars and universities. It is designed as a bipartite (two-mode) structure, linking individual scholars to institutions through thesis production, supervision, co-supervision, jury participation, and professional affiliation. This design moves beyond individual biographies or simple counts of theses to show how careers unfold, mentorship circulates, and institutions shape scholarly reproduction. It highlights clusters of activity, sites of continuity, and areas of marginalization that are often obscured in thematic or statistical overviews.

Nodes consist of two types:

- **Scholars**, included if they authored, supervised, co-supervised, or served on the jury of a thesis.
- **Universities**, coded with metadata on location, coordinates, and origin (Turkish or foreign).

Each node is tagged with two temporal markers: the year of first entry into the network (via authorship, supervision, or affiliation) and a uniform end date of 2025, enabling diachronic visualizations and temporal slicing.

Edges represent relationships of four kinds:

1. **Affiliation** (undirected): scholar ↔ university, either as a student author or as faculty.
2. **Supervision** (directed): author → supervisor.
3. **Co-supervision** (directed): author → co-supervisor.
4. **Jury membership** (directed): author → jury member.

Edges record the year of the thesis or affiliation and, when relevant, disciplinary metadata. This encoding ensures that network dynamics can be traced across generations and institutions, not just captured at a single moment.

To reflect the intensity and epistemic weight of different relationships, the model employs a three-tiered weighting system:

1. **Thematic relevance:** Each thesis is assigned a raw weight from 1–5 based on its degree of engagement with Byzantine studies, ranging from core disciplinary focus to contextual or supportive topics (Table 5.1).
2. **Thesis type:** Master’s theses are multiplied by 1.0, doctoral theses by 2.0, recognizing the deeper investment and disciplinary impact of doctoral training.
3. **Relation type:** Supervision ($\times 2.0$) is weighted more heavily than co-supervision ($\times 1.5$), jury participation ($\times 1.0$), or institutional affiliation (flat weight = 1.0), reflecting the greater role of supervision in long-term academic reproduction.

The final edge weight is calculated as:

$$\text{Edge Weight} = \text{Raw Weight} \times \text{Thesis Type} \times \text{Relation Type}$$

Table 5.1: Raw weighting scheme for thesis categories in the network model.

Cat.	Label	Group	Raw Weight	Rationale
1	Primary Focus on Byzantine or Late Antique Civilization	Core, Comparative, and Cross-Cultural	5	Central disciplinary focus: Byzantium is the main object of study
2	Studies of Byzantine Influence on Neighboring or Related Cultures		5	Byzantium is still central, with expanded cultural framing
3	Comparative Studies of Byzantine Themes to Other Civilizations or Periods		4	Byzantium shares focus; strong disciplinary contribution
4	Studies of Relations and Interactions with Byzantium		4	Byzantium is essential, but situated relationally
5	Studies of Neighboring Civilizations Close to Byzantium		3	Byzantium is proximate but not the primary focus
6	Modern Interpretations or Uses of Byzantium		3	Focus is on post-Byzantine uses or representations
7	Technical Studies of Heritage Documentation & Conservation	Technical / Heritage-Oriented	2	Object-focused; low interpretive engagement with Byzantium as a field
8	Byzantine Sources Supporting Turks/Ottomans or Other Periods/Cultures	Contextual / Supportive	2	Byzantium is instrumental, not central
9	Byzantium-to-Turks/Ottomans Transition Studies	Contextual / Supportive	1	Byzantium is a background or transitional frame

This weighting framework allows the model to distinguish between ties of different intensity and disciplinary depth. For example, a single doctoral supervision on a core Byzantine topic has far greater structural and epistemic significance than a jury membership on a peripheral master's thesis. Weighted metrics thus transform simple degree counts into more meaningful indicators of academic reproduction.

The inclusion of weights also improves the interpretive power of structural measures. In clustering, it draws together actors with strong intellectual ties rather than incidental overlaps. In path-based measures such as betweenness centrality, higher weights reduce the perceived distance between nodes, highlighting figures who act as substantive bridges rather than occasional evaluators. The model therefore captures not only who is connected to whom, but also how intensively, in what capacity, and with what disciplinary impact.

5.2.2 Network Statistics

The two-mode network comprises 2,798 nodes and 7,057 edges, mapping the relational foundations of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. It includes 2,597 scholars and 201 universities, of which 139 are Turkish and 62 foreign. Foreign universities enter the model either as training sites where Turkish Byzantinists earned graduate degrees or as affiliations of supervisors, co-supervisors, and jury members, thereby capturing the transnational dimension of scholarly formation.

Edges record four types of ties: affiliation (3,098), supervision (1,470), co-supervision (58), and jury membership (2,431).⁵⁴² Each edge is weighted using the three-tiered scheme introduced above: (1) thesis category relevance, (2) thesis type (MA = 1.0; PhD = 2.0), and (3) relation type (supervision $\times 2.0$; co-supervision $\times 1.5$; jury $\times 1.0$; affiliation = 1.0). This ensures that centrality reflects not just frequency of contact but the depth and disciplinary weight of ties.

5.2.3 Projection and Temporal Slicing

To examine institutional dynamics, a one-mode projection was derived from the two-mode network, linking universities directly through shared thesis activity (authorship, supervision, co-supervision, or jury membership). This projection highlights training

⁵⁴² Supervisor information could not be located for eight theses dating between 1949 and 2002. Several of these were completed at foreign universities, while others stem from earlier periods where institutional records are either incomplete or inaccessible. These missing ties remain unrepresented in the network but account for a negligible share of the total dataset and do not impact the broader structural analysis.

hubs, bridges, and structural dead-ends, offering a map of institutional collaboration within Byzantine studies. To trace change over time, temporal slicing was applied using rolling windows and decade-based segmentation, making visible shifts in generational succession, institutional expansion, and regional integration.

5.2.4 Limitations and Future Directions

The model does not yet include co-authorship data, due to the absence of a digitized bibliographic corpus, though the *Byzantine Studies in Turkey: A Bibliography (19th Century–2020)* could serve as a future source. Nor does it code the disciplinary specialization of supervisors and jury members, which could illuminate interdisciplinarity and may be pursued through alternative visualizations.

Collecting professional affiliation data was the most labor-intensive task: 3,098 entries, about 44% of all edges. Each required manual verification via the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) Academic database, CVs, or institutional records, especially for retired or mobile faculty. While all doctoral graduates, supervisors, and jury members were mapped, the 816 MA-level graduates were sampled selectively, given their low incidence of academic employment. Identified cases outside the sample were added manually.

Despite these gaps, the model is both methodologically rigorous and conceptually sensitive. It is designed not just to chart academic careers but to expose the structural foundations of disciplinary reproduction. Future refinements may incorporate co-authorship data, evolving institutional roles, and gender data to enrich the analysis.

5.2.5 Visualization Tools and Layout Algorithms

All network visualizations in this chapter were produced with Gephi, an open-source platform for SNA and exploratory graph visualization. They complement the statistical findings by enabling intuitive exploration of scholarly relationships, institutional affiliations, and structural patterns in Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

Two primary network types were constructed:

1. **Two-mode scholar–university networks**, showing direct academic ties between individuals and institutions.
2. **University–university projections**, derived from shared thesis supervision, co-supervision, and jury participation, highlighting institutional collaboration.

Different layout algorithms were used depending on the analytical aim:

- **Force Atlas 2**, a force-directed algorithm optimized for large graphs, served as the default. It accounts for edge weights and promotes modular clustering. The *No Overlap* function was added to reduce improve clarity in dense areas.
- **Fruchterman-Reingold**, also force-directed, was used for comparative views, highlighting overall topology and peripheral structures.
- **Geo Layout** was applied to university–university projections, placing nodes by real-world geographic coordinates and again refined with *No Overlap* to maintain legibility in crowded regions such as Istanbul and Ankara.

Visual encoding followed consistent rules:

- **Node size** reflects weighted degree, the cumulative intensity of thesis-related ties.
- **Node color** indicates either role (scholar/university) or modularity class
- **Edge color** varies by purpose: disciplinary affiliation, thesis category (nine-fold classification), or modularity class in cluster-partitioned views.

These visualizations were not used merely for illustration but as interpretive tools, enabling spatial insight into modular structure, institutional brokerage, disciplinary segmentation, and geographic cohesion. They also reinforce key analytical distinctions developed throughout the chapter—between cohesive lineage-based reproduction, fragmented institutional fields, and cross-cluster connectivity.

Figure 5.1 shows the full two-mode network of 2,798 nodes and 7,057 edges, linking 2,597 scholars with 201 universities involved in thesis authorship, supervision, or evaluation. Rendered with the Fruchterman-Reingold layout, the graph emphasizes structural cohesion while minimizing overlap. Scholars appear in pink, universities in green, and edges by disciplinary affiliation. The dominant fields are Art History (29.9%), History (29.7%), Archaeology (17.6%), and Architecture (11.6%), with smaller shares elsewhere. Node size reflects weighted degree, combining the number, type, and epistemic significance of ties. The visualization highlights disciplinary segmentation and institutional clustering: dense cores mark sites of concentrated thesis activity, while peripheral nodes represent isolated actors, specialized subfields, or newer contributors. Overall, the graph illustrates how disciplinary structures, institutional affiliations, and collaborations intersect in shaping Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

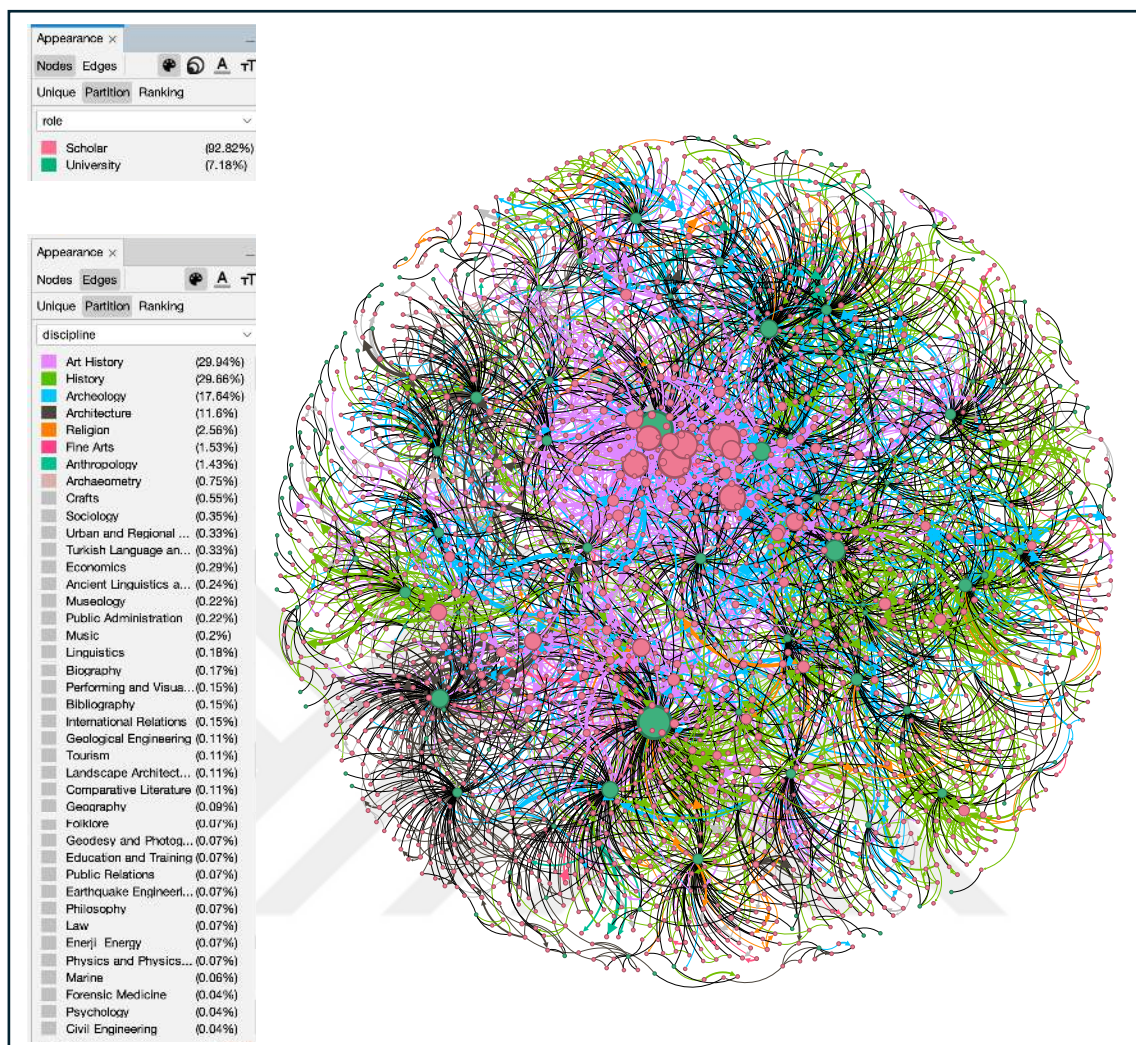


Figure 5.1: Two-mode network graph (Fruchterman-Reingold): Node partition by role, edge partition by discipline. Scholars (pink), universities (green); edges by disciplinary field (e.g., art history, history, archaeology). Node size reflects weighted degree; edge thickness reflects tie strength (thesis category, type, relation).

Figure 5.2 shows the same network, rendered with the Force Atlas 2 layout and No Overlap enabled. Unlike Fruchterman-Reingold, which emphasizes overall balance, Force Atlas 2 simulates attraction and repulsion to display clustering more organically. This highlights local clustering, disciplinary segmentation, and institutional gravity more clearly. Node color and size again distinguish scholars and universities, while edge color marks disciplinary affiliation. The layout reveals tightly knit disciplinary fields—especially in material and visual culture studies—alongside looser cross-thematic or cross-institutional ties. Central actors and institutions form dense hubs, while isolated

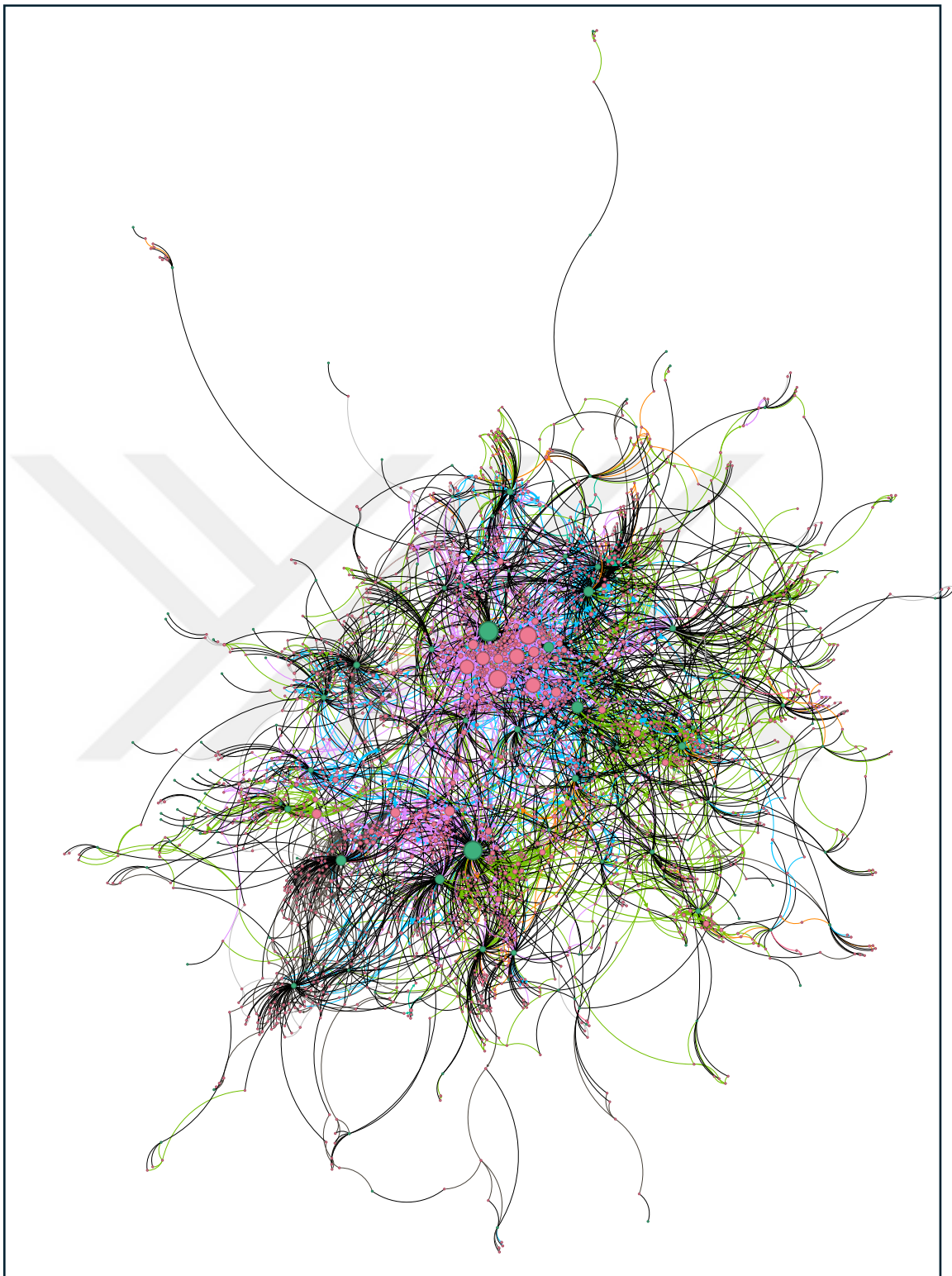


Figure 5.2: Two-mode network graph (Force Atlas 2): Node partition by role, edge partition by discipline. Scholars (pink), universities (green); edges by disciplinary field (e.g., art history, history, archaeology). Node size reflects weighted degree; edge thickness reflects tie strength (thesis category, type, relation).

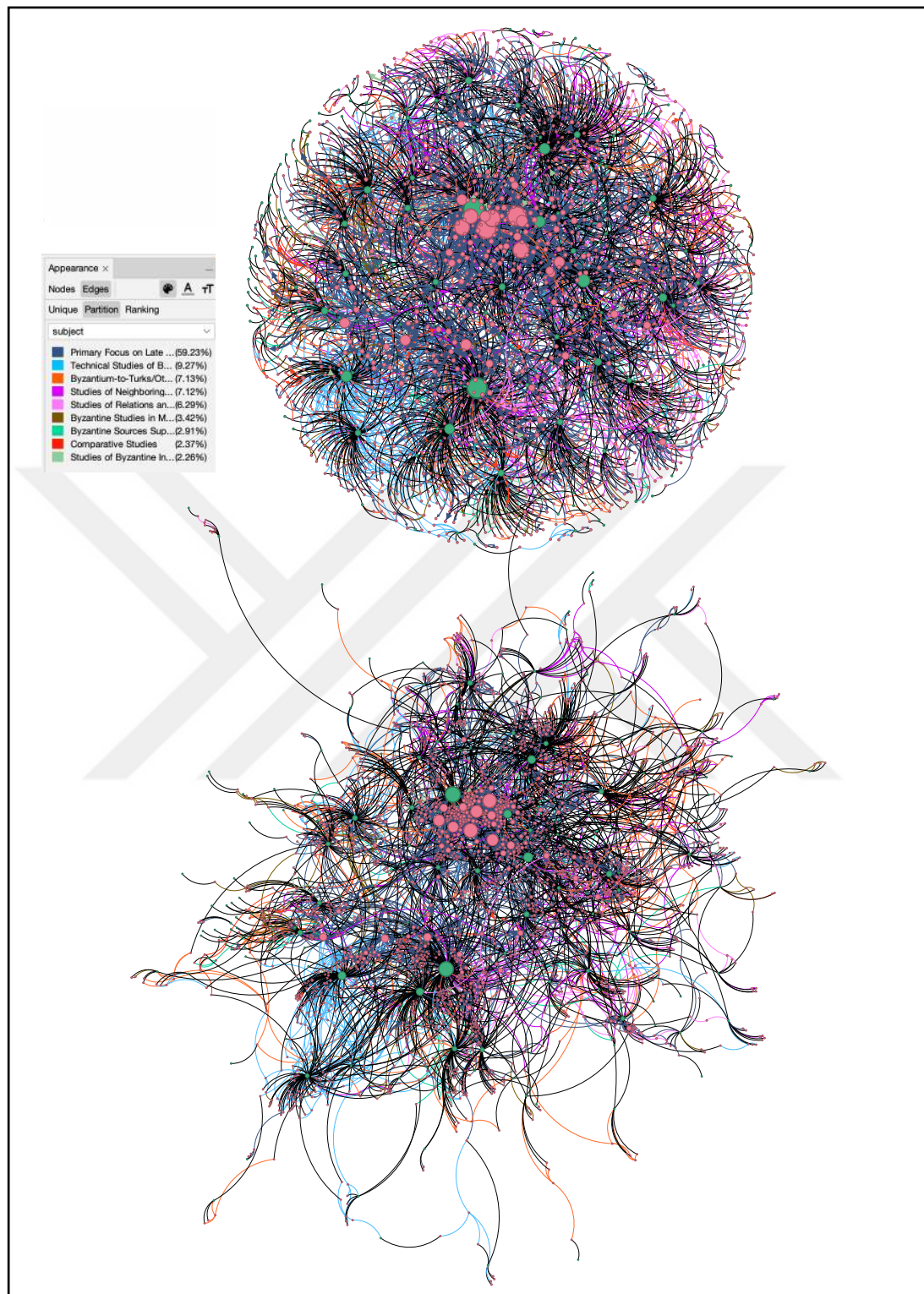


Figure 5.3: Two-Mode Network Graphs (Fruchterman-Reingold and Force Atlas 2 Layouts): Node partition by role, edge partition by thesis category. Scholars (pink), universities (green); edges by subject category. Node size reflects weighted degree; edge thickness reflects tie strength (thesis type, subject relevance, role).

disciplines and peripheral universities remain at the margins. The visualization thus makes visible the field's spatialized structure, from cohesive academic communities to distinctive peripheral clusters, patterns explored in the following sections.

Figure 5.3 shows the two-mode network with node partition by role and edge partition by thesis category, visualized through both Fruchterman-Reingold and Force Atlas 2 layouts. Scholars appear in pink, universities in green, edges by subject category (Categories 1–9). Node size reflects weighted degree, edge thickness tie strength. Category 1 (dark blue)—Primary Focus on Late Antiquity and Byzantium—dominates the core, forming dense institutional and scholarly linkages. Category 7 (light blue)—technical studies of Byzantine heritage (architecture, conservation, documentation)—is confined to a few universities with conservation programs (ITU, METU, Yıldız Technical). Its methodological specificity and predominance of master's theses generate local density but limited diffusion. Other categories—Byzantium-to-Turks/Ottomans transitions (Category 9, orange), neighboring civilizations (Category 5, magenta), and relations with Byzantium (Category 4, pink)—are more dispersed and peripheral, reflecting diverse but lower-frequency contexts. Overall, the visualization shows how thematic orientation shapes network segmentation: Category 1 anchors the connective core, while specialized topics consolidate in distinct institutional niches. These patterns lay the foundation for the cluster-level analyses that follow.

5.3 Structural Patterns: Cohesion, Centrality, Isolation

5.3.1 Central Nodes: Structural and Epistemic Prominence

The overall network is remarkably sparse, with a density of 0.002—only 0.2% of possible connections are realized. While this might suggest fragmentation, in a network built around mentorship and institutional affiliation it reflects the selective nature of scholarly ties, which are typically intensive, hierarchical, and tied to specific supervisory or evaluative roles rather than diffuse contact.

To assess prominence within this sparse but cohesive structure, two metrics were applied: degree, measuring the number of direct ties, and weighted degree, which incorporates the edge-weighting system outlined earlier (thesis category relevance, thesis type, and relation type) to capture disciplinary depth and qualitative academic impact.

The average degree is 5.044, meaning a typical node connects to about five others. The average weighted degree is much higher at 27.135, indicating that while ties are few, many represent significant relationships—especially doctoral supervision on core Byzantine topics. This divergence underscores the importance of considering structural and epistemic centrality together.

Rankings were generated for both metrics. Some nodes rank high in degree due to numerous ties but mostly peripheral ones, while others achieve prominence through fewer but more impactful connections. To reconcile these dimensions, combined rankings were produced: the university list includes the top 30 institutions, and the scholar list the top 50 (expanded to include key members of Semavi Eyice’s lineage, who are historically important but occupy lower centrality positions). Each list presents both raw and weighted values for a nuanced view of prominence. Table 5.2 summarizes the universities, while Table 5.3 provides the corresponding scholars.

Table 5.2: Top 30 universities by degree and weighted degree centrality.

University	Degree	Weighted Degree (rank)	University	Degree	Weighted Degree (rank)
Istanbul	221	781.0 (2)	Boğaziçi	62	202.0 (12)
Hacettepe	186	822.0 (1)	Akdeniz	59	186.0 (14)
ITU	129	387.0 (5)	Bilkent	59	156.0 (21)
Ankara	124	376.0 (6)	Trakya	58	157.0 (19)
Mimar Sinan	115	346.0 (7)	Erciyes	55	169.0 (17)
Ege	97	458.0 (3)	Koç	52	165.0 (18)
Yıldız Teknik	85	154.0 (22)	Onsekiz Mart	49	156.0 (20)
Marmara	84	180.0 (15)	Sakarya	47	112.0 (26)
Anadolu	82	394.0 (4)	Fırat	41	153.0 (23)
ODTU	78	210.0 (10)	Yüzüncü Yıl	39	109.0 (27)
Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli ⁵⁴³	73	172.0 (16)	Sıtkı Koçman	39	106.0 (28)
Dokuz Eylül	69	253.0 (8)	Süleyman Demirel	39	76.0 (30)
Selçuk	68	204.0 (11)	Mersin	38	126.0 (24)
Atatürk	67	190.0 (13)	Pamukkale	34	125.0 (25)
Uludağ	63	222.0 (9)	Celal Bayar	26	88.0 (29)

The top-ranking universities by degree are the expected “usual suspects” where Byzantine studies first took root in Türkiye: Istanbul University, Hacettepe University, Istanbul Technical University (ITU), and Ankara University—home to Faculty of

⁵⁴³ Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University was established in 2018 through a restructuring that transferred several academic units from Gazi University. For the purposes of the analyses in this dissertation, it is considered together with Gazi University.

Languages, History, and Geography (DTCF). These institutions reflect the early geographic and institutional concentration of the field. Yet when weighted degree is considered, the combined impact of Hacettepe and the extensions of its school—including Ege University, founded by Zeynep Mercangöz, and Anadolu University, where Ebru Parman played a leading role—becomes particularly visible. Together, these three institutions register more than twice the weighted degree of Istanbul University, even without accounting for the wider Hacettepe lineage. Their cumulative weight reflects not only the scale of thesis production but also the sustained disciplinary depth and intellectual continuity they fostered.

One of the sharpest divergences between raw and weighted rankings appears with Yıldız Technical University, followed by Marmara University. At Yıldız, the discrepancy stems from the predominance of master's theses in heritage-oriented technical studies, which fall into lower-weighted categories. Marmara's lower weighted score is similarly shaped by its high share of contextual or peripheral theses, again mostly at the master's level. These cases underscore the importance of moving beyond raw degree counts to interpret institutional influence—an interpretation better grounded in weighted centrality and the cohesion patterns discussed below.

The Hacettepe school also dominates the combined list of the top 50 scholars (57 in total), reflecting its broad institutional footprint and sustained lineage.⁵⁴⁴ Beyond first-generation figures Yıldız Ötüken (6th) and Parman (41st), the list includes 11 second-generation, 9 third-generation, and 2 fourth-generation scholars, as well as 4 closely affiliated colleagues—28 in total—demonstrating the cluster's depth and continuity. Their high centrality stems not only from thesis volume but also from two additional factors. First, documentation practices at Hacettepe and its affiliates—shaped by the German academic tradition of Ötüken (trained in Germany) and Parman (who held fellowships there)—ensured complete recording of jury compositions, even beyond regulatory requirements, producing unusually comprehensive data. Second, jury size at these institutions is consistently larger: while most universities convene three-member committees for master's theses, Hacettepe almost always assembled five or more, generating more ties (edges) per thesis and reinforcing its centrality in the network.

⁵⁴⁴ The degree rankings of the scholars are indicated in parentheses hereafter.

Table 5.3: Top scholars by degree and weighted degree centrality.

Rank	Scholar	Degree	Weighted Degree (Rank)	Rank	Scholar	Degree	Weighted Degree (Rank)
1	Sacit Pekak	72	751.0 (1)	31	Burcu Ceylan Duggan	20	210.0 (22)
2	Sema Doğan	70	632.5 (3)	32	Sezgin Güçlüay	20	192.0 (26)
3	Yelda Olcay Uçkan	67	731.0 (2)	33	Sercan Yandım Aydın	20	161.0 (35)
4	Nilay Çorağan	65	581.0 (5)	34	Güner Sağır	20	102.0 (55)
5	Zeynep Mercangöz	55	604.0 (4)	35	Mine Esmer	20	70.0 (57)
6	Yıldız Ötüken	52	544.0 (6)	36	Filiz Inanan	19	161.0 (35)
7	Meryem Acara Eser	46	367.0 (9)	37	Melek Delilbaşı	19	145.0 (42)
8	Macit Tekinalp	44	364.0 (11)	38	Oğuz Koçyiğit	19	141.0 (45)
9	Engin Akyürek	44	356.5 (12)	39	Ebru Altan	19	136.0 (47)
10	Nevra Necipoğlu	43	347.0 (13)	40	Bilge Ar	19	106.0 (54)
11	Gülgün Köroğlu	41	376.5 (8)	41	Ebru Parman	18	168.0 (33)
12	Zeliha Demirel Gökalp	40	406.0 (7)	42	Yegan Kahya Sayar	18	97.0 (56)
13	Murat Keçiş	39	245.5 (14)	43	Semavi Eyice	17	234.5 (16)
14	Lale Doğer	34	366.0 (10)	44	Binnur Gürler	17	166.0 (34)
15	Mustafa Daş	32	216.0 (21)	45	Demet Okuyucu Yılmaz	17	146.0 (41)
16	Emine Tok	28	243.5 (15)	46	Suna Güven	17	140.0 (46)
17	Yusuf Ayönü	28	225.0 (19)	47	Pınar Serdar Dinçer	17	136.0 (47)
18	Turhan Kaçar	27	224.0 (20)	48	Kutlu Akalın	17	124.0 (51)
19	Şener Yıldırım	26	226.0 (18)	49	Zeynep Kuban Tokgöz	16	170.0 (32)
20	Birsel Küçüksipahioğlu	26	185.5 (28)	50	Asnu Bilban Yalçın	16	158.5 (36)
21	Şevki Koray Durak	26	148.0 (40)	51	Bülent İşler	16	151.0 (37)
22	Ilker Mete Mimiroğlu	23	202.0 (24)	52	Evangelia Şarлак	16	142.5 (43)
23	Gökçen Kurtuluş Öztaşkın	23	186.0 (27)	53	Erkan İznik	16	133.0 (50)
24	Ahmet Oğuz Alp	22	228.0 (17)	54	Yalçın Karaca	16	121.0 (52)
25	Özkan Ertuğrul	22	195.0 (25)	55	Sinan Mimaroğlu	16	120.0 (53)
26	Alessandra Ricci	22	180.0 (29)	56	Ergün Lafli	12	151.0 (37)
27	Ayşe Çaylak Türker	21	206.0 (23)	57	Mehmet İhsan Tunay	12	135.0 (49)
28	Seçkin Evcim	21	176.0 (30)				
29	Muradiye Bursalı	21	171.0 (31)				
30	Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek	21	142.0 (44)				

The collegueship relations within the Hacettepe lineage are most visible in jury compositions. Dense intra-lineage collaboration and a tightly knit academic community significantly boost this cluster's centrality and cohesion.⁵⁴⁵ These patterns exemplify the network and cluster stages of Mullins' Four-Stage Model: informal ties became denser, collaborative practices routinized, and institutional structures stabilized around core figures and shared norms. The group's structural visibility thus offers concrete evidence of a sustained research tradition, marked by relational density and cognitive continuity. Anchored in material and visual culture studies, the lineage reinforced its internal coherence through a common disciplinary orientation. Its consistent documentation practices and preference for expanded jury compositions—regularly exceeding formal requirements—further illustrate the emergence of shared academic norms and routines that signal the field's progression into the cluster stage of development.

In contrast to other foundational figures, the Istanbul University lineage of Semavi Eyice is far less visible in the network. Aside from Eyice (43rd), only Özkan Ertuğrul (25th), affiliated with Trakya University, appears among the top-ranked scholars. Despite the absence of a doctoral program in art history at Trakya, Ertuğrul achieved notable presence through supervising numerous master's theses and frequent jury service. This limited showing confirms the analysis in chapter 4: Eyice's legacy was intellectually significant but structurally fragmented, defined by individual distinction without generational continuity.

To better capture his influence, the scholar rankings were expanded beyond the top 30 to include his lineage. Eyice himself ranks 43rd by degree and 16th by weighted degree—positions that reflect the modest number of theses he supervised (13 as primary supervisor, one as co-supervisor) but also the high thematic weight of those works,

⁵⁴⁵ The reception of outsiders by this closely knit cluster was among the dynamics that the oral history project aimed to explore but could not fully examine due to limited participation. One such case was Sercan Yandım Aydın, who—despite being embedded in the departmental environment—entered the field through a distinct academic trajectory. A graduate of the prestigious Business Administration program at ODTU, she later transitioned into Byzantine studies through a master's degree at Bilkent University and a PhD in Germany, both focusing on post-Byzantine icons. Her profile mirrors that of other interdisciplinary scholars such as Engin Akyürek. However, it has not been possible to interview her in the project. While such cohesion fosters continuity and a strong sense of community, it may also contribute—whether intentionally or structurally—to a degree of academic inbreeding, with supervision, recruitment, and collaboration often concentrated within a closely connected group of institutions shaped by this lineage. The broader dynamics surrounding the inclusion and exclusion of non-traditional scholars, and the structural implications of such academic boundaries, are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

concentrated on core topics in Byzantine art. His impact, while structurally narrow, remains visible through the content-driven dimension of the network.

Two further figures illustrate the limits of this lineage: Mehmet İhsan Tunay (57th), Eyice's only direct successor, who produced little supervision of his own; and Asnu Bilban Yalçın (50th), a loosely affiliated scholar included through a co-supervised master's thesis in Italy. Tunay's contributions remained limited, while Yalçın, though more active in recent years, is represented mainly through jury service. These cases show how limited supervision, the absence of a continuing mentorship line, and patchy data all reduce network centrality—even when intellectual significance is far greater than the metrics suggest.⁵⁴⁶

Although first-generation figures from the Kuban cluster do not appear in the combined top-ranking list, the group is represented by second-generation scholar Engin Akyürek (9th) and third-generation scholar Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek (30th). Akyürek stands out as the first non-Hacettepe figure in the rankings, while Çömezoğlu Uzbek—who earned her doctorate at Istanbul University under his supervision after an MA at Hacettepe—illustrates a more varied trajectory than the linear paths typical of Hacettepe affiliates. Other second- and third-generation members—Mine Esmer (35th), Bilge Ar (40th), Yegan Kahya Eser (42nd), and Zeynep Kuban Tokgöz (49th), trained by Metin Ahunbay or Turgut Saner—also appear. Their lower weighted scores often reflect jury-heavy activity and supervision of master's theses in heritage conservation, a lower-weighted category. At the same time, their frequent interdisciplinary jury work across institutions suggests a broader integrative role in the field.

Also prominent is Gülgün Köroğlu (11th), highly ranked in both degree and weighted degree metrics. Though an undergraduate student of Eyice, she forged an independent

⁵⁴⁶ None of the theses supervised by Semavi Eyice or Mehmet İhsan Tunay provide jury information, which may affect their degree centrality in the network—particularly if, for instance, Tunay had participated in the juries of theses supervised by Eyice. Of the 13 theses supervised by Eyice, only four are currently accessible; of Tunay's nine, only two are reachable, and neither includes jury data. Of the 13 theses supervised by Eyice, only four are accessible; of Tunay's nine theses, only two are reachable. In contrast, Yıldız Ötügen, whose career overlapped with both, supervised 26 theses—eight of which are accessible, all with jury data—and served as a jury member in 23 others mostly supervised by her students. This difference reflects both a generational shift in academic documentation and a more outward-facing supervisory model. Notably, Tunay did not assume supervisory duties while Eyice remained active, underscoring the lack of intergenerational continuity within the Istanbul chair. Asnu Bilban Yalçın supervised six theses and co-supervised one, most of them after 2020. Only two of her theses are accessible with jury data, but she also appears as a jury member in three other cases, increasing her degree score and visibility in the model. These discrepancies in archival access and thesis metadata have direct methodological consequences, particularly in centrality-based ranking.

path, establishing Byzantine art history at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University and maintaining wide engagement across institutions and disciplines.⁵⁴⁷ While not a formal member of the Hacettepe lineage, she has expressed admiration for its collaborative ethos, contrasting it with the hierarchical culture of her early training under Eyice. This alignment underscores the wider influence of the Hacettepe model and highlights K ro lu's role as a bridging figure whose integrative presence will become even clearer in subsequent analyses.

The first historian to appear in the degree ranking is Nevra Necipo lu (10th), followed by her student Koray Durak (21st), who returned to Bo azi University after completing his PhD at Harvard. Like Necipo lu—who shifted from economics and philosophy to a double major in economics and history.⁵⁴⁸ Durak entered the field through a disciplinary transition. He completed his undergraduate studies in International Relations, a choice shaped by high academic achievement and family expectations, before returning to his earlier passion for history during the final years of his studies.⁵⁴⁹ After being initially rejected by several institutions due to his lack of formal training in the discipline, he was admitted to the graduate program at Bo azi, where he began his master's studies under Necipo lu's supervision. His trajectory closely parallels that of Aky rek, who also came from International Relations and, facing similar barriers, pursued graduate work at Istanbul University. Both cases illustrate non-linear reorientations into Byzantine studies, contrasting with the more direct pathways typical of established lineages.

DTCF, one of the earliest centers of Byzantine historical research, is represented by third-generation scholar Murat Ke i  (13th) and his advisor Melek Delilba ı (37th), a student of Akdes Nimet Kurat and  erif Ba tav. From Istanbul University's Department of History, continuity appears through Birs l K   ksipahio lu (20th) and Ebru Altan (39th), both trained by I ın Demirkent, known for her work on the Crusades. Two other highly ranked historians, Mustafa Da  (15th) and Turhan Ka ar (18th), also began at

⁵⁴⁷ G lg n K ro lu has supervised 17 theses, co-supervised 2, and served as a jury member for an additional 17, spanning a wide range of institutions. These include: 3 from ITU; 2 each from Hacettepe, Istanbul, and Ko  Universities; and 1 each from Erciyes, Uluda , Atat rk, Sinop, Sakarya, Ege, Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli, and her home institution, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University.

⁵⁴⁸ Necipo lu, interview.

⁵⁴⁹ Koray Durak, "Oral History Interview with Koray Durak," interview by  ebnem D nbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 26 July 2018, 2018, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/koray-durak/>.

Istanbul University in 1989 but pursued divergent paths abroad with YÖK scholarships in the mid-1990s: Daş studied Byzantine–Ottoman relations in France, while Kaçar specialized in late antique Christianity in the UK, making him one of the first Turkish scholars in this subfield outside material culture studies.⁵⁵⁰

A similar trajectory characterizes Kutlu Akalın (48th), who studied International Relations at Bilkent before turning to history, completing an MA at Bilkent and a PhD in late antiquity under Peter Brown at Princeton. His training endowed him with a strong linguistic and interdisciplinary profile on his return to Türkiye.⁵⁵¹

Other historians occupy more regionally anchored positions. Yusuf Ayönü (17th), a medievalist and Seljuk historian, completed all his studies at Ege University, where he continues to focus on Byzantine–Seljuk relations. Sezgin Güçlüay (32nd), trained entirely at Fırat University and now based in its Department of General Turkish History, stands out for supervising theses that consistently place Byzantium at the center. This peripheral yet visible presence points to unexpected disciplinary activity outside traditional hubs.

The remaining scholars in the ranking, all focused on material and visual culture, fall into three groups. The first includes three figures at major institutions in Istanbul and Ankara: Alessandra Ricci (26th), an Italian archaeologist and Byzantinist initially at Bilkent and now at Koç; Suna Güven (46th), an architectural historian at Middle Eastern Technical University (ODTU) known for her work on Byzantine architecture; and Evangelia Şarlak (51st), a specialist in post-Byzantine art at Işık University, institutionally tied to ITU but outside the Kuban cluster.

The second group consists of two archaeologists at Dokuz Eylül University: Binnur Gürler (44th) and Ergün Laflı (56th). Both work on late antique, their visibility reflecting the rising prominence of this field since the 2010s, discussed in chapter 4.

The third group comprises two peripheral yet significant figures. Demet Okuyucu Yılmaz (45th), a graduate of Atatürk University now in its Department of Byzantine Art, focuses on Byzantine and post-Byzantine art and architecture, especially in Cappadocia.

⁵⁵⁰ Turhan Kaçar, “Oral History Interview with Turhan Kaçar,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 21 March 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/turhan-kacar/>.

⁵⁵¹ Kutlu Akalın, “Oral History Interview with Kutlu Akalın,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 19 December 2023, 2022, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/kutlu-akalin/>.

Yalçın Karaca (54th), trained at Hacettepe and Yüzüncü Yıl University, researches the Christian heritage of Eastern Anatolia, supervising theses that integrate Byzantine and neighboring traditions. Like Güçlüay in history, both represent regional nodes that extend the geographic reach of Byzantine studies beyond traditional centers.

5.3.2 Brokerage and Bridges: Betweenness Centrality

While degree and weighted degree centrality highlight prominence based on volume and disciplinary weight of ties, betweenness centrality captures brokerage—how often a scholar lies on the shortest paths between others, acting as a bridge across otherwise disconnected nodes.⁵⁵² In a fragmented field like Byzantine studies in Türkiye, where institutional histories are uneven and disciplinary boundaries porous, this measure is particularly valuable for identifying figures who facilitate cross-lineage, cross-institutional, or interdisciplinary connection. Table 5.4 lists the top ten scholars by betweenness, several of whom also rank highly in degree and weighted degree, showing they are both embedded in their clusters and structurally vital to the wider network. Their roles fall into four broad categories:

Table 5.4: Top scholars by betweenness centrality.

	Scholar	Betweenness Centrality	Degree Ranking	Weighted Degree Ranking
1	Gülgün Koroğlu	187275	11	8
2	Murat Keçiş	155797	13	14
3	Zeynep Mercangöz	155762	5	4
4	Engin Akyürek	142870	9	12
5	Yelda Olcay Uçkan	120820	3	2
6	Nilay Çorağan	111750	4	5
7	Nevra Necipoğlu	100132	10	13
8	Elif Keser Kayaalp	98496	150	302
9	Hatice Özyurt Özcan	89655	157	114
10	Esra Güzel Erdoğan Uluhan	84883	66	53

1. Integrative cross-lineage broker: Gülgün Koroğlu ranks first in betweenness centrality, confirming her role as the field's most significant bridge figure.⁵⁵³ Her

⁵⁵² Eigenvector centrality was calculated but largely mirrored degree centrality—favoring dense clusters like Hacettepe—and added little insight. Discussion in this section therefore focuses on betweenness.

⁵⁵³ Gülgün Koroğlu has supervised 17 theses, co-supervised 2, and served as a jury member for 16 theses. Her jury memberships span a wide institutional range, including ITU (3), Istanbul University (2), Koç University (2), Hacettepe University (2), and one each at Erciyes, Ege, Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli, Uludağ, Atatürk, Sinop, and Sakarya Universities.

sustained engagement across institutions and disciplines allows her to transcend lineage boundaries, linking otherwise separate communities in Byzantine art history. A similar pattern is visible in Murat Keçiş, trained at DTCF but long based at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, whose high betweenness reflects both his role as successor to a foundational school and his function as a connector across geographically dispersed institutions through supervision and jury service.⁵⁵⁴ Unlike lineage-bound figures, both exemplify integrative brokerage, combining disciplinary breadth with institutional versatility.

2. Cross-institutional successors and lineage brokers: Within the Hacettepe lineage, Zeynep Mercangöz, Yelda Olcay Uçkan, and Nilay Çorağan emerge as key connectors. Their brokerage is concentrated within the internal dynamics of a multi-generational academic cluster spanning Ege, Anadolu, and Erciyes Universities, showing how even a relatively closed lineage can generate structurally significant intermediaries.

3. Interdisciplinary and cross-cluster connectors: Engin Akyürek's influence derives from both supervision and extensive jury service, particularly at ITU, where his architectural and archaeological expertise links the Kuban cluster with other disciplinary areas.⁵⁵⁵ Nevra Necipoğlu, although primarily supervising at Boğaziçi, appears frequently in co-supervision and jury service at ITU, bridging textual and visual culture studies and linking Boğaziçi with other Istanbul-based institutions.⁵⁵⁶

4. Mobile specialists and institutional movers: The final three scholars—Elif Keser Kayaalp, Hatice Özyurt Özcan, and Esra Güzel Erdoğan Uluhan—illustrate brokerage through academic mobility and niche expertise. Keser Kayaalp, now at Hacettepe after posts at Artuklu and Dokuz Eylül, is widely recognized for her work on Syriac architecture; her mobility enabled extensive jury participation. Özyurt Özcan, trained at Atatürk and Istanbul and now at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman, gains visibility largely through institutional transitions rather than thesis supervision. Erdoğan Uluhan, a specialist in

⁵⁵⁴ Murat Keçiş has supervised 7 theses, co-supervised 4, and served as a jury member for 19 theses. His jury memberships include Boğaziçi University (3), Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University (3), Ankara University (2), Karadeniz Technical University (2), Uludağ University (2), and one each at Akdeniz, Artuklu, Adnan Menderes, Hacettepe, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts, and Kocatepe Universities.

⁵⁵⁵ Engin Akyürek has supervised 10 theses, co-supervised 1, and served as a jury member for 25 theses. His jury memberships include ITU (14), Istanbul University (4), Koç University (4), and one each at Mediterranean, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts, and Middle East Technical Universities.

⁵⁵⁶ Nevra Necipoğlu has supervised 28 theses, co-supervised 2, and served as a jury member for 10 theses. Her jury memberships include ITU (4), Boğaziçi University (4), and one each at Istanbul University and Sabancı University.

Byzantine sigillography, ranks highly despite supervising only two theses; her trajectory across Istanbul, Boğaziçi, and ITU places her strategically within multiple dense nodes.

Taken together, these four groups show that brokerage in Byzantine studies is not limited to prolific supervisors or dominant institutions. Some scholars, like Köroğlu and Keçiş, act as cross-lineage integrators, while others, such as Mercangöz, Olcay Uçkan, and Çorağan, consolidate influence within powerful lineages. Figures like Akyürek and Necipoğlu extend their reach across disciplinary and institutional boundaries, and mobile specialists such as Keser Kayaalp, Özyurt Özcan, and Erdoğan Uluhan highlight the role of academic movement and niche expertise. Betweenness centrality thus reveals the connective tissue of the field, showing how diverse forms of brokerage sustain cohesion in an otherwise fragmented academic landscape.

5.3.3 *Disciplinary Communities and Lineage Clusters: Modularity Analysis*

Beyond identifying individual and institutional prominence, the network model also reveals broader structural patterns through modularity analysis. Using the Louvain algorithm with weighted edges and a resolution setting of 3.5, twelve modularity classes were identified, yielding a modularity score of 0.740—evidence of strong community structure.⁵⁵⁷ A resolution-adjusted score of 3.024 further confirms the presence of fine-grained yet meaningful clusters.⁵⁵⁸ In practical terms, this means thesis-based relations in Byzantine studies concentrate in dense, cohesive subgroups shaped by thesis authorship, supervision, jury service, and institutional affiliation. These clusters align with disciplinary boundaries, generational continuities, and shared academic cultures.

⁵⁵⁷ See Appendix 8 for the modularity report generated by Gephi. Modularity is a scalar value between -1 and 1 that quantifies how densely connected nodes are within communities compared to between them. It is commonly used both to evaluate the quality of a network partition and as an objective function in community detection algorithms. Values above 0.3 typically indicate meaningful community structure. A score of 0.739 , as obtained in this analysis, reflects a high degree of internal clustering and suggests that the detected communities are statistically robust rather than random or diffuse, see Vincent Blondel et al., “Fast Unfolding of Communities in Large Networks,” *Journal of Statistical Mechanics Theory and Experiment* 2008 (04/04 2008).

⁵⁵⁸ The modularity resolution parameter adjusts the sensitivity of the community detection algorithm to finer or coarser partitions. Higher resolution values typically lead to the identification of smaller, more granular communities, see Santo Fortunato and Marc Barthélemy, “Resolution Limit in Community Detection,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104, no. 1 (2007). The modularity resolution parameter adjusts the granularity of community detection. Higher resolution values (such as 3.5) yield finer partitions by identifying smaller, locally dense clusters. A resolution-adjusted modularity score of 3.024 indicates that the communities detected under this setting are not only mathematically distinct but also structurally cohesive—supporting their use as interpretive units in the analysis. In this case, the high score confirms that the seven selected clusters represent meaningful subdivisions within the broader scholarly network.

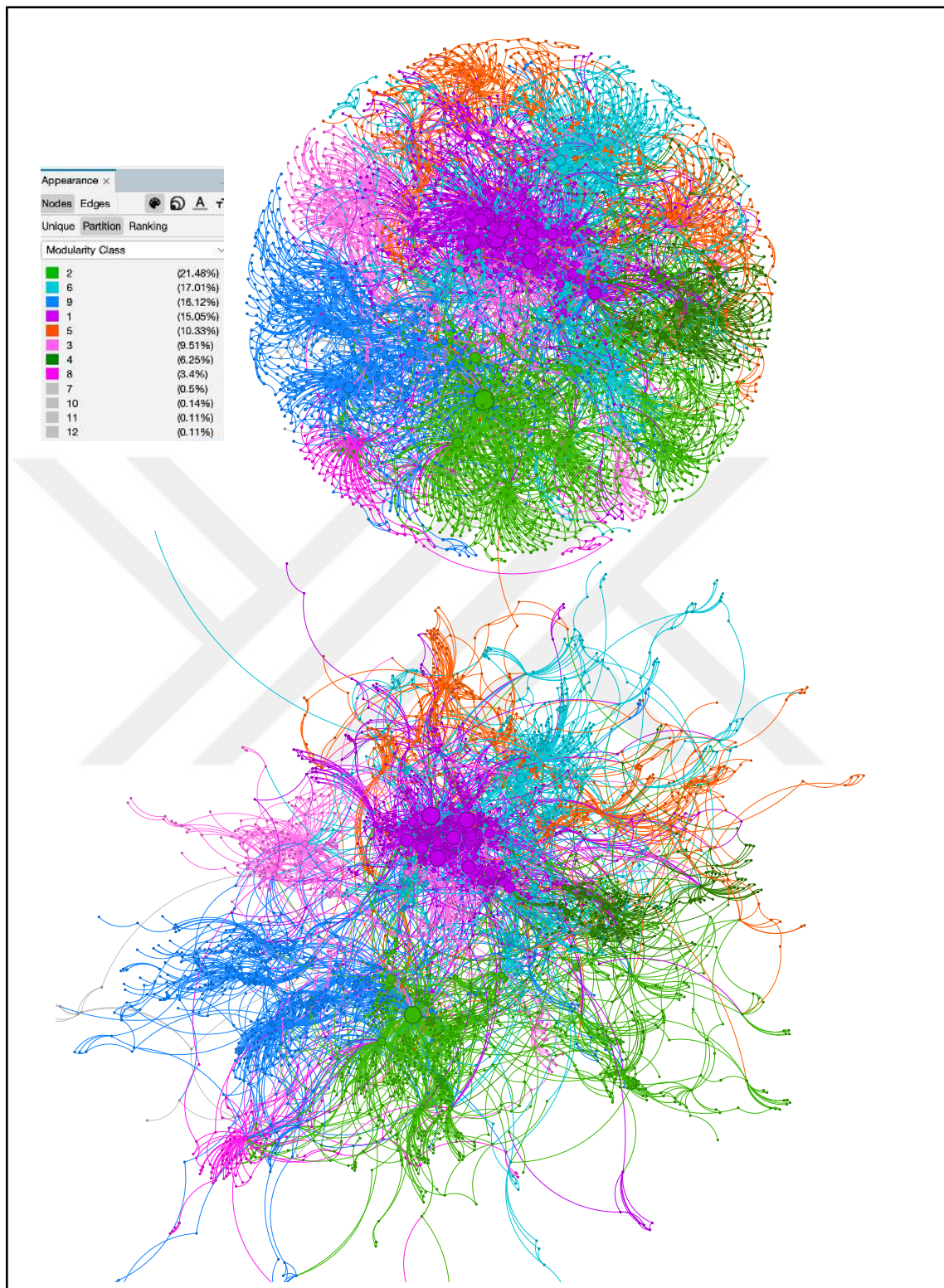


Figure 5.3: Two-mode network graphs (Fruchterman-Reingold and Force Atlas 2).

Node and edge partition by modularity class. Node colors show Louvain classes; edge colors follow node class. Node size reflects weighted degree; edge thickness tie strength (supervision, co-supervision, jury, affiliation).

Figure 5.3 illustrates this modular structure. Nodes (scholars and universities) and edges (thesis ties) are color-coded by modularity class. The Fruchterman-Reingold layout (top) emphasizes macro-level balance and separation, while the Force Atlas 2 layout (bottom), refined with No Overlap, highlights local clustering and proximity. Together they show how actors gravitate into tightly knit academic communities, separated by visible boundaries but connected through limited bridging ties.

Eight clusters dominate the visualizations; the remaining four, each under 0.5% of the network, are structurally included but not color-differentiated for clarity. Their marginal size suggests peripheral or recently formed communities, while the larger clusters display clear alignment between institutional affiliation, disciplinary orientation, and collaboration patterns.

Table 5.5 summarizes the distribution of scholars, universities, and weighted degree across the twelve modularity classes. Seven major clusters—selected for size and interpretive coherence—account for 95.7% of all nodes and 98.3% of total weighted degree, confirming their analytical significance. This provides empirical justification for focusing on these seven groups in the interpretation that follows.

Table 5.5: Distribution of nodes and weighted degree across modularity classes.

	Scholars		Universities		Total		
Modularity Class	Node Count	Weighted Degree	Node Count	Weighted Degree	Node Count	Weighted Degree	Cluster Selection
1	15.4%	28.4%	10.9%	23.8%	15.0%	27.8%	Cluster
2	21.8%	18.1%	16.9%	23.7%	21.5%	18.8%	Cluster
3	9.6%	8.2%	8.5%	7.7%	9.5%	8.1%	Cluster
4	6.3%	5.8%	6.0%	5.9%	6.3%	5.8%	Cluster
5	10.2%	8.1%	11.9%	8.6%	10.3%	8.2%	Cluster
6	17.3%	14.6%	13.4%	15.4%	17.0%	14.7%	Cluster
7	0.4%	0.1%	1.5%	0.1%	0.5%	0.1%	
8	3.4%	1.5%	3.0%	2.1%	3.4%	1.6%	
9	15.4%	15.2%	25.9%	12.4%	16.1%	14.9%	Cluster
10	0.1%	0.0%	1.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	
11	0.1%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	
12	0.1%	0.0%	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Cluster Selection	95.9%	98.4%	93.5%	97.6%	95.7%	98.3%	

While modularity metrics and visualizations confirm the presence of robust communities, they do not by themselves reveal the epistemic character or institutional logic of each cluster. To address this, the next section shifts from modularity classes to a one-mode projection of the university–university network, offering a complementary lens on inter-institutional collaboration, geographic distribution, and relational strength. This projection provides the context for a closer reading of each cluster in terms of its institutional anchors, disciplinary alignment, and generational depth.

5.3.4 University–University Network

Building on the modularity analysis, this section shifts from the bipartite (scholar–university) structure to a one-mode projection that connects universities directly. In this model, two institutions are linked when their faculty members participate in the same thesis, whether through supervision, co-supervision, or jury service. The approach emphasizes institutional collaboration, offering a new perspective on the structural cohesion of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

The projection includes 201 universities: 139 Turkish and 62 foreign. While foreign institutions are peripheral, they appear either as sites where Turkish scholars earned graduate degrees or as affiliations of supervisors and jury members active in Türkiye, tracing the international circulation of expertise. Figure 5.4 maps these relationships using a geo-layout, with node size reflecting weighted degree (institutional involvement) and edge thickness indicating the strength of collaborative ties.

This visualization reinforces patterns identified in the modularity analysis. A handful of universities—Hacettepe, Istanbul, Ege, Anadolu, ITU, Ankara, and Mimar Sinan—emerge as dense national hubs sustaining academic reproduction and cross-institutional engagement. Geographic proximity further shapes connectivity, as universities in the same city or province often form denser subnetworks. Yet long-distance ties, especially between metropolitan centers, highlight the role of mobility, networking, and disciplinary affinity. At the same time, many regional and recently founded universities remain weakly connected or isolated, their inclusion driven more by individual scholars with multiple affiliations or frequent jury service than by embedded institutional frameworks. Foreign universities, though not shown in Figure 5.4, also serve as bridges, reflecting the significance of overseas training and occasional jury participation in connecting Turkish Byzantine studies to global circuits.

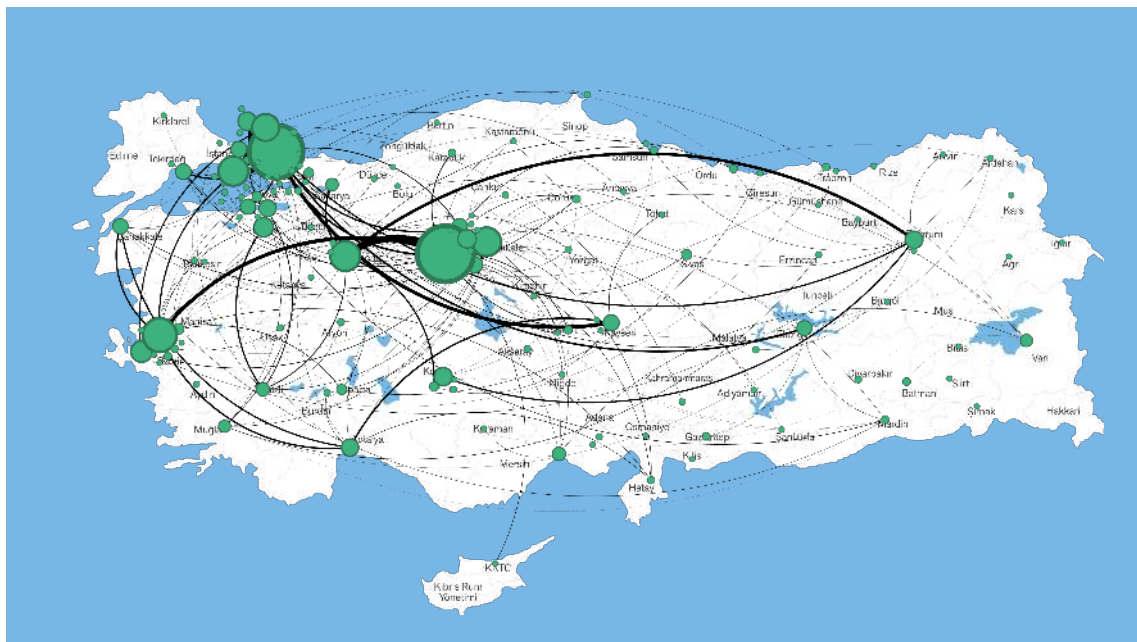


Figure 5.4: University–university network projection. Node size reflects weighted degree (thesis supervision, co-supervision, jury participation); edge thickness reflects strength of inter-institutional collaboration; layout geo-coordinated, No Overlap.

Having established these baseline patterns, the next step is to reintroduce modularity-based clusters into the university–university network and interpret them not only as structural groupings but also as markers of academic culture. As summarized in Table 5.6, twelve modularity classes were detected, of which seven show sufficient scale and coherence for closer analysis.⁵⁵⁹ These clusters—such as the Hacettepe Axis, Istanbul Legacy, and Connected Center—are examined in detail below as academic formations shaped by lineage, disciplinary orientation, institutional affiliation, and spatial proximity. Appendix 9 provides supporting data.

⁵⁵⁹ While this section focused on interpreting the major modularity classes as clusters, several modularity classes were excluded from further analysis due to their marginal scale and limited structural significance. Of the five excluded classes, four were extremely small, consisting of only a handful of universities and scholars—often brought into the network through single jury participations or one-off master’s theses with minimal weighted ties. The exception is modularity class 8, which includes 3% of universities and accounts for 2.1% of the total weighted degree (as detailed in Table 5.5). This class comprises six universities—four located in Istanbul and two in its immediate environs. However, Yıldız Technical University alone accounts for 79% of the total weighted degree within the group, rendering the class effectively a Yıldız Technical University cluster. Although it may be seen as a micro-cluster, its concentration in master’s-level technical heritage studies and its low connectivity with the broader network justify its treatment not as a standalone cluster but as a specific institutional case within the network’s periphery.

Table 5.6. Modularity clusters by weighted degree and leading universities

Modularity Class	Total Weighted Degree	Leading Universities by Weighted Degree	Share of Leading Universities	Cluster Name
1	18,960	Hacettepe, Ege, Anadolu, Erciyes, Cumhuriyet	89%	Hacettepe Axis
2	12,103	Istanbul, Mimar Sinan, Marmara, Trakya	68%	Istanbul Legacy
6	10,144	Ankara, Uludağ, Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli, Uludağ, Onsekiz Mart, Pamukkale, Sıtkı Koçman	83%	Republican Core
9	9,736	Istanbul Technical University, Boğaziçi, Koç	67%	Connected Center
5	5,477	Selçuk, Atatürk, Mersin, Yüzüncü Yıl	80%	Eastern Belt
3	5,422	ODTU, Akdeniz, Bilkent	79%	Bridge Cluster
4	3,898	Dokuz Eylül, Celal Bayar, Süleyman Demirel	88%	Western Belt

Modularity Class 1: Hacettepe Axis

This cluster is anchored by Hacettepe University, with substantial and enduring contributions from Ege, Anadolu, Erciyes, and Cumhuriyet Universities. Together these institutions account for 89% of the total weighted degree in Modularity Class 1, hence the designation of this group as the Hacettepe Axis. Its origins, as noted in earlier chapters, lie in the complementary leadership of Yıldız Ötügen at Hacettepe and Ebru Parman at Anadolu, whose parallel initiatives established a lineage that radiated outward to Ege, Erciyes, and Cumhuriyet, creating multiple sites of supervision and institutional continuity.

Structurally, the cluster exhibits high density and intergenerational cohesion. Consistent patterns of co-supervision and shared jury membership link its institutions through durable ties. This is the first case in the thesis where triadic closure emerges as a defining feature—a pattern in which universities connected to the same third node are also directly linked. Quantitatively, the cluster includes 22 universities (16 Turkish, 6 foreign), with an average clustering coefficient of 0.178 and a total of 757 triangles, the highest observed in any modularity class. These figures point to a stable and mutually reinforcing academic environment. Hacettepe itself holds the highest eigenvector

centrality in the cluster, while Anadolu, Ege, and Erciyes also act as secondary hubs, confirming that the cluster's coherence is both relational and distributed.

The Hacettepe Axis grew from a well-defined academic lineage that combined scholarly formation with institutional entrepreneurship. Ötüken's long-term leadership consolidated Byzantine art studies at Hacettepe, while Parman's move to Anadolu signaled a decentralized but coordinated expansion. Their students—such as Zeynep Mercangöz at Ege, Yelda Olcay Uçkan at Anadolu, and Meryem Acara Eser at Cumhuriyet—founded sustainable research and teaching environments rooted in this tradition. While these offshoots did not replicate Hacettepe's model in a uniform way, they maintained strong intellectual and relational alignment, producing a coherent, regionally distributed formation.

Cognitively, the cluster is heavily oriented toward material and visual culture approaches: 84% of affiliated theses fall under material and visual culture studies (MVCS), far above the corpus-wide average of 63%. Topics cluster around Byzantine art and architecture, iconography, and regional material heritage, with Category 1 theses (Primary Focus on Late Antiquity and Byzantium) forming the overwhelming majority. Newer institutions such as Necmettin Erbakan and Ordu Universities continue this tradition with theses that closely mirror the thematic coherence of the parent institutions. The Izmir Institute of Technology, while not genealogically connected, contributes technical studies of Byzantine heritage that align structurally with the cluster's material culture orientation.

In terms of disciplinary development, the Hacettepe Axis most closely approximates the cluster stage in Mullins' Four-Stage Model. It demonstrates intellectual consolidation, multi-institutional expansion, and crucially, organizational leadership. Ötüken's enduring role at Hacettepe and Parman's establishment of a new hub at Anadolu show how mentorship was coupled with institution building and agenda setting. Rather than simply reproducing knowledge, they created academic units and coordinated structural reproduction across multiple universities. As such, the Hacettepe Axis stands as one of the most successful examples of institutional and cognitive coherence in the field of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

Modularity Class 2: Istanbul Legacy

This cluster is carried by Istanbul University, with major contributions from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Marmara University, and Trakya University. Together these four institutions account for 68% of the total weighted degree in Modularity Class 2. Their combined prominence justifies the label Istanbul Legacy, reflecting the symbolic centrality of Istanbul University in the early phases of Byzantine studies. As outlined in earlier chapters, Semavi Eyice's work gave the field initial visibility, but the institutional pathways that followed diverged rather than consolidating into a single lineage. Marmara and Trakya carried forward the historical orientation, while Mimar Sinan—especially through the work of Gülgün Koroğlu—established an independent tradition in visual culture. What binds the cluster is less institutional coordination than a common origin point and accumulated symbolic capital.

Structurally, the cluster presents a moderately cohesive but strategically placed configuration. Istanbul University remains central by eigenvector centrality, yet the internal structure is diffuse. Unlike the Hacettepe Axis, triadic closure is weak here, indicating looser interconnections among member institutions. Quantitatively, the cluster includes 34 universities (30 Turkish, 4 foreign) and shows the highest average betweenness centrality (52,898) of all modularity classes, highlighting its role as a broker between otherwise unconnected parts of the network. At the same time, its low average eigenvector centrality (0.036) and modest clustering coefficient (0.160) reflect a fragmented internal composition, with influence spread across independent nodes rather than concentrated in a cohesive core. The result is a historically rich but structurally diffuse network, where institutions like Mimar Sinan and Marmara have maintained activity, yet often in parallel rather than within a coordinated lineage.

Institutionally, Istanbul University's early bifurcation between art history and history continues to shape the cluster. Eyice's chair in Byzantine art remained relatively isolated, while the History Department pursued themes such as the Crusades. Marmara carried this historical trajectory, while Mimar Sinan emerged as a focal point for Byzantine art and archaeology. Trakya, along with institutions like Fırat, Sakarya, Medeniyet, and Hacı Bektaş Veli, contributed additional thesis production, especially on historical topics. Yet these contributions have tended to remain autonomous, reflecting departmental agendas rather than shared institutional strategies.

Cognitively, the Istanbul Legacy has a diffuse and heterogeneous profile. Only 51% of affiliated theses fall under Category 1 (Primary Focus on Late Antiquity and Byzantium), below the corpus-wide average of 60%. The remainder is spread across categories dealing with interactions, neighboring civilizations, source studies, and technical or comparative themes, pointing to the absence of a dominant intellectual core. The cluster also leans toward historical and textual studies (HTS), which make up 53% of theses—well above the network average of 37%. This reflects the historical emphasis of Istanbul and Marmara, reinforced by production at Fırat, Sakarya, and related institutions. In contrast, Mimar Sinan and Trakya contribute more heavily to MVCS. The balance between HTS and MVCS here reflects not interdisciplinarity but parallel disciplinary orientations, separated by institutional boundaries.

In terms of disciplinary formation, the Istanbul Legacy does not reach the cluster stage in Mullins' Four-Stage Model. Despite its symbolic importance and volume of thesis production, it lacks structural cohesion, genealogical succession, and reciprocal ties among its institutions. Its inter-institutional links are sporadic and uncoordinated, operating more as parallel tracks than as a unified field. The legacy of Istanbul University remains foundational in a historical sense, but in structural terms it represents a diffuse constellation rather than a generative or self-sustaining academic formation.

Modularity Class 6: Republican Core

This cluster is carried by a group of major public universities founded or expanded during the early Republican era, most prominently Ankara University, Uludağ University, Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli University, Onsekiz Mart University, Pamukkale University, and Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University. Together these institutions account for 83% of the total weighted degree within Modularity Class 6 in the university–university projection. Their consistent thesis supervision and shared academic frameworks justify the designation Republican Core.

The label reflects their historical and institutional lineage: early Republican foundations combined with post-1980 expansions of public higher education, forming a disciplinary base rooted in state-led development and institutional standardization. Operating mainly through large history and art history departments, these universities have embedded Byzantine topics into the curriculum of mainstream Turkish higher education, even without a single dominant lineage or regional identity.

Structurally, the Republican Core presents a broad but moderately cohesive architecture, functioning as a stabilizing rather than centralized segment of the academic network. The cluster includes 27 universities (22 Turkish and 5 foreign), with no single institution dominating. Ankara, Uludağ, and Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli act as modest hubs, while the overall structure resembles a loosely knit federation of state universities tied together more by shared disciplinary norms and bureaucratic alignment than by mentorship ties. The cluster records a moderate connector role in betweenness centrality, 430 triangles, and an average clustering coefficient of 0.207—figures that suggest localized cohesion but not the recursive density observed in more cohesive clusters. Low eigenvector centrality values, such as 0.0168 for Ankara, confirm the absence of a dominant node and reflect a flatter hierarchy and distributed academic output.

The universities within this cluster operate primarily through history and art history departments, some established during early Republican reforms, others emerging during the 1980s–1990s expansion. Institutions such as Ankara, Uludağ, and Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli have each supported long-term thesis supervision, often by scholars with varied specializations. Although decentralized, the cluster retains a strong orientation toward HTS, rooted in the DTCTF tradition of source-based inquiry. This legacy continues through figures such as Murat Keçiş, whose high betweenness centrality—the highest in the cluster and second overall—underscores his role as a connector across institutions and a key representative of this tradition.

Cognitively, the cluster shows a balanced but distinct profile. Majority of the theses (56%) Primary Focus on Late Antiquity and Byzantium (Category 1), while the disciplinary split is almost even between MVCS (54%) and HTS (46%). Compared to other clusters, the Republican Core has the highest share of theses using Byzantine sources to support studies of Turks, Ottomans, or neighboring cultures, and a notable share on relations and interactions with Byzantium, again reflecting the DTCTF tradition.

In terms of disciplinary formation, the Republican Core aligns with a late networking stage in Mullins' Four-Stage Model. It demonstrates continuity, centrality, and institutional spread through regular thesis production and collaborations, but lacks the density, epistemic core, and intergenerational reproduction that characterize a true disciplinary cluster. Its modular architecture reflects the logic of the Turkish public university system—distributed, standardized, and horizontal. As such, its role is

infrastructural rather than generative: sustaining Byzantine historical scholarship across the public university network, but without producing a cohesive or lineage-based academic formation.

Modularity Class 9: Connected Center

This cluster is anchored by ITU, Boğaziçi University, and Koç University, which together account for 67% of its weighted degree and form its Istanbul-based core. Of the 52 universities in the cluster (20 Turkish, 32 foreign), most appear only once; the structural weight lies firmly with these three.

Their strengths are complementary: ITU sustains the conservation and technical tradition in Byzantine architectural studies, Koç has become a hub for interdisciplinary art history and archaeology, and Boğaziçi anchors the historical-textual dimension. As noted in earlier chapters, the cluster also houses Türkiye's only two dedicated Byzantine studies research centers, directed by Engin Akyürek at Koç and Nevra Necipoğlu at Boğaziçi, which amplify its centrality through fellowships, graduate training, and public programming.

Structurally, the cluster's Turkish core dominates. ITU (betweenness 237,689), Boğaziçi (108,550), and Koç (103,768) act as bridging institutions rather than densely interlinked nodes, reflected in the cluster's low clustering coefficient (0.13) and modest number of triangles (103). Their faculty frequently serve as co-supervisors and jury members beyond the cluster, particularly with the Hacettepe Axis and Republican Core, giving the group a disproportionately large integrative role.

Cognitively, the Connected Center leans strongly toward MVCS (67% of theses), with ITU's conservation focus especially visible: technical heritage studies account for 25.1% of output, the highest across all clusters. While 51% of theses fall into Category 1 (core Byzantine focus), the cluster also supports comparative and interdisciplinary work, producing a plural but coherent profile grounded in innovation rather than inherited lineage.

In Mullins' terms, the Connected Center sits at the advanced edge of the networking stage. Unlike the Hacettepe Axis, it lacks dense intergenerational reproduction, though ITU partially sustains a conservation-focused lineage through Metin Ahunbay and his students. More broadly, the cluster's identity rests on institutional synergy and research infrastructure rather than mentorship traditions.

Looking ahead, its trajectory depends on the mobility and reintegration of graduate students. Many Boğaziçi MA graduates, and to a lesser extent Koç alumni, pursue doctorates abroad. Whether they return to find positions in Türkiye remains uncertain. Koray Durak's return from Harvard is a positive precedent, but many peers were unable to do so, underscoring structural challenges in sustaining scholarly reproduction through international returnees—a theme revisited in chapter 6.

Modularity Class 5: Eastern Belt

This cluster is led by Selçuk, Atatürk, Mersin, and Yüzüncü Yıl Universities, which together account for 80% of its weighted degree. Among the 24 universities represented (23 Turkish, 1 foreign), these institutions stand out for sustained thesis supervision and a shared regional profile. Their collective visibility signals a geographically embedded platform for engaging with Byzantine topics outside the Istanbul–Ankara corridor.

The label Eastern Belt reflects both geographic spread and regional logic. These universities are not tied to a single lineage or disciplinary specialization but incorporate Byzantine studies into broader historical and cultural narratives. Theses often focus on local heritage, cultural transitions, or relations between Byzantium and its neighbors, giving the cluster its contextual and regionalist character.

Structurally, the Eastern Belt forms a moderately cohesive subnetwork. While overall centrality scores are modest, Mersin (betweenness 105,262) and Yüzüncü Yıl (74,734) act as regional connectors, linking otherwise isolated peers. Their low clustering coefficients (0.0498 and 0.0740) confirm that connections are horizontal rather than triadic, producing a loosely integrated but functional network adapted to regional academic life.

Most Byzantine work here is housed in history or art history departments also focused on Seljuk, Islamic, or Ottoman heritage. This positioning embeds Byzantine subjects within broader historical frames, emphasizing continuity and local heritage preservation. Faculty typically supervise theses linked to specific sites or collections, resulting in incremental but steady contributions. While lacking vertical succession or metropolitan visibility, the cluster provides stability and relevance at the regional level.

Cognitively, the cluster exhibits a standard MVCS/HTS distribution (63% MVCS, 37% HTS) but is distinguished by its thematic profile. Studies of Neighboring Civilizations (Category 2) make up 16% of theses—the highest share across all clusters—

while Relations with Byzantium (Category 3) and Byzantium-to-Turks/Ottomans Transitions (Category 4) each account for 10%. These emphases, alongside a 51.9% share of Category 1 theses, reflect a comparative and transitional orientation, with History departments often serving as gateways for integrating Byzantine themes into Turkish, Seljuk, and Islamic historiography.

Within Mullins' framework, the Eastern Belt sits in the early-to-mid networking stage. It lacks centralized leadership or genealogical continuity, but its geographically dispersed contributions extend the territorial reach of Byzantine studies. Its role is less about innovation and more about sustaining presence and access, particularly in peripheral regions. The cluster's future depends on faculty retention, stronger lateral ties, and building pathways to national and international collaboration. For now, it plays a stabilizing and democratizing role, anchoring Byzantine studies within Türkiye's regional universities.

Modularity Class 3: Bridge Cluster

This cluster is anchored by ODTU, Bilkent, and Akdeniz Universities, which together account for 79% of its weighted degree. In total, it includes 17 universities (8 Turkish, 9 foreign), reflecting both geographic spread—from Ankara to the Mediterranean coast—and strong international connectivity. Though modest in thesis volume, its importance lies in its intermediary role, linking otherwise disjointed parts of the network through faculty engagement, cross-disciplinary orientation, and institutional adaptability.

The label Bridge Cluster captures this structural role. Unlike lineage-based or regionally bound groups, these institutions function as connectors across disciplinary, institutional, and regional divides. Their shared capacity is not genealogical reproduction but the facilitation of movement between core and peripheral themes, traditional and experimental methodologies, and public and private institutional frameworks.

Structurally, the cluster is dispersed but strategically positioned. With a moderate average betweenness centrality (29,895), a low clustering coefficient (0.15), and 144 triangles, it shows limited internal density but substantial cross-cluster connectivity. Its architecture resembles a relay system: internal collaborations are few, but its institutions regularly serve as articulation points in the broader network. Faculty frequently appear in co-supervisory and jury roles across multiple clusters—including the Hacettepe Axis,

Republican Core, and Connected Center—making them essential to the field’s relational integrity.

Institutionally, each plays a distinct role. ODTU contributes through its Faculty of Architecture, where Byzantine topics intersect with historic preservation, urban archaeology, and architectural documentation. Bilkent, as a private English-medium university, supports comparative and interdisciplinary approaches in art history, archaeology, and museum studies. Akdeniz University, regionally situated near major archaeological sites, sustains fieldwork-based and heritage-oriented theses. None follow a lineage model, but all share commitments to interdisciplinary pedagogy and cross-institutional collaboration, reinforcing the cluster’s bridging role.

Cognitively, the cluster leans heavily toward MVCS (73.7% of theses, second only to the Hacettepe Axis). Category 1 (core Byzantine focus) dominates at 62.3%, but there is elevated representation in Category 4 (Byzantium–Ottoman transitions), Category 5 (comparative themes), and Category 8 (modern uses of Byzantium), each at 7.9%. This mix signals permeability: research that blends frameworks and situates Byzantine heritage within broader cultural and theoretical discourses. Its cognitive profile is thus flexible and exploratory—less about coherence than about adaptive capacity.

Within Mullins’ Four-Stage Model, the Bridge Cluster aligns with the mid-networking stage. It lacks deep mentorship traditions or dense intergenerational succession, but it performs an indispensable integrative role, keeping the network cohesive across disciplinary and institutional divides. As a strategic nexus, it embodies methodological innovation, institutional adaptability, and cross-cluster relevance. Its future depends on whether its programmatic openness can translate into sustained research initiatives, but even now, it exemplifies the connective tissue that sustains Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

Modularity Class 4: Western Belt

This cluster is anchored by Dokuz Eylül, Celal Bayar, and Süleyman Demirel Universities, which together account for 88.3% of its weighted degree—one of the highest concentrations among all classes. In total it includes 12 universities (9 Turkish, 3 foreign). The foreign institutions enter the network through the careers of Mustafa Daş and Ergün Laflı, while the Turkish members are concentrated in western and southwestern Anatolia, giving the cluster a distinctly regional profile.

The label Western Belt reflects this geographic orientation. Its core institutions, based in provincial urban centers, have sustained Byzantine studies primarily through History and Archaeology departments. They lack the academic lineage or metropolitan prestige of larger hubs but have maintained steady contributions through regional specialization and graduate training. Their role is anchored rather than expansive, ensuring consistent supervision and heritage engagement outside Istanbul and Ankara.

Structurally, the cluster shows moderate cohesion and regionally distributed ties. Süleyman Demirel registers the highest betweenness score (81,997), with Celal Bayar serving as a secondary connector (29,757). Yet both have low clustering coefficients (0.0341 and 0.0906), indicating that while they link to various institutions, they are not embedded in dense triadic networks. Foreign universities add cross-border ties, but these reflect individual careers rather than durable institutional pathways.

Institutionally, Dokuz Eylül stands out for its emphasis on archaeological training, while Celal Bayar and Süleyman Demirel consistently support theses on late antique and early Islamic transitions. Faculty supervision is often locally focused—on settlement patterns, religious architecture, and cultural continuity—anchoring the cluster in regional heritage rather than broader disciplinary debates.

Cognitively, the Western Belt is the most HTS-oriented cluster in the network: 61.6% of its theses fall under HTS, compared to 38.4% in MVCS. Core Byzantine topics remain strong (57% Category 1), but the cluster also shows high representation in Relations with Byzantium (15.1%), Neighboring Civilizations (9.3%), and Byzantine–Ottoman transitions (8.1%). Its thematic profile centers on cross-civilizational analysis and regional continuity, reflecting its grounding in History departments and site-based research.

In Mullins' Four-Stage Model, the Western Belt aligns with the early networking stage. It has achieved regional consolidation and stability but lacks genealogical depth or strong cross-cluster integration. Its function is primarily territorial and pedagogical, maintaining Byzantine studies across Türkiye's western regions. The cluster exemplifies consolidation without centrality: coherent, HTS-dominant, and regionally reliable, but structurally peripheral to the field's most generative centers.

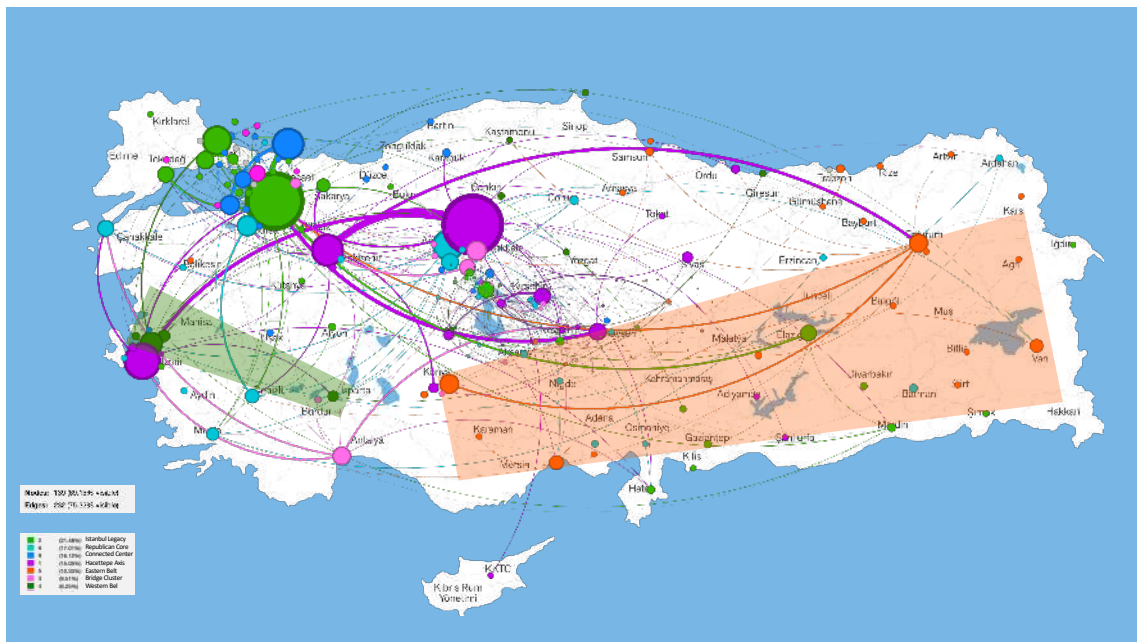


Figure 5.5: University–university cluster network projection (Geo Layout, No Overlap, Türkiye Only): Node size reflects weighted degree (thesis supervision, co-supervision, jury participation); edge thickness reflects inter-institutional collaboration strength. Node and edge colors show modularity class (Louvain clustering).

Figure 5.5 visualizes the geographic layout and inter-institutional ties among the modularity clusters, highlighting structural asymmetries across the field. Each cluster embodies a distinct mode of disciplinary development: the lineage-based and consolidated Hacettepe Axis; the historically prominent but fragmented Istanbul Legacy; the integrative, internationally linked Connected Center and Bridge Cluster; the stable yet geographically dispersed Republican Core; and the regionally embedded, HTS-oriented Western and Eastern Belts. Collectively, these formations illustrate the uneven and multi-scalar growth of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, shaped by faculty mobility, institutional geography, disciplinary trajectories, and unequal opportunities for scholarly reproduction. Their relative positions within Mullins' Four-Stage Model are shown in Table 5.7, which consolidates both structural metrics and qualitative interpretation.

Table 5.7. Modularity clusters in Mullins' Four-Stage Model (by weighted degree).

Mod. Class	Cluster Name	Stage in Mullins' Model	Justification
1	Hacettepe Axis	Cluster Stage	High cohesion, sustained lineage, multi-institutional reproduction, and strong internal density. It represents the most consolidated and pedagogically generative formation.
2	Istanbul Legacy	Below Networking Stage	Despite high betweenness, it lacks genealogical continuity, internal cohesion, and epistemic unity. Institutions operate in parallel without forming a structurally coherent subfield.
6	Republican Core	Mid-Networking Stage	No centralized lineage, but consistent thesis production, broad institutional spread, and moderate clustering. Functions as a stabilizing, infrastructural layer.
9	Connected Center	Late Networking (Near-Cluster)	While internal density is low (low clustering, few triads), the cluster includes high-profile institutions with strong interdisciplinary profiles, research centers, and high cross-cluster engagement. Acts as a strategic hub rather than a closed formation.
5	Eastern Belt	Early Networking Stage	Dispersed but sustained thesis activity, especially in History departments. Weak structural cohesion, but a clear regional role and entry point into the field.
3	Bridge Cluster	Mid-Networking Stage	Low internal density but strong cross-cluster connectivity and interdisciplinarity. Functions as a flexible broker with moderate cohesion and thematic permeability.
4	Western Belt	Early Networking Stage	HTS-dominant, regionally consistent, and modestly collaborative. Lacks lineage or high centrality but maintains a coherent local presence in thesis production.

5.3.5 Temporal Slicing

This section reframes the university–university network as a temporal sequence, tracing the emergence, diffusion, and saturation of Byzantine studies institutions over time. Instead of static structures, the focus is on when clusters emerged and how inter-institutional collaboration expanded or contracted.

The earliest period (pre-1970) shows a tightly bounded structure anchored in Istanbul, with limited ties and a separate nucleus in Ankara. In the 1970s and 1980s, new actors in Ankara and Izmir established a westward triadic axis. The 1990s brought initial engagement from eastern and southeastern universities, though these ties remained sparse and often unidirectional.

In the 2000s, institutional growth accelerated, thickening the network but also introducing fragmentation and asymmetry. The 2010s marked a turning point: regional universities expanded their role through co-supervision and jury participation, transforming marginal nodes into active participants.

Temporal slicing thus highlights not only geographic expansion but also shifting rhythms of scholarly circulation. The network has become more inclusive, yet structural gaps persist in regions with limited graduate infrastructure or weak disciplinary roots. This diachronic perspective underscores the importance of viewing the field as historically dynamic, shaped by alternating phases of centrality, marginalization, and emergence. Decade-wise visualizations are provided in Appendix 10.

5.3.6 Centers and Peripheries: Hierarchies in the Network

Institutional centrality remains concentrated in legacy universities in Istanbul and Ankara, but several regional universities have become structurally significant—not through volume of theses, but through their strategic positioning. Atatürk University in Erzurum exemplifies this role: with high degree and betweenness scores, it anchors eastern Anatolia and links distant clusters through steady supervision and jury participation. Fırat University (Elazığ) and Yüzüncü Yıl University (Van) perform similar bridging functions, enabling East–West circulation despite smaller institutional scales. A second group of institutions—such as Artuklu (Mardin), Kocaeli, Hitit (Çorum), Karabük, and Hacı Bektaş Veli (Nevşehir)—serve as peripheral bridges. Though modest in degree, their disproportionately high betweenness positions them as connectors between otherwise separate clusters or regions.

Despite these contributions, such universities remain under-integrated into the broader scholarly infrastructure. Their collaboration with high-degree legacy institutions is limited, and opportunities for joint supervision, jury service, or cross-institutional committees remain uneven. This underutilization reflects a wider challenge: the persistence of hierarchical fragmentation even amid geographic expansion. Addressing this asymmetry will require deliberate strategies—joint supervision schemes, national thesis panels, or rotating graduate colloquia—that mobilize bridging universities not just as conduits but as co-architects of a more inclusive academic network. Figures 5.6–5.8 illustrate these dynamics: Figure 5.6 foregrounds selected scholars and universities

discussed in the text; Figure 5.7 highlights outliers on the network's margins; and Figure 5.8 visualizes the Hacettepe cluster.

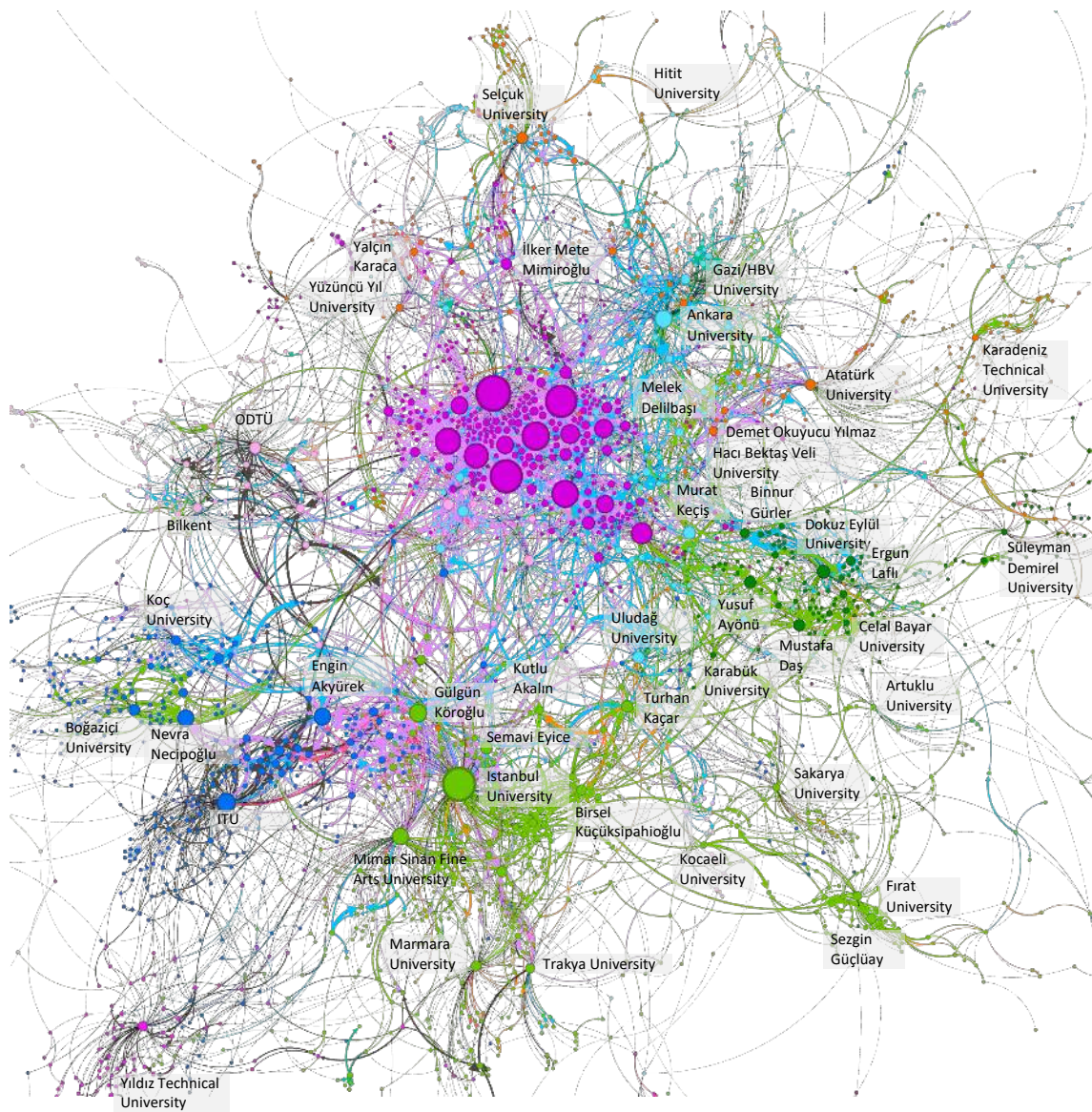


Figure 5.6: Two-Mode Network Graph (Force Atlas 2, No Overlap): Modularity classes close-up. Node size reflects weighted degree; edge thickness shows tie strength. Nodes are colored by modularity class; edges by disciplinary field (e.g., art history, history, archaeology).

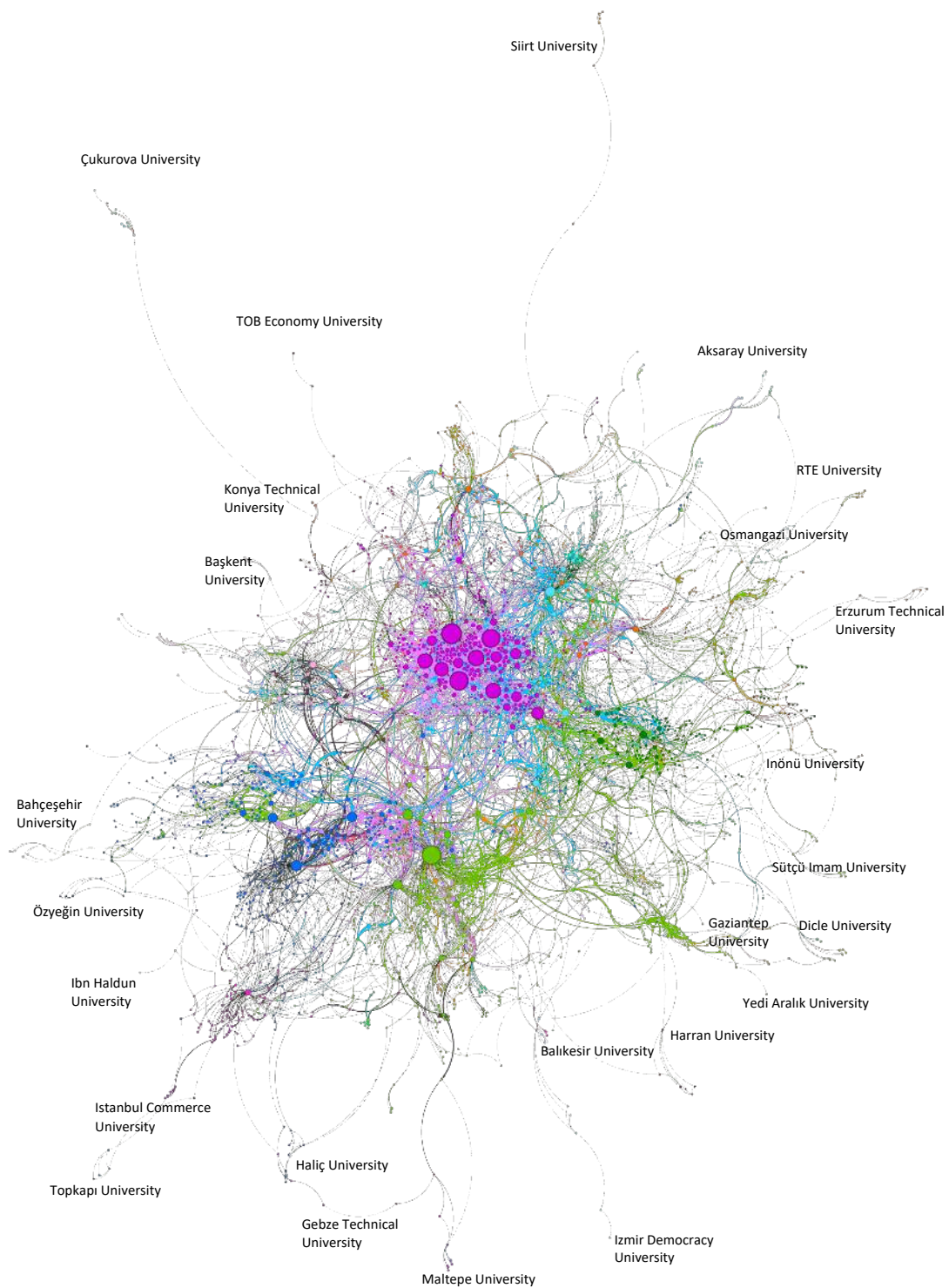


Figure 5.7. Two-mode network graph (Force Atlas 2, No Overlap): Edges close-up. Node size reflects weighted degree (thesis supervision, co-supervision, jury participation); edge thickness shows inter-institutional tie strength. Nodes are colored by modularity class; edges by disciplinary field (e.g., art history, history, archaeology).



Figure 5.8: Two-mode network graph (Force Atlas 2, No Overlap): Hacettepe Axis close-up. Node size reflects weighted degree; edge thickness shows tie strength. Nodes are colored by modularity class; edges by disciplinary field (e.g., art history, history, archaeology).

5.3.7 Beyond Borders: Foreign Universities in the Thesis Network

Although the focus of this chapter is on Turkish institutions, the network also incorporates foreign universities and international scholars directly involved in thesis production—through graduate training, co-supervision, or jury service.

Fifty-one theses are affiliated with foreign universities (34 PhDs, 17 MAs), reflecting long-standing patterns of scholarly mobility. The spread covers North America, Western and Central Europe, and the Eastern Mediterranean. The United States and United Kingdom dominate (16 theses each), followed by France (6) and Germany (6). Table 5.8

lists the leading universities, with Harvard, Paris 1 Panthéon–Sorbonne, and Birmingham among the most visible.

Table 5.8: Top foreign universities by thesis affiliations.

University ⁵⁶⁰	Country	Master's	PhD	Grand Total
Harvard	USA		5	5
Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne	France	1	3	4
Birmingham	UK	2	2	4
Central European	Austria	3		3
Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	USA		3	3
Sussex	UK	2	1	3
Princeton	USA		2	2
Oxford	UK		2	2
St Andrews	UK	2		2
University of Wales, Swansea	UK	1	1	2
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität (Freiburg)	Germany		2	2

Two broad generational pathways emerge. The first includes early Republican scholars, often state-sponsored, who trained abroad to build a modern academic elite. Akdes Nimet Kurat and Şerif Baştav exemplify this cohort, followed later by figures such as Mustafa Daş and Turhan Kaçar. Others—like Ayla Ödekan and Metin Ahunbay—studied abroad on fellowships, while Yıldız Ötüken and Asnu Bilban Yalçın, having completed earlier schooling abroad, continued seamlessly into European graduate programs. Pioneers such as Nergis Günsenin renowned for her work on Byzantine amphorae and Nevra Necipoğlu shaped both disciplinary standards and mentorship models that later widened international access.

The second pathway reflects the rise of English-medium universities in Türkiye (Boğaziçi, ODTU, Bilkent, Koç), which prepared students for advanced study abroad, often with scholarships. Their graduates trained at major Byzantine centers such as Harvard, Birmingham, Central European University, Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (notably under Robert Ousterhout), Sussex, Princeton, and Oxford, embedding Turkish Byzantinists in international research networks.

⁵⁶⁰ Brown, Budapest, Edinburgh, Friedrich Wilhelms, Hamburg, Köln, London School of Economics, Pennsylvania, Philipps-Universität Marburg, Queen's Thessaloniki Aristotelion, UCLA, and Université d'Artois, one PhD each. Bryn Mawr, Chicago, London Metropolitan, Università Degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, and Université de Poitiers, one master's each.

Network metrics underline the disproportionate influence of certain institutions. Harvard has the highest betweenness centrality, serving as a conduit between otherwise disconnected clusters. Birmingham also functions as a broker, while Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, linked to Ousterhout, holds high eigenvector centrality within the Bridge Cluster. Paris 1 Panthéon–Sorbonne, with moderate degree but high centrality, remains a stabilizing hub in the European segment, especially in archaeology and art history.

These affiliations represent not just individual degree attainment but the import of disciplinary norms, mentorship practices, and research orientations into Turkish academia. Yet their domestic impact has been uneven: some returnees reshaped their departments, while others met with disciplinary insularity or institutional inertia. This tension between international training and local absorption will be taken up in the next chapter, which turns to the infrastructures and institutional logics that condition the sustainability of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

5.4 Conclusion to Chapter 5

This chapter has used SNA to map Byzantine studies in Türkiye as a relational field, tracing ties of supervision, co-supervision, jury service, and institutional affiliation. The results reveal a field neither fully consolidated nor entirely fragmented, but shaped by dynamic configurations of institutional anchoring, mentorship traditions, and generational overlap.

The analysis identified several dominant clusters and modular structures, from early mentorship lineages to more recent multi-institutional formations. Central nodes such as Hacettepe, Istanbul University, Boğaziçi, and ITU emerged not simply through thesis volume but through their bridging role across generations and disciplinary orientations. These nodes underscore how institutional memory and scholarly reproduction often rest on recursive mentorship rather than formal disciplinary scaffolding.

Temporal slicing showed how the field expanded chronologically and geographically. Alongside the historically dominant centers in Hacettepe, Istanbul, and Ankara, new formations such as the Bridge Cluster, Connected Center, and the Eastern and Western Belts signal the diversification of territorial and institutional bases. Yet growth has not produced symmetry: while some institutions are densely connected, others remain weakly integrated or peripheral.

Center–periphery analysis further highlighted this unevenness. Certain regional universities function as crucial bridges, yet their contributions are often under-recognized or structurally marginal. Limited collaboration even among core institutions suggests the persistence of siloed mentorship traditions and institutional silences.

Foreign universities have also played a formative role, particularly in shaping second- and third-generation Byzantinists. Early Republican scholars trained abroad under state sponsorship, while later cohorts—often from English-medium Turkish universities—studied at international centers such as Harvard, Birmingham, Illinois Urbana–Champaign, and Paris 1 Panthéon–Sorbonne. Though modest in thesis numbers, these institutions occupy disproportionately central positions in the network as conduits of cross-generational and cross-institutional influence.

Viewed through Mullins’ Four-Stage Model, the field shows a stratified configuration: the Hacettepe Axis has reached full cluster formation, marked by high cohesion and lineage continuity; the Western and Eastern Belts remain in early networking stages; and intermediary formations such as the Republican Core and Bridge Cluster display networking without full consolidation.

What emerges is a portrait of Byzantine studies in Türkiye as a structurally uneven but relationally active field, where intellectual reproduction, institutional constraint, and scholarly agency intersect. This network analysis not only affirms but deepens the findings of chapter 4, showing how disciplinary formation unfolds through connectivity as much as through content. As the dissertation turns in chapter 6 to an institutional focus, these results provide a relational baseline for assessing the infrastructures that enable—or impede—the consolidation of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

Chapter 6 – Bottlenecks and Bridges: Institutional Pathways in Byzantine Studies

This chapter marks a critical inflection point in the dissertation: a shift from tracing scholarly networks to interrogating the institutional durability of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Building on the preceding analyses of mentorship, genealogies, and intellectual communities, the focus now turns to the structural mechanisms—organizational, pedagogical, professional, and discursive—that condition the field’s reproduction over time.

The analytical frame of “bottlenecks and bridges” emerged through an iterative process that combined oral history interviews, institutional mapping, and social network analysis with the conceptual frameworks introduced in chapter 2. These categories crystallized from the dialogue between empirical material and theoretical reflection, allowing the analysis to capture both the field’s heterogeneity and its recurrent institutional patterns. Care was taken to preserve the voices of interviewees: quotations have been translated and minimally edited to maintain their candor and affective force.

“Bottlenecks” refer to entrenched constraints—such as the absence of dedicated departments, fragmented staffing, curricular gaps, or ideological marginalization—that inhibit disciplinary reproduction. “Bridges,” by contrast, denote the platforms and practices—research centers, symposia, journals, and associations—that mitigate precarity and enable scholarly life. The two are not symmetrical: a bridge may alleviate but rarely eliminates a bottleneck.

In total, fifteen bottlenecks and four bridges are prioritized here for their salience in shaping the field’s institutional ecology. The chapter unfolds in two interlinked parts: sections 6.1 to 6.4 map the constraints that delimit the consolidation of Byzantine studies, while section 6.5 highlights the infrastructures that sustain scholarly practice in the absence of sufficient institutional scaffolding.

The analysis is guided by four framing questions that cut across institutional, pedagogical, professional, and discursive levels.

1. **Does the field exist institutionally?** This concerns the structural anchoring of Byzantine studies, from the absence of dedicated departments to the uneven distribution of resources across the center–periphery divide.

2. **How are students trained, and pipelines sustained?** This points to curricular gaps, graduate training, and the availability of international opportunities.
3. **What are the career prospects inside the academy?** This highlights the limits of hiring, the precarity of early career stages, and the reliance on informal architectures of mentorship and patronage.
4. **What broader ideological and discursive limits constrain the field?** This brings into focus nationalist framings, disciplinary entanglements, and the epistemic boundaries within which Byzantium is situated.

These questions provide the scaffolding for the fifteen bottlenecks and four bridges examined in this chapter. Bottlenecks are not treated as isolated categories but as intersecting dynamics that continually reinforce one another across sites of formation, integration, and professional navigation. Bridges, meanwhile, show how scholarly communities have responded to these constraints, offering not prescriptive solutions but critical infrastructures of possibility.

6.1 Institutionalization Bottlenecks

6.1.1 *Absence of Dedicated Departments*

Byzantine studies in Türkiye remains structurally fragile despite growing scholarly activity. No dedicated undergraduate or graduate department exists; instead, Byzantinists are embedded within broader units—most often art history, history, archaeology, or architecture. This embedding limits their ability to shape curricula, recruit graduate students, or reproduce the field institutionally.

As discussed in chapter 3, teaching on Byzantium began after the 1933 university reform, initially led by foreign scholars such as Steven Runciman, Philippe Schweinfurth, and Paolo Verzone. Turkish scholars gradually assumed these roles, extending specialization into architectural history, conservation, and restoration. Their students carried the field beyond Istanbul and Ankara, aiding its diffusion across a growing university system.

From three universities in 1933, the number rose to 29 by 1990 and more than 200 by 2023 (Table 6.1).⁵⁶¹ Yet this growth did not produce a consolidated disciplinary base.

⁵⁶¹ Kılıç, “Byzantine Studies in Turkish Universities,” 124.

Table 6.1: Number of Turkish universities by decades.
(Şahin Kılıç, ISGBS, p. 124, Table 1, no change from 2023)

Period	Number of Universities
1933–1955	3
1955–1960	7
1960–1970	8
1970–1980	19
1980–1990	29
1990–2000	72
2000–2011	163
2011–2023	208 (205 active as of 2023)

A turning point came with the 1981 establishment of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), which centralized governance after the military coup. In 1982, YÖK dissolved autonomous academic chairs and merged them into standardized departments.⁵⁶² Independent chairs in Byzantine art lost their institutional status and were absorbed into archaeology and art history. In the late 1990s, archaeology and art history were once again separated, but the position of Byzantine studies remained unchanged: scattered and without an institutional anchor.⁵⁶³

Turkish universities are organized hierarchically: faculties (*fakülte*) house departments (*bölüm*), which are subdivided into divisions (*anabilim/anasanat dalı*) and further into subfields (*bilim/sanat dalı*).⁵⁶⁴ Divisions are the operative units for hiring, supervision, and curriculum design.⁵⁶⁵ Within this structure, Byzantine studies does not appear as a stand-alone entity but is subsumed into larger departments. Undergraduate

⁵⁶² Conservatories focus on performance and artistic training; vocational schools offer two-year applied degrees; and institutes coordinate graduate programs across multiple departments, such as a social sciences institute overseeing all related graduate fields.

⁵⁶³ History, art history, and archaeology programs are taught in Turkish and English. Programs in English: Koç (Full scholarship and 50% scholarship), Boğaziçi, Yeditepe (Scholarship), ODTU, Ibn Haldun (Scholarship), Bilgi (Scholarship); both in English and Turkish: Ankara, Medeniyet, see “Yükseköğretim program atlası,” <https://yokatlas.yok.gov.tr/index.php>.

⁵⁶⁴ In this study, the *anabilim dalı* units are referred to as divisions, not to mark disciplinary boundaries but to highlight their function as organizational units within departments. This differs from the earlier use of “field,” which denoted a broader terrain of scholarly activity beyond institutional structures.

⁵⁶⁵ According to Article 23 of Law No. 2547, academic staff are formally appointed to divisions, which operate under the authority of the department head. For example, a department of archaeology may include distinct divisions such as classical archaeology or underwater archaeology, each of which independently manages its academic affairs.

engagement is usually limited to electives; specialization occurs at the graduate level, depending on available faculty.

Despite scattered initiatives, the field lacks the integrated departmental structures or cross-institutional coordination needed for continuity. Instead, it survives through fragmented and often informal arrangements. The next section maps this fragmentation across Turkish universities.

6.1.2 Institutional Misalignment and Fragmented Placement

In the absence of a dedicated department of Byzantine studies, the only formally recognized unit explicitly associated with the field is the Division of Byzantine Art (*Bizans Sanatı Anabilim Dalı*) within art history departments⁵⁶⁶ As of June 2025, thirty-two universities list such a division, though some exist only on paper with no staff—at Aydın Adnan Menderes and Karadeniz Technical Universities.

Even where divisions are active, appointments are inconsistent. At Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Byzantinists such as Gülgün Köroğlu and Günder Varinlioğlu are formally placed in the Division of Western and Contemporary Art. At Mustafa Kemal University, specialists are attached to a general, undivided art history department. At Koç University—the only combined archaeology and art history department—faculty such as Engin Akyürek, Alessandra Ricci, and Ivana Jevtić belong to the department but not to a distinct division. Other Byzantinists are appointed outside art history altogether, in museology, heritage studies, tourism, or hospitality.⁵⁶⁷ These pragmatic solutions underscore a persistent mismatch between expertise and institutional placement.

In history departments, Byzantine history lacks its own division but is often placed in Medieval History.⁵⁶⁸ Yet, Byzantinists are sometimes elsewhere due to availability of

⁵⁶⁶ Generic division names in the YÖK Academic system are capitalized in this chapter to distinguish them from broader disciplinary fields, see Appendix 1 for style notes. In the departmental structure of art history programs at Turkish universities, the following divisions are commonly present: Turkish-Islamic Art, Byzantine Art, Western and Contemporary Art, and General Art History. At Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and Süleyman Demirel University, Archaeology of the Turkic World and Medieval Cultures divisions also exist. The Byzantine Art division may appear under slightly different titles: at some universities, it is listed in the plural as Byzantine Arts, and in two cases—Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and Necmettin Erbakan University—it appears as the Early Christian and Byzantine Arts.

⁵⁶⁷ For example, some Byzantinists are appointed in museology or heritage studies (e.g., Zeynep Çakmakçı at Dokuz Eylül; Güner Sağır at Istanbul University), while others work in more loosely related fields such as tourism and hospitality (e.g., Şükran Ünser at Kapadokya University; Esra Güzel Erdoğan Uludağ at Marmara University).

⁵⁶⁸ History departments are structured around seven broad temporal categories—Ancient History, Medieval History, Early Modern History, Modern History, Republican History, General Turkish History, and Ottoman Institutions and Civilization.

positions: at Boğaziçi University, Nevra Necipoğlu is listed under Ancient History, and Koray Durak under Early Modern. Such arrangements reflect structural constraints rather than scholarly focus.⁵⁶⁹

This misalignment has generated repeated calls for a formal Byzantine history division. Necipoğlu, one of the most vocal, recalls being sent evaluation files on early Islamic history and having to stress that she was “a specialist in Byzantine history.”⁵⁷⁰ For her, the absence of recognition signals “a broader exclusion, the refusal to make Byzantium visible or even say its name.” Şahin Kılıç emphasizes the incoherence of YÖK’s classification, which collapses Indian, European, and Byzantine Medieval History under one umbrella, diluting specificity.⁵⁷¹ He adds Byzantinists are sometimes excluded from medieval categories entirely at conferences. Kutlu Akalın highlights the distortions in promotion processes: candidates in Medieval History are assessed through expectations tied to Islamic history—including questions about Arabic proficiency—even when irrelevant.⁵⁷² He recalls a colleague working on European medieval history being asked about the Ghaznavids during an evaluation. Murat Keçiş situates the issue in long-standing departmental design, noting that the seven recognized divisions shape Turkish history departments. He observes, the present framework “expects you to specialize in everything between 375 and 1453 across vast geographies and hundreds of political structures.”⁵⁷³ Any new division would require YÖK approval. Yet, some universities have specialized divisions, such as the Caucasus History at Marmara University and the Military History and Strategy at the National Defense University.

Despite these barriers, many scholars see the establishment of a Byzantine history division as a necessary step toward institutional consolidation. Necipoğlu stresses the parallel with the history of the Ottoman Empire, which has its own division.⁵⁷⁴ Turhan

⁵⁶⁹ Among the faculty members of the Department of History at Boğaziçi University, there is currently no historian officially appointed to the Medieval History Division. According to the YÖK Academic database, the only academic listed under the Medieval History Division at Boğaziçi University is Talal Al-Azem. However, no information about him is available on either the YÖK Academic profile or the department’s official webpage. Publicly available information indicates that Dr. Talal Al-Azem is a lecturer in Islam and the Mohammed Noah Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he also serves as Fellow Librarian. <https://www.theology.ox.ac.uk/people/talal-al-azem>

⁵⁷⁰ Necipoğlu, “The Current State and Future Direction of Byzantine History in Turkey” 37; Necipoğlu, “Türkiye’de Bizans tarihçiliği.”; Necipoğlu, “Türkiye’de Bizans tarihi çalışmalarına dair gözlemler.”; Necipoğlu, “Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies,” 166; Necipoğlu, interview.

⁵⁷¹ Kılıç, interview.

⁵⁷² Akalın, interview.

⁵⁷³ Keçiş, interview.

⁵⁷⁴ Necipoğlu, interview.

Kaçar underscores the fragility of the current arrangement: “Once someone changes direction or retires, the whole thing collapses.”⁵⁷⁵ At the same time, he notes promising networks forming around research centers. Still, he concedes, “we don’t yet have enough Byzantine historians in Türkiye to form a division.” By contrast, Melek Delilbaşı cautions against overreliance on period-based divisions, stressing the advantages of interdisciplinary centers in sustaining research.⁵⁷⁶

Beyond Türkiye, Byzantium is itself marginal in global historiography. Kaçar cites prefaces by Dionysios Stathakopoulos and Averil Cameron noting how the subject remains outside the “main course” of history. He concurs—“it’s a bit on the margins—yet insists on its distinctiveness, stressing Byzantium’s heirs in the Balkans and Türkiye itself: “We live in Istanbul, after all. It’s not just symbolic; this is Byzantium’s capital.”⁵⁷⁷ Addressing concerns that late antiquity might subsume Byzantium, he argues the opposite: “It doesn’t erase Byzantium—it enriches it.”

Comparable misalignments affect archaeology and architecture.⁵⁷⁸ Archaeology departments do not have a dedicated division for Byzantine archaeology.⁵⁷⁹ Byzantine archaeology is usually folded into Medieval Archaeology or Art History; architectural studies are housed in Restoration or Architectural History. These institutional homes may accommodate research but do not provide a disciplinary identity or coherent training tracks. Yet the archaeological record underscores Byzantium’s centrality. 71% of excavations and nearly 60% of surveys contain a Byzantine layer.⁵⁸⁰ Numerous major excavation projects and surveys confirm Byzantium’s prominence.⁵⁸¹ Graduate thesis

⁵⁷⁵ Kaçar, interview.

⁵⁷⁶ Delilbaşı, interview.

⁵⁷⁷ Kaçar, interview.

⁵⁷⁸ At the undergraduate level, archaeological training outside of archaeology departments is offered only at Koç University, where it is integrated with art history in the joint Archaeology and Art History program. In addition, several universities offer archaeology programs with specialization in distinct historical periods, including Classical Archaeology Department (Istanbul, Ankara, Ege), Protohistory and Near Eastern Archaeology Department (Istanbul, Ankara, Ege), Prehistoric Archaeology Department (Istanbul, Ankara), and Turkish-Islamic Archaeology Department (Izmir Katip Çelebi University).

⁵⁷⁹ The disciplinary structure of archaeology departments in Türkiye typically includes the following divisions (*anabilim dalları*): Prehistoric archaeology, protohistory and Near Eastern archaeology, classical archaeology, underwater archaeology, and medieval archaeology.

⁵⁸⁰ Excavations and Surveys with Byzantine Layers is an ongoing project run by the Koç University Sevgi Gönül Center for Byzantine Studies, see “Bizans tabakası bulunan kazı ve yüzey araştırmaları haritası (2022),” 2022, <https://bizansikazmak.ku.edu.tr/>. The list for 2022 includes 179 excavations out of 251 and 83 surveys out of 142 that contain Byzantine layers.

⁵⁸¹ Archaeological excavations in Türkiye are led by scholars working in Byzantine studies include: Amorium (Zeliha Demirel Gökalp, Anadolu University); Mokissos (Nilüfer Peker, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University); Kalecik Fortress (Bülent İşler, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University); Olympos

production mirrors this reliance: of 1,478 theses surveyed, 930 fall within research on material and visual culture, nearly 370 of them directly linked to excavations, surveys, or museums. Still, as Varinlioğlu observes, the field has “always had a secondary status” and remains largely located in art history departments despite employing archaeological methods.⁵⁸²

Oral histories underscore both the potential and the neglect of Byzantine archaeology. Tolga Uyar points to a history of discarding Byzantine layers altogether, though he notes a positive shift as more classical excavations now include Byzantinists.⁵⁸³ He also underscores the substantial potential of Byzantine archaeology in Türkiye and the need

(Gökçen Kurtuluş Öztaşkın, Pamukkale University); Church of St. Nicholas in Demre (Ebru Fatma Fındık, Hatay Mustafa Kemal University); Arykanda (Macit Tekinalp, Hacettepe University); Kadıkalesi-Anaia (Suna Çağaptay, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University); Anadolu Kavağı-Beykoz (Asnu Bilban Yalçın, Istanbul University); Ayasuluk–Church of St. John (Sinan Mimaroglu, Hatay Mustafa Kemal University); Korykos Fortress (Şener Yıldırım, Mersin University); Kissebükü (Hatice Özyurt Özcan, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University); Sinop–Balatlar Church (Gülgün Köroğlu, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University); and Komana (Deniz Burcu Erciyas, Middle East Technical University). Although not directed by Byzantinists, other excavations with significant Byzantine components include Myra-Andriake (Nevzat Çevik, Akdeniz University); Perge (Sedef Çokay Kepçe, Istanbul University); Rhodiapolis (Antalya Archaeological Museum); and Sagalassos (Peter Talloen, Bilkent University). Additionally, some excavations led by scholars from Byzantine art history divisions do not directly focus on the Byzantine period—for example, the Iznik Tile Kilns excavation (Belgin Demirasar Arlı, Istanbul University). “2024 yılında Türk bilim heyetlerince gerçekleştirilen Cumhurbaşkanlığı Bakanlar Kurulu kararlı kazılar,” 2024 Yılı Kazı ve Yüzey Araştırma Faaliyetleri, <https://kvmgm.ktb.gov.tr>. Survey projects led by scholars specializing in Byzantine studies and listed in the 2024 national registry include: Byzantine Settlements in the Ihlara Valley (Hülya Coşgunaras, Adıyaman University); Kozkalesi (Ayşe Henry, Bilkent University); Identification of the Battlefield at Dara (Süha Konuk, Erzincan Binalı Yıldırım University); Early Byzantine Religious Architecture in Karadağ-Binbirkilise (İlker Mete Mimiroğlu, Necmettin Erbakan University); Mukaddem Neighborhood in Silifke, Mersin Province (Ayşin Özügül, Uludağ University); and Architectural Archaeology of Rough Cilicia (Günder Varinlioğlu, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University). Surveys that are not led by Byzantinists but include the Byzantine period within their chronological scope include the project on Classical, Roman, and Byzantine settlements in the Kalecik, Akyurt, Çubuk, and Kahramankazan districts of Ankara Province (Çiğdem Gençler Güray, Ankara University). “2024 yılında Türk bilim heyetlerince gerçekleştirilen yüzey araştırmaları,” 2024 Yılı Kazı ve Yüzey Araştırma Faaliyetleri, <https://kvmgm.ktb.gov.tr>. There are also projects administered by museums and municipal authorities in which specialists in Byzantine archaeology are actively involved. Among these, several recent initiatives in Istanbul—such as the excavations at the Boukoleon Palace, Haydarpaşa Station, Yenikapı, the Church of Saint Polyeuktos in Saraçhane, Damatrys Palace, and Küçükalyalı Arkeopark—deserve particular mention for their relevance to Byzantine archaeology. Küçükalyalı Arkeoloji Park project was led by Alessandra Ricci from Koç University and supported by GABAM. For other archaeological projects that received support from GABAM, see Sevgi Gönül Center for Byzantine Studies Koç University, *Ten Years in Byzantine Research (2015-2025)* (2025), https://cdn.ku.edu.tr/cdn/files/GABAM/GABAM_10YearReport_LOWWEB.pdf.

⁵⁸² Günder Varinlioğlu, “Oral History Interview with Günder Varinlioğlu,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 23 December 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/gunder-varinlioglu/>.

⁵⁸³ Tolga Uyar, “Oral History Interview with Tolga Uyar,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 23 January 2018, 2018, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/tolga-uyar/>.

to make better institutional use of it, observing that much of what is labeled Byzantine art history is, in practice, archaeological. Varinlioğlu notes the neglect of non-monumental material: “When you work with material that has no visual appeal—nothing you can ‘sell—you always face some difficulties in this field.”⁵⁸⁴ Akyürek emphasizes Türkiye’s comparative advantage in proximity: “If something about a dome troubled me, I would put my pen down, walk over there, check it, and come back.”⁵⁸⁵ He cautions, however, that such advantages must be used collaboratively, stressing that archaeology is a collective enterprise best pursued with international teams: “Science has no borders, and only by working together can Byzantine archaeology contribute meaningfully to global scholarship.” He also warns against the uncoordinated proliferation of Byzantine content under new labels, recalling an attempt at Istanbul University to create a medieval archaeology program simply by duplicating the Byzantine art curriculum in place. These reflections highlight the paradox: Byzantium is central in practice but marginal in structure. The field benefits from abundant sites, rich material, and strong potential for collaboration, yet lacks the stable institutional embedding that would secure its reproduction.

In some cases, Byzantinists have found footholds through language programs which, though not structurally integrated, provide crucial training and occasional appointments. Ferhan Kırıldökme Mollaoğlu and Kılıç have been affiliated with Contemporary Greek Language and Literature at Trakya University; between 2012 and 2020, Akalın held a position in Syriac Language and Culture at Mardin Artuklu University.

Byzantine studies in Türkiye is thus dispersed across a patchwork of institutional contexts. While these arrangements sustain activity, they exemplify what Whitley has termed a “fragmented adhocracy”—a field marked by weak structural integration, low standardization, and reliance on individual initiative. These scattered placements, however, are only the surface expression of deeper systemic logics. The next section turns to those logics more directly, beginning with the lived impact of career trajectories.

6.1.3 Navigating Academic Careers: Institutional and Positional Bottlenecks

The development and sustainability of Byzantine studies in Türkiye—as in all academic fields—are deeply shaped by the availability and allocation of academic positions.

⁵⁸⁴ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁵⁸⁵ Akyürek, interview.

Staffing structures determine not only where scholars work but whether they can join professional networks, ensure research continuity, and enable generational renewal. As discussed in chapter 2, disciplines depend on stable employment, professional standards, and institutional platforms as much as intellectual formation.

Oral histories repeatedly identified staffing as one of the most decisive factors shaping the field. As Ebru Parman put it, “An academic position is the lifeblood of the system. If there’s no position, nothing else matters.”⁵⁸⁶ Scarcity has been a defining feature since the earliest years. Even Semavi Eyice, a foundational figure, admitted to Parman: “You’re one of my best students, but I can’t bring you into the department—there’s simply no position.” She began teaching at Hacettepe instead. Similar redirections were common: Gülgün Koroğlu left Istanbul University after a hiring freeze, and Melek Delilbaşı, trained in medieval history, recalled finding all posts in the chair already filled.⁵⁸⁷ “Eventually,” she said, “a position from another unit—Hungarian Studies—was temporarily reassigned, and that’s how I entered.”

Others recalled mismatched or peripheral appointments. In the early 1990s, Sema Doğan took a post in Department of Tourism and Hospitality at Hacettepe: “I said I wouldn’t do anything outside art history,” she remembered, “but there were no positions.” She later transferred into Art History through the director’s support. Ebru Altan likewise began at Istanbul University’s Center for Turkic Studies, not by disciplinary choice but because no position in her own field was available.⁵⁸⁸ Such placements reinforced Byzantium’s marginality, often delaying careers.

Constraints extended into mid- and senior stages. At Istanbul Technical University (ITU) after the 1980 restructuring, Ayla Ödekan had achieved the rank of associate professor but recalled: “I had no office, no students—I couldn’t even supervise theses.”⁵⁸⁹ “She transferred to Istanbul University to continue properly. Parman herself left Hacettepe for Anadolu in 1990: “Your turn comes, but if there’s no position, you simply can’t advance.”⁵⁹⁰ At Anadolu she went on to found a new art history department, which became a major center for Byzantine art history. Meryem Acara Eser faced a similar

⁵⁸⁶ Parman, interview.

⁵⁸⁷ Koroğlu, interview; Delilbaşı, interview.

⁵⁸⁸ Altan, interview.

⁵⁸⁹ Ödekan, interview.

⁵⁹⁰ Parman, interview.

bottleneck, moving from Hacettepe to Cumhuriyet University in 2005 to secure a tenure-track role.⁵⁹¹

The rapid expansion of universities from the 1990s created new footholds, particularly outside major cities. Zeynep Mercangöz, working in the Ministry of Tourism, joined the newly established Ege University Art History Department in 1981 on Gönül Öney's recommendation.⁵⁹² Nilay Çorağan similarly found her footing at a new department—this time at Erciyes University in Kayseri.⁵⁹³ Burcu Ceylan Duggan started as a research assistant in Erciyes' Architecture Faculty, later moving to Akdeniz University's newly founded Department of Art History. She recalled, "There were periods when I felt disconnected from Byzantium... I couldn't focus as much as I wanted."⁵⁹⁴ Had circumstances been different, she added, she might have pursued additional language training or engaged more deeply with the field. "But in the environment I was in, that simply wasn't possible—not while working in Kayseri."

An interesting case is that of Ayşe Türker Çaylak, who entered the field of Byzantine studies through the staffing needs of a newly established department. Initially trained in Ottoman architecture, she applied for a position at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, where the newly forming Department of Art History was seeking to broaden its disciplinary coverage, and she redirected her doctoral research to Byzantine studies with the encouragement of the department head.⁵⁹⁵ Kutlu Akalın followed a similar path when he joined Mardin Artuklu's Syriac Language and Culture unit, aligning with his linguistic expertise but still outside history.⁵⁹⁶ These cases illustrate how departmental openings sometimes shaped not just careers but specializations themselves.

Institutional vision occasionally played a transformative role. At Anadolu in the early 1990s, rector Yılmaz Büyükerşen personally backed the creation of the Art History Department. Parman recalled: "I brought the students I had trained in Ankara. I found a

⁵⁹¹ Meryem Acara Eser, "Oral History Interview with Meryem Acara Eser," interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 26 November 2022, 2022, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/meryem-acara-eser/>.

⁵⁹² Mercangöz, interview.

⁵⁹³ Çorağan, interview.

⁵⁹⁴ Burcu Ceylan Duggan, "Oral History Interview with Burcu Ceylan Duggan," interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 7 December 2022, 2022, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/burcu-ceylan-duggan/>.

⁵⁹⁵ Çaylak Türker, interview.

⁵⁹⁶ Akalın, interview.

position for each of them.”⁵⁹⁷ Büyükerşen’s intervention shows how leadership could enable durable careers and new disciplinary centers.

Beyond scarcity, ideological suspicion also shaped careers. Buket Kitapçı Bayrı observed, “There aren’t many universities that open positions in Byzantine history. They treat it like a curiosity.”⁵⁹⁸ Altan recalled the discomfort of being labeled “a Byzantinist in Turkic Studies.”⁵⁹⁹ Murat Keçiş remembered an administrator implying that his Greek skills meant serving Byzantine interests: “It was as if he was trying to paint me as someone serving Byzantium.”⁶⁰⁰ He countered by stressing his training at DTCF, which emphasized multilingual sources across Turkish history. These accounts show how Byzantine studies was sometimes framed as incompatible—or even suspect—within national academic culture.

These experiences reveal a field shaped less by systematic planning than by contingent opportunities and workarounds. As Kitapçı Bayrı noted, “Many of us, after struggling for years to find a position, eventually consider leaving the field altogether.”⁶⁰¹ The stakes are clear in Nevra Necipoğlu’s decision to return to Türkiye rather than stay at Harvard as a visiting professor: “In 1990, there was one available assistant professorship in Boğaziçi’s History Department. If I didn’t take it, someone else probably would have—and then what? Even though Harvard was incredibly tempting, having a permanent position at Boğaziçi meant much more to me.”⁶⁰² Her choice highlights the decisive weight of institutional permanence. Parman’s move to Anadolu—where she founded a new department—underscores the same lesson: stable positions sustain not only careers but the very reproduction of the field. These cases show the lived impact of staffing bottlenecks.

⁵⁹⁷ Parman, interview.

⁵⁹⁸ Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, “Oral History Interview with Buket Kitapçı Bayrı,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 15 April 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/buket-kitapci-bayri/>.

⁵⁹⁹ Altan, interview.

⁶⁰⁰ Keçiş, interview. In a separate episode, Murat Keçiş recalled his compulsory military service at the Air Defense School in Konya. When his commanding officer asked about his doctoral work and heard it was in Byzantine history, he replied with open derision: “Couldn’t you find anything better to study than Byzantium?” Keçiş described the tone as unmistakably dismissive military language and remembered thinking: “Was studying Byzantine history considered a crime?”

⁶⁰¹ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

⁶⁰² Necipoğlu, interview.

6.1.4 Staffing Systems, Field Classifications, and Structural Invisibility

If the previous section mapped where Byzantinists are actually placed, this section turns to why such misalignments persist. At the core are the structural mechanisms that regulate presence and visibility in Turkish academia: YÖK's staffing regulations—most notably the Norm Staff Regulation—and the disciplinary taxonomies of the YÖK Academic database. Together, these frameworks determine whether Byzantine studies appears as an institutional entity, how its specialists are categorized, and to what extent the field is recognized and consolidated within the higher education system.

Regulatory Framework and the Norm Staff System

In 2018, YÖK introduced the Norm Staff Regulation, a national framework linking the allocation of academic positions in state universities to standardized indicators such as student enrollment, teaching load, research output, and departmental capacity.⁶⁰³ Under the Norm Staff Regulation (2018), academic posts are allocated based on indicators like student numbers, teaching load, and research output, with requests moving from departments through university commissions to YÖK and the state budget authorities. As a result, the model often reproduces existing hierarchies, privileging large, well-established disciplines and marginalizing others—such as Byzantine studies—regardless of their cultural or scholarly significance.

The effect is visible even in universities with strong scholarly leadership. Gülgün Köroğlu, a central figure in the field and then head of the Art History Department at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, applied in 2019 to establish a division of Byzantine Art. As she remarked at the time, “We’ve applied... hopefully it will be approved—it should happen in the near future.”⁶⁰⁴ Yet, as of June 2025, neither YÖK Academic records nor the university’s website list such a division. Even where intellectual momentum and administrative advocacy exist, bureaucratic rigidity may slow or block recognition.

These structural barriers are compounded by ideological perceptions. Fields seen as marginal or “suspect” may be deprioritized when resource requests are reviewed, not only on objective indicators but also through tacit judgments about their relevance to national academic agendas.

⁶⁰³ T.C. Resmî Gazete, *Yurt dışına lisansüstü öğrenim görmek üzere gönderilecek öğrenciler hakkında yönetmelik*, no. 30583, 2 November 2018. <https://resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2018/11/20181102-14.htm>.

⁶⁰⁴ Köroğlu, interview.

Finally, discretion at university and national levels plays a decisive role. Rectors, institutional priorities, and informal networks often determine which requests succeed. For Byzantine studies, which spans multiple departments—art history, history, archaeology, architecture—such flexibility can work both ways: enabling creative appointments in supportive environments, or sidelining the field when advocacy is weak.

Occasionally, even when positions are formally earmarked for Byzantinists, they may be reassigned to candidates from adjacent fields. Ambiguities in disciplinary coding and broader pressures within institutional hiring processes can lead to mismatches, weakening the field's representation despite headcounts. This undermines continuity and makes it difficult to consolidate disciplinary communities.

One notable counterexample comes from Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University. Following the 2022 appointment of Turhan Kaçar as rector, the institution began uniting historians, archaeologists, art historians, and philologists under a more integrated vision. The initiative illustrates how institutional leadership and disciplinary alignment can generate rare platforms for Byzantine studies in Türkiye—models closer to what Buket Kitapçı Bayrı identifies as lacking nationwide: “very few universities have a proper unit where historians, archaeologists, art historians, philologists—all Byzantinists—can teach and continue their research.”⁶⁰⁵

Classification and Disciplinary Coding

Alongside staffing regulations, classification systems play a crucial role in shaping the institutional presence of Byzantine studies. Since 2023, YÖK has standardized academic evaluations through a taxonomy used both in the associate professorship applications and the YÖK Academic personnel database.⁶⁰⁶ Disciplines are organized into main fields (*temel alanlar*), subfields (*bilim/sanat alanları*), and keywords (*anahtar kelimeler*), creating the official vocabulary through which research areas are recognized.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁵ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

⁶⁰⁶ “Doçentlik başvurularında kullanılan bilim/sanat alanı ve anahtar kelime güncellemeleri hakkında duyuru,” 2023, <https://www.uak.gov.tr/announcements/docentlik-basvurularinda-kullanilan-bilimsanat-alani-ve-anahtar-kelime-guncellemeleri-hakkinda-duyuru-xRPOe>. While not entirely error-free or retrospective, YÖK Academic remains the most authoritative source on staffing and specialization. As the official platform for applications, evaluations, and statistics, it provides a curated and reliable snapshot of the field's current institutional positioning, despite occasional inconsistencies in labels or keywords.

⁶⁰⁷ Names of the main fields (*temel alanlar*), subfields (*bilim/sanat alanları*), and keywords (*anahtar kelimeler*) in the YÖK Academic system are capitalized in this chapter to distinguish them from broader disciplinary terms.

Within this framework, specializations in Byzantine history and Byzantine art history can be explicitly coded. Both fall under the main field of Social Sciences, Humanities and Administrative Sciences. Byzantine history appears as the keyword “Byzantine History” under “Medieval History” subfield, while Byzantine art history is listed as keyword “Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History” under “Art History” subfield.

By contrast, related domains such as archaeology, architecture, conservation, and heritage studies contain no explicit reference to Byzantium. These fields can host Byzantine-focused research depending on the scholar’s specialization and institutional orientation, but none of their available keywords directly mention Byzantium. In archaeology alone, 22 keywords exist—spanning chronological, thematic, and regional domains—yet Byzantine Archaeology is absent.⁶⁰⁸ The closest proxy is Medieval Archaeology, though keywords such as Urban Archaeology, Numismatics, or Landscape Archaeology may also overlap depending on research focus. This absence has significant consequences. When a scholar’s work cannot be coded as Byzantine, it is often registered under broader categories, diluting the field’s visibility in statistics, staffing allocations, and evaluation procedures, obscuring their contribution in institutional record.

The ambiguity also creates flexibility—and risk—in hiring. Universities may justify appointments under broad labels, but posts can then be filled by non-specialists or candidates only tangentially connected to Byzantium. Occasionally this enables creative placements (for example, Byzantinists finding homes in philology or conservation), but more often it sidelines the field and weakens its institutional continuity.

In short, the taxonomic invisibility of Byzantium within major disciplinary classifications reproduces the precarious status of the field. Unlike Ottoman Archaeology or Seljuk History keywords, which are present in the coding system, Byzantine history and archaeology remains dependent on proxy labels. This structural erasure reinforces perceptions of the field as marginal, despite its intellectual and cultural importance.

⁶⁰⁸ Archaic Period, Archaeometry, Early Bronze Age, Hellenistic Period, Hittite, Archaeology of Islamic Geography, Pre-Islamic Turkish Archaeology, Urban Archaeology, Classical Period, Neolithic Age, Numismatics, Obsidian, Medieval Archaeology, Ottoman Archaeology, Paleolithic, Landscape Archaeology, Seljuk Archaeology, Ceramics, Underwater Archaeology, Archaeology of Turkish Geography, Settlement Archaeology, Greek and Roman Period.

Subfield Analyses: Institutional Footprints

As of June 2025, 86 academics are listed in the YÖK Academic database under the keyword Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History (*Erken Hristiyan ve Bizans Sanatları Tarihi*). Unsurprisingly, most are affiliated with art history departments; a smaller number are located in archaeology, museum studies, or vocational programs (Table 6.2). These outliers generally reflect institutional constraints or the absence of field-specific staffing lines, pushing Byzantinists into adjacent units.

Table 6.2: Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History keyword by department.
(YÖK Academic database as of June 2025)

Academic Title	Art History	Archaeology	Archaeology & Art History	Vocational School	Museum Studies	Culture of Science	Total
Professor	18	2	1	1	1		23
Associate Professor	17	2	1		1		21
Assistant Professor	6						6
(Title: Assoc. Professor)							
Assistant Professor	15		1	2		1	19
Lecturer	2						2
Research Assistant	15						15
Total	73	4	3	3	2	1	86

One marker of structural bottlenecks is the presence of six scholars who hold the title of associate professor but remain in assistant professor positions. Having completed all requirements, including the oral exam, they nevertheless await appointment, highlighting how the norm staff system can delay advancement even after academic criteria are met.

Within art history departments, 50 of 73 scholars are housed in divisions explicitly named Byzantine Art (Table 6.3), the most direct institutional homes for the field.⁶⁰⁹ The rest are dispersed across General Art History (8), Western and Contemporary Art (9), Turkish and Islamic Art (4), Medieval Archaeology (1), and Turkic Cultures (1). Based on training, dissertations, teaching, and supervision, 84 of the 86 scholars listed under Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History can be considered active contributors to

⁶⁰⁹ In some universities, the division is named as Byzantine Arts or Early Christian and Byzantine Arts.

Byzantine studies—50 in Byzantine Art units and 34 in related divisions. Only two, though classified under the keyword, show little engagement with the field.⁶¹⁰ In summary, 60 percent (50 of 86) of Byzantine art specialists are in dedicated divisions.

Table 6.3: Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History keyword by division.
(YÖK Academic database as of June 2025)

Academic Title	Byzantine Art	Western & Contemp. Art	General Art History	Turkish Islamic Art	Medieval Archaeol.	Turkish World & Medieval Cultures	Total
Professor	14	2	1		1		18
Associate Professor	11	4	2				17
Assistant Professor (Title: Assoc. Prof.)	4		1	1			6
Assistant Professor	9	2	2	1		1	15
Lecturer		1	1				2
Research Assistant	12		1	2			15
Total	50	9	8	4	1	1	73

Across 32 universities that list a Byzantine Art division, 30 currently have active staff. Collectively, these universities employ 301 art historians, of whom 77 (26%) belong to Byzantine Art divisions.⁶¹¹ The rank distribution within these units closely mirrors other divisions, suggesting a degree of parity in academic seniority (Table 6.4).

⁶¹⁰ Osman Eravşar and Abdullah Sinan Güler, for instance, list Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History only as their second or third keyword. Five others—Assistant Professors Ayşın Özügül, Orçun Erdoğan, Yurdagül Özdemir, Hüseyin Şan, and Research Assistant Yusuf Gül—likewise record it as a secondary field, though their graduate training and research focus closely on Byzantium. In total, 79 of the 86 scholars considered here identify Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History as their primary specialization. By comparison, Şahin Kılıç reported 66 (p. 125) and 69 (p. 126) such listings as of September 2024. The discrepancy likely reflects both new appointments and legacy entries in data, where the field appeared as a subfield rather than a keyword, see Kılıç, “Byzantine Studies in Turkish Universities,” 124–31. The full list is provided in Appendix 11.

⁶¹¹ Of the 77 scholars affiliated with Byzantine Art divisions, 50 list Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History among their profile keywords. Nine others, though clearly active in the field, have no keywords recorded in the YÖK Academic system—likely due to database gaps or because most have not yet applied for associate professorship (only one holds that title; the rest are assistant professors, research assistants, or lecturers). The remaining 18 represent a mixed group, including non-Byzantinists as well as scholars whose primary focus lies elsewhere and who accordingly selected different keywords.

Table 6.4: Rank distribution in divisions of Byzantine Art History.
(YÖK Academic database as of June 2025)

Title	Byzantine Art Division	Percentage	Other Divisions	Percentage	Total
Professor	16	21%	51	23%	67
Associate Professor	14	18%	41	18%	55
Assistant Professor (Title: Associate Prof.)	5	6%	10	4%	15
Assistant Professor	24	31%	59	26%	83
Lecturer	2	3%	9	4%	11
Research Assistant	16	21%	54	24%	70
Total	77	100%	224	100%	301

A closer institutional breakdown (Table 6.5) reaffirms the centrality of long-standing hubs such as Anadolu, Istanbul, and Hacettepe Universities, which correspond to the dominant groupings identified earlier: the Hacettepe Axis and the Istanbul Legacy. These universities have consistently shaped the discipline’s training, output, and visibility.

The next tier—Bursa Uludağ, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli, and Bartın Universities—each hosts four Byzantinists.⁶¹² While the presence of Bursa and Nevşehir is consistent with their regional and cultural contexts, Bartın is more surprising. Several staff working in the division of Byzantine Art there are in fact archaeologists administratively housed in art history, as the university lacks a separate archaeology department.⁶¹³ This mismatch illustrates how titles do not always align with scholarly focus.

Such anomalies are widespread. As noted above the reverse scenario also exists: Thirty-four Byzantinists are officially assigned to other divisions or departments,

⁶¹² In a small but noteworthy number of institutions—including Bursa Uludağ, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli, and Muğla Sıtkı Koçman—the number of faculty members in Byzantine Art division exceeds those in Turkish-Islamic Art. While this may reflect regional heritage considerations (e.g., Cappadocia’s Byzantine legacy), in cases like Bursa—an Ottoman heartland—the pattern is less expected. Additional universities such as Ordu, Süleyman Demirel, and Sakarya show roughly equal representation or a slight favoring of Byzantine art historian staffing, indicating that localized priorities or individual leadership can sometimes shape disciplinary balance in favor of underrepresented fields.

⁶¹³ At Bartın University, all four faculty members listed under the Byzantine Art disciplinary unit—one professor, two assistant professors, and one research assistant—have designated archaeology as their disciplinary field. Their selected keywords include Settlement Archaeology; Hellenistic Period, Early Bronze Age; Pre-Islamic Turkish Archaeology; Neolithic Period, Greek and Roman Period; Classical Period; Hellenistic Period; Medieval Archaeology; and Landscape Archaeology. A similar pattern is observed at Bitlis Eren and Iğdır Universities. Among the four academics affiliated with Byzantine Art units at these institutions—one associate professor, two assistant professors, and one research assistant—all list archaeology as their disciplinary field, with research keywords limited to non-Byzantine themes such as Greek and Roman Period; Classical Period; Hellenistic Period; Archaic Period; Neolithic Period; Settlement Archaeology; Archaeometry; and Early Bronze Age.

including Classical Archaeology, Western and Contemporary Art, Turkish and Islamic Art, or General Art History. Some of this reflects the absence of a Byzantine Art division at their institution; other cases point to flexible or ambiguous administrative practices, multi-period specialization, or simple misclassification.

Table 6.5: Distribution of faculty positions in universities with Byzantine Art division.

(YÖK Academic database as of June 2025)

University	Turkish Islamic Art	Byzantine Art	Western & Cont. Art	General Art History	Mediev. Archaeol.	Total	Share of Byzantine Art
Anadolu	6	6	6			18	33%
Istanbul	9	6		5		20	30%
Hacettepe	9	5	5			19	26%
Bartın	3	4		5		12	33%
Bursa Uludağ	3	4	2			9	44%
Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş	3	4	2			9	44%
Akdeniz	5	3			4	12	25%
Ege	5	3	2			10	30%
Istanbul Medeniyet	7	3				10	30%
Ordu	3	3	2			8	38%
Pamukkale	7	3	2			12	25%
Süleyman Demirel	2	3			2	7	43%
Trakya	6	3	3			12	25%
Adıyaman	1	2		4		7	29%
Bitlis Eren	7	2	1			10	20%
Çanakkale Onsekiz	4	2		3	2	11	18%
Iğdır	1	2		2		5	40%
Manisa Celal Bayar	4	2	3			9	22%
Mardin Artuklu	4	2	2	2		10	20%
Marmara	7	2	1			10	20%
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman	2	2	1	2		7	29%
Necmettin Erbakan	4	2		4		10	20%
Sakarya	4	2	1			7	29%
Ankara	5	1	1			7	14%
Atatürk	7	1	1			9	11%
Karabük	6	1	4			11	9%
Niğde Ömer Halisdemir	3	1	3			7	14%
Ondokuz Mayıs	7	1	3			11	9%
Sivas Cumhuriyet	1	1	2		1	5	20%
Yozgat Bozok	4	1		2		7	14%
Total	139	77	47	29	9	301	26%

These patterns highlight a central point: the academic infrastructure of Byzantine studies in Türkiye is uneven. The field's visibility depends not only on the number of qualified scholars but also on whether they are institutionally anchored in appropriate units. Where this alignment is absent, Byzantium risks being diluted in statistics, sidelined in staffing, and marginalized in curricula. Yet the presence of 50 scholars in dedicated Byzantine Art divisions across 30 universities—alongside 34 more working elsewhere—marks a significant achievement. Though inconsistencies remain, this represents a meaningful foothold from which more integrated and strategic consolidation may emerge.

As of June 2025, the YÖK Academic database lists 56 scholars under the keyword Byzantine History (*Bizans Tarihi*). Of these, 53 are based in history departments: 47 in Medieval History, one in Ancient History, one in Early Modern History divisions, and four in General History without further designation. Remaining three are outside history—two in Syriac Language and Culture and one in English Language and Literature.⁶¹⁴

A recurring concern is whether Byzantine History keyword represents these scholars' primary field or a secondary designation. At universities without dedicated Byzantinists, faculty may list the keyword in their profiles simply because they occasionally teach Byzantine history, while others include it as a reflection of broader or incidental interests. To capture this distinction, Şahin Kılıç proposes focusing on the primary keyword recorded in YÖK Academic.⁶¹⁵ When applying this criterion, a significant portion of the 56 scholars under review—24 individuals—list Byzantine history as either their second (14 cases) or third (10 cases) keyword. This presents a notable contrast with the field of Byzantine art history, where 92% of scholars identify it as their primary specialization, compared to only 57% in the case of Byzantine history. This difference signals a weaker degree of institutional anchoring for Byzantine history as a specialization.

The scholars who identify Byzantine History as their primary keyword shows a fairly balanced distribution across academic ranks, with roughly one-quarter each serving as professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and research assistants (Table 6.6).

⁶¹⁴ Full list of scholars is available in Appendix 12.

⁶¹⁵ Kılıç, "Byzantine Studies in Turkish Universities," 126.

Table 6.6: Title and keyword ranking distribution of Byzantine History keyword.
(YÖK Academic database as of June 2025)

Academic Title	1 st		2 nd /3 rd		Total	Percentage
	Rank	Percentage	Rank	Percentage		
Professor	8	25%	7	29%	15	27%
Associate Professor	9	28%	1	4%	10	18%
Assistant Professor						
(Title: Associate Professor)		0%	3	13%	3	5%
Assistant Professor	8	25%	12	50%	20	36%
Research Assistant	7	22%	1	4%	8	14%
Total	32	100%	24	100%	56	100%

Because no Turkish university has a dedicated division for Byzantine history, it is difficult to gauge the field's proportional presence within departments. A useful benchmark, however, comes from four institutions that host multiple scholars whose primary keyword is Byzantine History and have emerged as visible centers of research: Boğaziçi University (Nevra Necipoğlu and Koray Durak), Istanbul University (Birsel Küçüksipahioğlu and Ebru Altan, continuing the legacy of Işın Demirkent within the Medieval History Division), İzmir Bakırçay University (Mustafa Daş and Osman Doğukan Zorbey Öztunç from the “Western Belt” cluster identified in chapter 5), and Manisa Celal Bayar University (Şükran Yaşar and Ali Genç). While the depth of their focus varies, their collective presence indicates a degree of disciplinary concentration. Bilkent University also hosts two Byzantinists, but since one is outside the history department, it was excluded from this departmental-level analysis.⁶¹⁶ According to YÖK Academic, the history departments of these four universities together employ 129 faculty, of whom eight list Byzantine history as their primary keyword, with an additional professor at Manisa Celal Bayar identifying it as a third keyword (Table 6.7).

At Boğaziçi University, Byzantine historians hold 14% of professor and associate professor posts (2 of 15). Including lower-ranked faculty reduces this share to 7%, though incomplete keyword data for junior staff limits precise evaluation. A similar gap exists at Istanbul University, where Byzantine historians account for 6.25% of senior faculty (2 of 32 with keywords), despite the department's much larger size and historical prominence.

⁶¹⁶ Nathan Leidholm received his PhD in Byzantine History from the University of Chicago in 2016 and currently is part of Program in Cultures, Civilizations and Ideas where he teaches humanities courses.

Table 6.7: Title and ranking distribution of Byzantine History keyword for 4 selected universities. (YÖK Academic database as of June 2025).

University / Academic Title	1 st Rank	3 rd Rank	None	Total
Boğaziçi University	2		25	27
Professor	1		7	8
Associate Professor	1		5	6
Assistant Professor (Title: Associate Professor)			1	1
Assistant Professor			7	7
Lecturer			1	1
Research Assistant			4	4
Istanbul University	2		58	60
Professor	2		19	21
Associate Professor			9	9
Assistant Professor (Title: Associate Professor)			2	2
Assistant Professor			12	12
Research Assistant			16	16
Izmir Bakırçay University	2		10	12
Professor	1		1	2
Associate Professor			2	2
Assistant Professor			5	5
Research Assistant	1		2	3
Manisa Celal Bayar University	2	1	27	30
Professor		1	12	13
Associate Professor	1		2	3
Assistant Professor (Title: Associate Professor)			3	3
Assistant Professor	1		6	7
Research Assistant (Title: Associate Professor)			1	1
Research Assistant			3	3
Total	8	1	120	129

Several scholars not formally coded under Byzantine history nonetheless contribute to the field. Mustafa Hamdi Sayar, an epigrapher in Ancient History, became president of the National Committee for Byzantine/Eastern Roman Studies in 2024. Others—such as Hamdi Şahin (Ancient History) and Mualla Uydu Yücel (General Turkish History)—also intersect with Byzantium and were included in this study’s network analysis.

Outside these hubs, İzmir Bakırçay and Manisa Celal Bayar Universities form a small cluster in western Türkiye, together employing 42 historians with relatively complete keyword data. Among senior faculty, 25% at İzmir Bakırçay and 6.25% at Manisa Celal

Bayar list Byzantine history as their primary field. Although the data cannot provide statistically robust conclusions, it highlights the marginal position of Byzantine history within history departments across Türkiye. Even long-standing centers such as Ankara University's DTCF merit attention despite not being part of the main sample. Of its 30 faculty, only two have evident ties to Byzantium: Hatice Oruç, a student of Melek Delilbaşı, who lists Byzantine history as a secondary keyword (her primary field is European History), and Törebey Günaydın, whose master's thesis on Byzantium and the Balkans was likewise supervised by Delilbaşı.

The structural bottleneck is clear in individual careers. Kılıç was unable for years to secure a suitable history department post. After mandatory service at Uludağ, he and his spouse sought joint placement but could not obtain one. He instead joined Trakya University's Modern Greek Studies, teaching language and Balkan history courses rather than Byzantium directly.⁶¹⁷ Only recently was he able to transfer into history. His case reflects a wider pattern: Byzantinists are often absorbed into adjacent units not by intellectual choice but by staffing constraints. Even where multiple Byzantinists exist in the same university, such as Kılıç and Ferhan Kırıldökme Mollaoğlu at Trakya, history departments do not necessarily integrate them into Byzantine teaching.

Byzantine archaeology does not appear in the YÖK Academic taxonomy—neither as a recognized division (*anabilim dalı*) nor as a keyword. The closest proxy is Medieval Archaeology, under which 21 scholars were listed as of June 2025.⁶¹⁸ Of these, 10 can be identified as working intensively on Byzantium, based on their graduate training, dissertation supervision, course offerings, and publication record, as well as the network analysis conducted for this study.

Several stand out for their contributions to late antique and early Byzantine archaeology, including Ergün Laflı (Dokuz Eylül University), Füsün Tülek (Kocaeli University), and Deniz Burcu Erciyas (ODTU), director of the Komana excavation. While some are based in archaeology departments, others hold posts in more tangential units such as tourism guidance or urban and regional planning. These cases highlight the persistent problem of disciplinary invisibility and weak institutional anchoring for Byzantine archaeology in Türkiye.

⁶¹⁷ Kılıç, interview.

⁶¹⁸ Full list is available in Appendix 13.

Byzantine architectural history, conservation, restoration, and museum or heritage studies are effectively invisible in existing institutional and taxonomic frameworks. Neither the YÖK Academic database nor the taxonomy used for associate professorship applications provides a dedicated or convergent keyword for these areas. Searches under related headings—Architectural History, Conservation of Cultural Property, Restoration, Site Management, Museum and Cultural Heritage Management, or Cultural and Natural Heritage—rarely yield reliable results for Byzantium-specific work. As a result, scholars engaged with Byzantine architecture or heritage are often hidden within broader categories, complicating any effort to assess their presence, track disciplinary growth, or allocate staffing and resources.

The mapping presented above shows that even as new appointments and footholds emerge, Byzantine studies in Türkiye continues to operate within an uneven and often restrictive academic terrain. Both institutional data and oral histories point to intersecting pressures: entrenched disciplinary hierarchies, inflexible staffing regulations, insufficient personnel, and bureaucratic procedures that limit scholarly autonomy.

The predominance of Ottoman history in Turkish historiography continues to shape staffing priorities and intellectual visibility. Kaçar argues that Byzantine history has not yet developed into an academic current of comparable institutional strength, even though individual contributions are significant.⁶¹⁹ He notes that unlike fields supported by long-standing centers such as *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* or Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine studies in Türkiye is still undergoing the process of institutionalization. This imbalance affects not only hiring but also perceptions of disciplinary legitimacy. Elif Keser Kayaalp similarly observed that Byzantine culture is often “othered,” while Seljuk or Ottoman topics are “more embraced”—a dynamic that translates into broader career opportunities both in Türkiye and abroad.⁶²⁰

Similar hierarchies operate in art history, where Byzantine studies is often overshadowed by Turkish-Islamic specializations. Meryem Acara Eser noted that the dominant training background of faculty in her department shaped curricula, making it

⁶¹⁹ Kaçar, interview.

⁶²⁰ Elif Keser Kayaalp, “Oral History Interview with Elif Keser Kayaalp,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 4 Şubat 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/arastirma/projeler/gabam-projeleri/turkiyede-bir-bizansci-olmak-sozlu-tarih-projesi/gorusme-videolari/elif-keser-kayaalp/>.

hard to build a sustained student base for Byzantine topics.⁶²¹ Interest, she added, often fades after the MA level due to weak institutional support and demanding doctoral language requirements. She also pointed to staff shortages and excessive teaching loads. At Cumhuriyet University, four faculty manage all instruction without research assistants. Her own workload includes five courses per term plus thesis supervision and graduate seminars. “I want to sit down and work two days a week,” she said, “but I can’t—there’s no time.” Comparing this with her Hacettepe doctoral years, she underscored the importance of institutional density for scholarly productivity. At Hacı Bayram Veli University, Bülent İşler recalled teaching up to 56 hours a week, now 42–44. While frustrated by the load, he stressed his commitment to ensuring that “every area of Byzantine studies is represented at the university.” Still, he admitted the trade-off: “I feel I’m not reading enough. My work could be more productive.”⁶²²

These constraints extend beyond teaching. Günder Varinlioğlu described bureaucracy as “structural overregulation”: research trips, summer fieldwork, even weekend visits require prior approval, regardless of funding. “Everything requires clearance,” she noted, “even if you are acting on your own time.”⁶²³ Without such freedom, she argued, “all you get is standardized publications. Real scholarship needs autonomy.” She also pointed to resource gaps: comparative work often depends on material not available in Turkish libraries. “We end up studying what’s available,” she said, “not necessarily what we want to explore.”

For excavation directors, administrative burdens are heavier still. Sema Doğan, leading the Demre St. Nicholas project, described how permits, reports, and ministry correspondence consume months: “My year is split between university teaching and bureaucratic responsibilities. There’s no time left for writing.”⁶²⁴

Heavy workloads also curtail international engagement. Sacit Pekak observed that while “a professor here has thirty-five hours of teaching a week,” abroad “six or nine hours is considered heavy.” The imbalance, he concluded, leaves little room for research

⁶²¹ Acara Eser, interview.

⁶²² Bülent İşler, “Oral History Interview with Bülent İşler,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 20 April 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/bulent-isler/>.

⁶²³ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁶²⁴ Doğan, interview.

or collaboration.⁶²⁵ Beyond logistics, such conditions affect morale. According to Acara Eser, many students now hesitate to commit to Byzantine studies: “Very few of them dedicate themselves fully. It’s not just our field—this is happening across disciplines. But the trend is discouraging.”⁶²⁶

Together, these accounts reinforce the core finding: a persistent misalignment between expertise and institutional recognition. Even as new generations are trained, their integration remains fragile. Hierarchies, staffing restrictions, and bureaucracy shape not only productivity but also the prospects for continuity and renewal.

6.2 Pipeline Bottlenecks

6.2.1 Courses and Curricula

The curriculum of Byzantine studies in Turkish higher education remains fragmented and precarious. No centralized or regularly updated database tracks the field reliably. As Şahin Kılıç notes, the absence of dependable data makes it nearly impossible to monitor trends over time.⁶²⁷ The Bologna Information Package, while nominally covering course listings, is often outdated or incomplete, with departments failing to revise titles or update instructors—making the official record a poor reflection of practice.

Byzantine art and archaeology benefit from earlier institutionalization and a relatively larger pool of instructors, resulting in more consistent teaching. Byzantine history, by contrast, appears only sporadically and rarely as a core requirement, usually surfacing as a graduate-level elective tied to the availability of individual faculty rather than program design.⁶²⁸ Given these limitations, this section does not provide a quantitative mapping of curricula. Instead, it draws on oral histories to reconstruct how courses have been created, adapted, or left absent across different institutions. The aim is to highlight structural obstacles—staffing shortages, disciplinary marginality, and administrative inertia—while also tracing strategies of adaptation and innovation.

The findings are presented thematically but remain grounded in the voices of interviewees. Particular attention is paid to course sequences, disciplinary affiliations, and the broader institutional ethos in which Byzantine studies has been taught. Through these

⁶²⁵ Pekak, interview.

⁶²⁶ Acara Eser, interview.

⁶²⁷ Kılıç, “Byzantine Studies in Turkish Universities,” 134.

⁶²⁸ Kılıç, “Byzantine Studies in Turkish Universities,” 134, Table 6.

narratives, curricula emerge not only as mirrors of institutional priorities but also as contested spaces where scholars negotiate visibility, legitimacy, and pedagogical innovation. The discussion is divided into two parts to reflect the field's two main orientations: historical and textual studies (HTS), and material and visual culture studies (MVCS).

Historical and Textual Studies

Ankara University: Early Republican Ideals and Philological Training: In the early years of the History Department at the Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography (DTCF), students selected their chronological specialization—Ancient, Medieval, Modern, or Recent History—within weeks of entering. As Melek Delilbaşı recalls of the 1960s, “there were chairs, not yet departments... we would choose our chairs in the first semester, though we could still switch after a month or two.”⁶²⁹ Instruction during the first two years was cross-sectional, with professors from all chairs lecturing, and examinations were rigorous: only two students in her cohort passed on the first attempt, most retaking the exams in September.

Delilbaşı emphasized the culture of early specialization: already in her first year she was attending third- and fourth-year medieval history lectures.⁶³⁰ The structure, however, remained tied to chronology rather than geography—a format she critiqued, citing the *Annales* School and Braudel, and argued instead for a geographically oriented system.

Delilbaşı situates the proseminar and seminar system instituted by Akdes Nimet Kurat within the broader pedagogical and institutional reforms of the early Republic. His deep commitment to source-based instruction, she recalls, left a long legacy: his method-focused articles in *DTCF Journal* were still assigned to her own students decades later.⁶³¹ Courses emphasized philological precision and historical methodology, demanding parallel study of Greek, Latin, Ottoman Turkish, and Turkic dialects, often across departments. Delilbaşı remembered “running from Professor Kurat’s office on the first floor to ancient history classes on the third,” capturing the intensity of moving daily between linguistic and disciplinary worlds.⁶³²

⁶²⁹ Delilbaşı, interview.

⁶³⁰ Delilbaşı, interview.

⁶³¹ Kurat, “Akademik tarih tahsili, proseminer ve seminerlere dair.”

⁶³² Delilbaşı, interview.

Students were also required to select a source language and take courses in two other disciplines such as geography, literature, or anthropology.⁶³³ For Delilbaşı, this enforced interdisciplinarity reflected the early Republican ethos of cultivating historians with broad philological and cross-disciplinary competence. It was demanding, but formative, producing the multilingual, intercultural literacy considered essential for national scholarship.

Istanbul University: Institutional Continuities and Post-YÖK Contractions: Ebru Altan recalls how deeply embedded Byzantine history once was in the Istanbul University History Department. Under Fikret Işıltan, both Byzantine and Crusader history were offered across three consecutive years—"second, third, and fourth grade"—a structure she describes as "extraordinary."⁶³⁴ This level of integration ended in the post-YÖK era, when Işın Demirkent compressed the sequence into a single year covering the Macedonian to Palaiologan dynasties (1081–1261). "It was never again like in Işıltan's time," Altan reflected, noting that the contraction stemmed both from national curricular reforms that reduced course hours and from Demirkent's own focus on the middle Byzantine period.

Altan noted that for decades, Byzantine history was taught only in Istanbul and Ankara Universities, underscoring the fragility of its institutional base.⁶³⁵ Beyond these, she explained, the subject surfaced only peripherally: "In all medieval history courses, Byzantium would inevitably come up—even Islamic or Seljuk historians mentioned it—but it was never a formalized track, just fragments embedded in other narratives."

This marginalization is echoed by Turhan Kaçar, who later became a Byzantinist but recalls that as an undergraduate in the same department he never actually studied Byzantium. "I wish I could say I took courses in Byzantine history and loved them," he admitted, "but unfortunately, I never took any."⁶³⁶ Even though Demirkent was teaching a Crusades course at the time, he says it made little impression: "There's very little I remember about Byzantine history from my student years."

His reflection highlights the paradox of studying in Byzantium's former capital without curricular awareness of the empire itself. "Istanbul University is right by the

⁶³³ Delilbaşı, interview.

⁶³⁴ Altan, interview.

⁶³⁵ Altan, interview.

⁶³⁶ Kaçar, interview.

Forum of Theodosius,” he recalled, “but I didn’t see those places as Byzantine—I saw them as part of the city.”⁶³⁷ He even bought Ostrogorsky’s *History of the Byzantine State* in Turkish translation, but, as he confessed, “I bought most books with that mindset—thinking they might come in handy someday.”

Together, these testimonies reveal the sharp contraction from Işıltan’s expansive curriculum to Demirkent’s reduced sequence, and from formal integration to a marginal presence at the edges of medieval history instruction. They also show how, for some students, Byzantium remained absent altogether—curricularly, cognitively, and affectively—even in Istanbul itself.

From Absence to Infrastructure: Building a Curriculum at Boğaziçi: When Nevra Necipoğlu joined Boğaziçi University in 1990, the institution had no formal curriculum in Byzantine history. Yet it inherited a dormant but significant legacy from its predecessor, Robert College. A central figure in that legacy was Alexander van Millingen, who taught there from the 1870s until 1915 and authored seminal works on the city’s walls and churches.⁶³⁸ His memory remains embedded in the university’s fabric: the current Rectorate building, originally constructed as a library under his influence, is named Alexander van Millingen Hall, and his personal collection of Byzantine books formed the nucleus of the university’s “Near East Collection.”

Necipoğlu arrived at a moment when this legacy had not yet been translated into curricular form. “There was no such course listed when I arrived,” she recalled.⁶³⁹ “I was effectively the first full-time instructor to teach Byzantine history here.” She designed and submitted the courses herself, gradually integrating them into the department’s offerings. What began as electives developed into a two-semester survey sequence and eventually became a core undergraduate requirement. Her early teaching load, however, extended well beyond her specialization: “They hired me as a Byzantinist,” she explained, “but the department lacked faculty for basic required courses.” For several years she taught Roman history and medieval Europe, delaying the launch of a Byzantine sequence. Only after three years was she able to introduce the first dedicated course.

⁶³⁷ Kaçar, interview.

⁶³⁸ Alexander van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople: The Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites* (London, 1899); Alexander Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture* (London, 1912).

⁶³⁹ Necipoğlu, interview.

Curricular growth accelerated with the arrival of Koray Durak in 2008, a Harvard-trained Byzantinist who joined as a faculty member. Since then, he and Necipoğlu have co-taught the undergraduate survey, *History of the Byzantine Empire I* (HIST 335, 4th–9th centuries) and *II* (HIST 336, 9th–15th centuries). Complementary art history courses—*Byzantine Art and Architecture I and II* (HIST 337–338)—were taught for many years by visiting professors supported by the Onassis Foundation.⁶⁴⁰ At the graduate level, Durak expanded offerings to include seminars on trade, Byzantine economic history, historiography, and medicine, while co-creating *How to Become a Byzantinist?*—a meta-disciplinary seminar on historiography, research tools, and trends.

The program’s philological foundations were also strengthened with the introduction of Ancient Greek instruction. “There were no Greek or Latin classes, so we were mostly trained in Ottoman history,” Buket Kitapçı Bayrı recalled of her own years as an early student.⁶⁴¹ The arrival of instructors such as Anna Stavrakopoulou—later Director of Dumbarton Oaks—and Chryssi Sidiropoulou, now Chair of Philosophy, was transformative. Their courses deepened students’ access to sources and expanded the intellectual horizons of the curriculum. Both Greek and Latin are offered at the undergraduate level, a rarity in Turkish universities. As Durak emphasized, “You cannot pursue Byzantine history, art history, or archaeology without language training.”⁶⁴²

Taken together, Boğaziçi’s curricular development reflects the convergence of return migration, international partnerships, and sustained faculty initiative. What began as the work of a single instructor has evolved into one of the most mature and interdisciplinary programs for Byzantine history in Türkiye, anchored since 2015 by the Byzantine Studies Research Center.

Beyond the Centers: Byzantine History in Provincial and Newly Founded Universities: Outside Istanbul, Ankara, and Boğaziçi, Byzantine history has often been present only intermittently and usually through individual initiative.

⁶⁴⁰ At the time of the interview, appointing a specialist of Byzantine art and architecture to expand the cohort was being considered—though this had not yet materialized as of this writing.

⁶⁴¹ Buket Coşkun, “Oral History Interview with Buket Coşkun,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 12 December 2018, 2018, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/buket-coskuner/>.

⁶⁴² Durak, interview.

Murat Keçiş recalls that at Cumhuriyet University in Sivas, Byzantine history appeared only as a compulsory elective taught by an Ottoman historian.⁶⁴³ The sole text was Ostrogorsky's *History of the Byzantine State*, presented with little context or engagement. The experience was so unremarkable that he even failed the course—his only failure as an undergraduate—an outcome that, in his view, reflected more the inadequacy of teaching than his own lack of interest.

For Kaçar, who returned from graduate studies in the UK to the newly founded History Department at Balıkesir University in 2000, Byzantium was absent altogether. Only after transferring to Pamukkale University in 2009 did he introduce a structured sequence—Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Ancient Iranian history—often taught in parallel. Byzantine history quickly drew large enrollments: “I had to teach Byzantine history to 300 students... the most challenging part wasn't the lecture—it was reading all the exam papers.”⁶⁴⁴ Yet, as he noted, the numbers reflected program requirements of the Archaeology Department more than genuine student interest.

A similar pattern of fragile beginnings unfolded in related fields. At Mardin Artuklu University, where Syriac studies was newly emerging, Kutlu Akalın described the immense labor of building a curriculum from scratch: “I felt like a schoolteacher... my doctoral gown was left hanging.”⁶⁴⁵ With no textbooks and no domestic model to follow, he had to prepare all materials himself, introducing students to Syriac language step by step. This case, though outside Byzantine history proper, illustrates the structural fragility of launching new fields: individual initiative compensating for absent models, resources, and institutional planning.

Kılıç's experience at Uludağ University shows similar patterns. As an MA student in the early 2000s, he found Byzantine history treated as a filler course, assigned to whoever was available. When he returned in 2013 as an assistant professor, he sought to institutionalize the field: “It had been my dream for years—to come back and teach Byzantine history there.”⁶⁴⁶ But staffing shortages and weak library resources meant the subject remained marginal: “Perhaps I wouldn't have chosen it,” he admitted, had he known how entrenched the obstacles would be.

⁶⁴³ Keçiş, interview.

⁶⁴⁴ Kaçar, interview.

⁶⁴⁵ Akalın, interview.

⁶⁴⁶ Kılıç, interview.

Together these accounts show how, beyond the main centers, Byzantine history has been introduced fitfully, often by lone scholars navigating limited resources, heavy teaching loads, and fragile institutional structures.

Curricular Flexibility and Institutional Privilege: The Case of Bilkent: Bilkent University offers a striking counterpoint in the landscape of Byzantine education in Türkiye. Without a formal Byzantine history track, its Anglo-American model and strong infrastructure nonetheless enabled rigorous, individualized engagement with the field.

Akalın's experience is illustrative. Though he received no formal coursework in Byzantium, Bilkent's modular, seminar-based system allowed him to design personalized classes with faculty. "I could create my own curriculum," he recalled, often working with customized reading lists and original sources.⁶⁴⁷ This pedagogical freedom—rare in Turkish universities—created space for sustained engagement even without a departmental Byzantinist.

Institutional resources amplified these opportunities. Institutional resources and infrastructure amplified these opportunities: Ancient Greek and Latin were available, and the Bilkent library—"the best in Türkiye at the time"—provided critical editions, multilingual resources, and periodicals. Akalın credited his advisor Evgenia Kermeli Ünal with securing travel to Athens and noted the university's funding for international research.⁶⁴⁸ "It was a privilege students elsewhere could hardly imagine," he said.

Others confirmed this reputation. Bülent İşler remembered Hacettepe students depending heavily on the Bilkent library, whose collections, he stressed, surpassed even the National Library.⁶⁴⁹ Other repositories, such as the British Institute of Archaeology or the Turkish Historical Society, were useful but lacked Bilkent's consistency and depth.

"In this sense, Bilkent functioned as an oasis in the desert of Byzantine education in Türkiye—its resources and flexibility enabling a depth of engagement rarely possible elsewhere, even if it never evolved into a formal track.

A More Mature Stage in Byzantine History Education: Although exceptional, a handful of institutions in Türkiye have developed sustained models of Byzantine history education, where trained Byzantinists gained curricular space, institutional support, and opportunities for collaboration. Istanbul Medeniyet University, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman

⁶⁴⁷ Akalın, interview.

⁶⁴⁸ Akalın, interview.

⁶⁴⁹ İşler, interview.

University, and Boğaziçi University illustrate different pathways toward institutionalization.

At Istanbul Medeniyet University, founded in 2010, Byzantine history became an integrated part of the curriculum largely through the initiative of Kaçar. Joining in 2015, he introduced a full sequence: Early Byzantine History (330–641 CE), The Medieval Byzantine World, graduate-level Sources for Early Byzantine History, and doctoral seminars such as The Late Antique Mediterranean and Anatolian Paganism.⁶⁵⁰ “I’m here entirely as a Byzantinist,” he emphasized. He deliberately foregrounded Byzantium’s relevance: “Anatolia—and by extension the Republic of Türkiye—is the greatest heir of Byzantium. Not just Istanbul, but all of Anatolia.” Rejecting the British preference for “Late Roman,” he emphasized: “I specifically prefer the term ‘Byzantine’” unlike his advisor Stephen Mitchell. Kaçar also revised his teaching to balance methodology and student expectations: “Thematic teaching is more correct, but students want to know what happened when.” At the graduate level, his source-based seminars reflected a philological orientation and connected Byzantine history to broader Mediterranean and Anatolian contexts.

Akalın, who joined in 2020, broadened the program further. He taught in both Turkish and English tracks, offering Early and Middle Byzantine History, Hellenistic Anatolia, and Mesopotamian History. He noted strong demand: “The Byzantine History course gets a lot of interest—75 students in Turkish, 30 in English.”⁶⁵¹ He also expanded the language component, teaching Latin and Syriac alongside colleagues who offered Ancient Greek. Students could begin languages by their second year, with some pursuing them well beyond graduation: “One of mine speaks both Latin and Syriac quite well—and keeps showing up after graduation.”

Kaçar and Akalın created one of the richest environments for Byzantine history in Türkiye—structured survey courses, advanced seminars, and strong linguistic training—supported by Istanbul’s proximity to Byzantine remains and academic networks. Their presence helped make Istanbul Medeniyet University a rare example of curricular depth, scholarly rigor, and student engagement in the field. Whether this momentum will be

⁶⁵⁰ Kaçar, interview.

⁶⁵¹ Akalın, interview.

maintained remains an open question, however, as both scholars who acted as intellectual and organizational leaders later left the institution to join Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University.

At Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, another young institution, Byzantine history expanded rapidly from 2011 under Keçiş, who introduced Byzantine Empire I and II and graduate seminars such as Byzantine Sources for Turkish History, modeled on Delilbaşı's course at Ankara.⁶⁵² He also taught History of the Crusades, continuing the Istanbul University tradition of treating the Crusades as integral to Byzantium. Reflecting on an existing doctoral course, Byzantine History and Civilization, he judged it overly broad: "At the doctoral level, courses should be more specialized." He hoped to reframe it with a late Byzantine emphasis, aligning advanced teaching with his own expertise.

Momentum accelerated after Kaçar's appointment as rector in 2022. Together with Keçiş, Akalın, and other instructors he initiated the Classical Languages Summer Course, which has since run annually, teaching Ancient Greek, Latin, and Syriac alongside seminars on Byzantine culture. The program, modeled on international summer schools, aimed not just at language acquisition but also at embedding Byzantium in a broader intellectual framework.

By 2025, Muğla had assembled one of the most comprehensive Byzantine teams in Türkiye under Kaçar's leadership: Keçiş (history), Akalın (philology), Ayşe Aydın (art history), Hatice Özyurt Özcan (archaeology), Suna Çağaptay (archaeology and architectural history), and a dedicated research assistant in Byzantine art history. This convergence created a rare multidisciplinary hub where history, archaeology, art history, and philology were institutionally aligned. Provided that they can attract and recruit academically strong students, this environment holds the potential to develop into a center of excellence for an interdisciplinary program.

Finally, Boğaziçi University, already discussed above, remains the longest-running mature program. Since Necipoğlu's appointment in 1990, and later joined by Durak, the curriculum has grown steadily in scope and interdisciplinarity. Anchored since 2015 by the Byzantine Studies Research Center, it now stands as the most established and internationally connected environment for Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

Challenges of Teaching Byzantine History: Despite institutional progress, teaching Byzantine history in Türkiye remains a complex pedagogical task—shaped by student

⁶⁵² Keçiş, interview.

preconceptions, disciplinary marginality, and broader cultural ambivalence toward the field. Interviews with faculty across institutions highlight how the classroom becomes not just a site of instruction, but of negotiation: between historical distance and relevance, skepticism and engagement, inertia and intellectual curiosity.

At Boğaziçi University, Durak reflects candidly on the complexities of teaching a field that many undergraduates encounter with ambivalence, if not outright prejudice. Because introductory Byzantium course is mandatory, it draws large and diverse enrollments—typically between 70 and 100 students. “Some see it as just a class they need to pass,” he notes, while others openly express discomfort with the subject matter.⁶⁵³ Rather than avoid this tension, Durak uses it as a pedagogical entry point, beginning the semester with a discussion on how Byzantium is perceived in the present day. “Not every prejudice has to be broken,” he adds. “Some actually contain truth.” His approach invites students to reflect on the ideological and historiographical filters that shape their perceptions, creating a space where skepticism can evolve into critical inquiry rather than resistance.

Kaçar, drawing from his years of experience across institutions, emphasizes that student engagement often hinges on the lecturer’s method. “It was about who was teaching it,” he said.⁶⁵⁴ To make Byzantine history relatable, he employed analogies drawn from contemporary Turkish politics. “I used to say Justinian was like Turgut Özal—accused of being a ‘*takunyalı*’ conservative—while Theodora resembled *Semra Hanım*, who appealed more to social democratic circles.” These comparisons, while informal, helped students grasp the ideological complexity of imperial rule through familiar frameworks. Kaçar also made extensive use of visual materials, transitioning from overhead projectors to digital slides over time. One especially effective strategy involved comparing the political role of Byzantine monastic networks to that of modern religious orders in Türkiye. “When I explained how monks from various monasteries engaged in political affairs, and then related it to contemporary communities, students would go, ‘Aha!’” Such moments, he notes, make the unfamiliar suddenly legible.

At Istanbul Medeniyet University, Kaçar noticed a striking contrast with his earlier experience in Denizli: “Here, I saw students bringing translations and sourcebooks on the first day. That never happened in Denizli.”⁶⁵⁵ For him, this reflected both student quality

⁶⁵³ Durak, interview.

⁶⁵⁴ Kaçar, interview.

⁶⁵⁵ Kaçar, interview.

and Istanbul's Byzantine landscape, which gave courses immediate relevance. "It's not hard for students here to grasp the importance of Byzantium—they live in its capital," he observed. Some came from Boğaziçi specifically to study with him, though graduate-level retention was limited by strict language requirements for their own students.

Keçiş highlights the affective dimension of pedagogy. "When students feel seen, valued, and engaged, their interest follows," he explained.⁶⁵⁶ In his classes, curiosity often grew out of the personal connection with the instructor, deepening into academic motivation over time. But Keçiş is also sharply critical of teaching practices elsewhere: "Even in Istanbul, I hear of professors still assigning Ostrogorsky's book from the 1950s as the main textbook. That kind of teaching kills students' curiosity." This concern is echoed by Kılıç, whose survey of Byzantine history syllabi shows that "the majority contain outdated and overly simplistic content, both in terms of topics and source materials."⁶⁵⁷ For Keçiş, the problem is not merely pedagogical but structural: "Without disciplinary specialization, institutional support, and curricular renewal, Byzantine history risks being treated as a static inheritance rather than a dynamic field of inquiry."⁶⁵⁸

Kitapçı Bayrı also observed the transformative potential of thoughtful instruction. At Yeditepe University, where Byzantine history was required, students struggled with terminology but were eager to learn: "They were very interested, actually. But they struggled a bit—especially with the unfamiliar names."⁶⁵⁹ At Bilgi, her elective on Byzantine Constantinople drew both Erasmus and Turkish students; several later pursued graduate study in Byzantium. "It's a history that belongs to where they live—even to their city—so it naturally sparks curiosity," she reflected.

Together, these accounts show that teaching Byzantine history in Türkiye involves more than filling a curricular gap. It demands affective sensitivity, strategic framing, and comparative thinking to overcome preconceptions, outdated materials, and limited institutional support. When successful, these efforts do more than transmit knowledge: they create spaces where students can see Byzantium not as a distant empire but as part of their historical landscape, and where the field itself is reimagined as a dynamic rather than inherited discipline.

⁶⁵⁶ Keçiş, interview.

⁶⁵⁷ Kılıç, interview.

⁶⁵⁸ Keçiş, interview.

⁶⁵⁹ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

Material and Visual Culture Studies

Semavi Eyice's Curriculum at Istanbul University: The institutional foundation of Byzantine art history in Türkiye is inseparable from the legacy of Semavi Eyice, whose decades at Istanbul University defined the earliest model of teaching the field. Before the YÖK reforms of 1982, the university housed a dedicated Chair of Byzantine Art, which allowed for a specialized curriculum that combined broad lecture courses with seminars that assigned individualized research topics, cultivating habits of close visual study and methodological rigor. The scope included architecture, painting, decorative arts, and minor arts, supplemented by site-based seminars on Byzantine monuments in Istanbul and Anatolia.⁶⁶⁰

The reforms of 1982 dramatically curtailed this structure: class hours were reduced, and Byzantine art was compressed into a two-hour course.⁶⁶¹ Yet Eyice carried the teaching load almost single-handedly into the 1990s. According to testimony from his then-assistant, Engin Akyürek, Eyice taught two undergraduate courses (Byzantine Architecture I–II, and Byzantine Art with a focus on painting) alongside graduate seminars.⁶⁶² Classes were crowded—often 40–50 students—and success depended on attendance, since no single textbook existed. Students relied on detailed notes and slides compiled in class. Additional courses included the seminar on Byzantine monuments in Anatolia, taught by Mehmet İhsan Tunay, as well as the seminar on Byzantine monuments in Istanbul—both of which relied heavily on site visits.

The contraction of formal curricula was partly mitigated by student initiative. As Gülgün Koroğlu recalled: “Before YÖK, Byzantine Art at Istanbul University was a full four-year curriculum. After the reforms, only Religious Architecture and Painting remained. We didn’t even get Decorative Arts.”⁶⁶³ To compensate, Koroğlu and her classmates produced their own study materials, compiling lecture notes and theses to reconstruct the broader content that had disappeared from the formal curriculum. This tension between institutional erosion and informal continuity marked the experience of

⁶⁶⁰ Semavi Eyice, “Oral History Interview with Semavi Eyice,” interview by Günder Varinlioğlu, *The Oral History Project at Dumbarton Oaks*, 9 May 2011, 2011, <https://www.doaks.org/research/library-archives/dumbarton-oaks-archives/historical-records/oral-history-project/semavi-eyice>.

⁶⁶¹ Pekak, “Semavi Eyice,” 275.

⁶⁶² Akyürek, interview.

⁶⁶³ Koroğlu, interview.

Byzantine art education in Istanbul and became emblematic of later patterns across Türkiye.

Hacettepe and a Multi-Voiced Tradition: In contrast to Istanbul University’s single-instructor model, Hacettepe developed a multi-faculty approach that made it a major hub for Byzantine art education. Specialists covered architecture, painting, decorative arts, and iconography, creating breadth at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Alumni emphasize not only the range of courses but also the mentorship and fieldwork that sustained student interest.

Yelda Olcay Uçkan credited Sacit Pekak’s courses in Iconography and Byzantine Terminology as pivotal: “His contribution was huge.”⁶⁶⁴ She also took Byzantine Decorative Arts with Ebru Parman and Byzantine Architecture and Painting with Yıldız Ötüken, experiences that steered her toward a senior thesis and graduate study. Meryem Acara Eser described a similar path: “Until third year, I didn’t really have that awareness.”⁶⁶⁵ A turning point came with Ötüken’s Christian Architecture course, followed by Parman’s Decorative Arts, which together drew her into Byzantium.

Instruction was never limited to Byzantium. Students also studied with Günsel Renda (Ottoman), Aynur Durukan (Seljuk), and Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu (Islamic), ensuring a broad comparative grounding. Over time, Sema Doğan added electives in Byzantine Decorative Arts and Painting and taught European Medieval Art “through parallels—starting from the Ottos and ending with the Gothic period. The overlaps and divergences with Byzantium are key.”⁶⁶⁶ This cross-referencing approach exemplifies Hacettepe’s pedagogical philosophy, which encouraged students to understand Byzantium within a broader medieval context.

Pekak emphasized the long arc of his career: “For many years, I taught the introductory Byzantine Art course—it covered all areas.”⁶⁶⁷ He also taught Methodology and Terminology, and for nearly four decades, Christian Iconography and Mythology, inspired by Bedrettin Cömert. At the PhD level he specialized in architecture and wall painting, reflecting the program’s capacity for graduate-level depth.

⁶⁶⁴ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

⁶⁶⁵ Acara Eser, interview.

⁶⁶⁶ Doğan, interview.

⁶⁶⁷ Pekak, interview.

Graduates stress the integration of coursework and fieldwork. “We had specialists in every area,” recalled Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek, noting site visits and hands-on analysis as integral parts of training.⁶⁶⁸ Her cohort also saw the arrival of Macit Tekinalp, expanding the program’s reach. Together, these accounts highlight Hacettepe’s distinctive model: not the vision of a single figure, but a collective academic culture where diverse expertise, mentorship, and interdisciplinarity produced one of the most durable centers of Byzantine art education in Türkiye.

Istanbul Technical University and an Architectural History Teaching: At ITU, Byzantine studies developed within the framework of architectural education rather than art history or archaeology. This orientation shaped course design, privileging construction techniques, monumental analysis, and site-based inquiry. Though the number of Byzantinists remained small, a lineage of instructors sustained and deepened the field.

Ayla Ödekan, among the first to teach Byzantine architecture systematically at ITU, recalled: “There weren’t other academics working on Byzantium at the time—I was the only one, really.”⁶⁶⁹ Receded briefly by Roman specialist Berge Aran, she became the central figure in the program, offering both undergraduate and graduate courses on Byzantine architecture and art as well as broader architectural history. Later, she handed the core Byzantine courses to Metin Ahunbay, marking a new phase.

The division of labor reflected both institutional needs and scholarly strengths. “I passed Byzantine Architecture to Metin—he had also taken the Historic Environment Evaluation course. That’s how we split the responsibilities,” Ödekan explained.⁶⁷⁰ Over time, Byzantine content became more embedded in ITU’s curriculum. Zeynep Ahunbay, who observed her husband’s teaching for decades, recalled his range: Architectural History, Medieval Architecture, and specialized offerings such as Seljuk and Byzantine Construction Techniques.⁶⁷¹ “His signature course, Hagia Sophia, provided an in-depth single-building study of design, symbolism, and transformation, while Byzantium in Istanbul combined classroom teaching with extensive field visits. “Metin would walk students through the city—the walls, Sultanahmet, Hagia Sophia—we would spend hours

⁶⁶⁸ Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek, “Oral History Interview with Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 10 December 2022, 2022, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/ozgu-comezoglu-uzbek/>.

⁶⁶⁹ Ödekan, interview.

⁶⁷⁰ Ödekan, interview.

⁶⁷¹ Ahunbay, interview.

on-site,” she remembered. He also incorporated practical drawing exercises to reinforce architectural literacy alongside historical analysis.

Graduate offerings were equally technical and specialized, including Byzantine Building Techniques, Construction in the Byzantine Period, and a seminar on Northern Syrian Churches, which linked Byzantium to broader Eastern Mediterranean contexts.⁶⁷² Although undergraduate interest sometimes lagged, those who engaged often pursued graduate research, supported by the body of knowledge built through these courses.

The ITU case illustrates how situating Byzantine studies within an architecture faculty reoriented pedagogy toward design, engineering, and urban form. Far from narrowing the field, this perspective created a distinctive approach that connected Byzantine monuments to both professional architectural training and contemporary preservation discourse.

Bilkent University and the Ecosystem of Byzantine Studies: At Bilkent University, Byzantine art and archaeology developed within an Anglo-American academic model that emphasized interdisciplinarity, broad historical coverage, and internationally trained faculty. While never the central focus of the curriculum, Byzantium was consistently present through specialized electives and survey courses that gave students rigorous exposure to the field. Oral histories portray Bilkent as a “silent yet significant” contributor to Byzantine education in Türkiye—underrecognized precisely because of its seamless integration into a wider art historical and archaeological framework.

Çağaptay recalls her undergraduate years as intellectually rich and structurally coherent. From prehistory to the fifteenth century, the department aimed to “cover everything,” with faculty including Jean Öztürk, Julian Bennett, the late Norbert Karg, and Charles and Marie-Henriette Gates.⁶⁷³ Gates in particular introduced Byzantine art history, often as an extension of Roman and late antique studies. His courses were memorable for their rigor: “Before each session, we were required to read portions from the Bible... he would put keywords in a bag and have students draw them at random, then quiz them on the spot,” Çağaptay recalled.

A turning point came with the arrival of Alessandra Ricci in 1995. Unlike her predecessors, Ricci placed Byzantium at the center of inquiry, offering courses on

⁶⁷² Ahunbay, interview.

⁶⁷³ Suna Çağaptay, “Oral History Interview with Suna Çağaptay,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 30 March 2019, 2019, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/suna-cagaptay/>.

Byzantine art, archaeology, and Constantinople. Her teaching was, in Çağaptay's words, "demanding and exacting," and though it may have deterred some, it left a lasting impact.⁶⁷⁴ Günder Varinlioğlu, echoed this view: "At Bilkent, only Alessandra taught Byzantine courses... she pulled students into the material."⁶⁷⁵ For her, a pivotal moment came when Ricci urged her to expand a term paper on the Hippodrome into a longer project: "I didn't yet know I would pursue a master's thesis, but Alessandra said, 'Would you like to continue?' That's how it all began."

Alongside Ricci, students also took courses on Roman archaeology (Jennifer Tobin), late antique art (Jean Öztürk), and medieval archaeology (Julian Bennett). The result was a curriculum that—while not formally organized around a Byzantine track—nonetheless allowed for sustained engagement with the field. Yet Byzantine studies never drew large cohorts. "Of the 47 in our class, only 22 graduated—and I was the only one who pursued Byzantium professionally," Çağaptay noted, attributing this to Ricci's high standards and the diverse career trajectories of her peers.⁶⁷⁶

Bilkent thus represents a distinctive case. Its strong libraries, low student-to-faculty ratio, and steady flow of foreign-trained staff created ideal conditions for Byzantine training, even in the absence of a dedicated program. While it never became a "center" of the field, it quietly produced a generation of rigorously trained scholars who went on to work across the eastern Mediterranean and late antiquity.

Teaching Byzantine Art and Archaeology Between Solitude and Collaboration: In Türkiye's newer or structurally limited universities, the teaching of Byzantine art has often depended on the presence—and perseverance—of a single Byzantinist. Oral history accounts reveal how faculty, often arriving as the sole specialists, were compelled to juggle a wide range of courses, frequently outside their expertise. Only gradually, and under heavy workloads, could they begin to carve out a curricular space for Byzantium.

Zeynep Mercangöz, reflecting on her early years at Ege University, recalled teaching a wide range of subjects—including European Painting and Modern Turkish Art—alongside Byzantine content. "Each course opened a new horizon for me," she noted.⁶⁷⁷ Over time, she established a cohesive sequence beginning with Introduction to Byzantine

⁶⁷⁴ Çağaptay, interview.

⁶⁷⁵ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁶⁷⁶ Çağaptay, interview.

⁶⁷⁷ Mercangöz, interview.

Art and expanding into courses on Mythology, Iconography, and Christian Art in Medieval Anatolia. She stressed the Hacettepe tradition of Biblical and classical literacy: “You can’t study Byzantine or European art without knowing mythology and iconography—without knowing the Bible and the Torah.” Later, she transferred Byzantine teaching to new colleagues, Lale Doğer and Emine Tok, who built on the foundations she laid.

At Erciyes University, Nilay Çorağan described teaching seven courses per term across both day and evening programs, from Mythology and Iconography to Byzantine Architecture, Painting, and Decorative Arts.⁶⁷⁸ Similarly, at Cumhuriyet University, Acara Eser carried the entire Byzantine load—four to five courses per semester plus thesis advising. “It becomes a very intense academic term,” she observed, underscoring the cumulative weight of working as a lone Byzantinist.⁶⁷⁹

Together, these cases underscore a persistent structural challenge in the field: the burden placed on lone Byzantinists, particularly in regional universities, where institutional resources and staffing flexibility are often limited. Without colleagues to share instructional duties or support curricular development, individual scholars are frequently stretched beyond sustainable workloads, even as they strive to maintain rigorous teaching and mentorship standards.

Comparable scenarios unfolded elsewhere. At Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Tolga Uyar and a colleague founded a new department, teaching five courses weekly before their first cohort had even graduated.⁶⁸⁰ “The concept is unfamiliar,” Uyar admitted of Byzantium, “I try to make it understandable—but that also means simplifying a lot.”⁶⁸¹ Elif Keser Kayaalp, meanwhile, taught not only Byzantine but also Islamic art and English in the early years of Mardin Artuklu, later shifting to Museology at Dokuz Eylül before joining Hacettepe’s Byzantine division in 2023.⁶⁸²

The most ambitious example comes from İşler at Gazi (later Hacı Bayram Veli) University. When he arrived, Byzantine art was covered by a two-hour survey taught by

⁶⁷⁸ Çorağan, interview.

⁶⁷⁹ Acara Eser, interview.

⁶⁸⁰ Established in 2010, the Department of Art History at Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University began admitting undergraduate students in the 2016–2017 academic year, followed by the launch of its MA program in 2020–2021.

⁶⁸¹ Uyar, interview.

⁶⁸² Keser Kayaalp, interview.

a non-specialist.⁶⁸³ He restructured the curriculum, introducing electives such as Byzantine Painting, Byzantine Decorative Arts, Byzantine Cities, Byzantine Anatolia and Neighboring Cultures, and Christian Art in the Ottoman Period. “I teach all of them myself,” he explained, adding that he also covers general art history and service courses across faculties. At one point, his weekly load reached 56 hours. He also pioneered MA and PhD electives, with strong demand: “Some courses fill up so quickly I’ve had to cap them... if I set the limit at 50, I’m sure 50 would enroll.” His comparative seminar, Byzantine Anatolia and Neighboring Cultures, reflects his effort to situate Byzantium within wider networks: “We look at Georgian, Armenian, Islamic, Seljuk, and Byzantine art in the context of cross-cultural exchange.”

Where multiple Byzantinists are present, the burden eases and curricula diversify. At Ege, Mercangöz’s successors Lale Doğer and Emine Tok enabled a more balanced distribution of courses. At Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Koroğlu recalled a once-structured sequence covering Religious and Secular Architecture, Painting, and Decorative Arts.⁶⁸⁴ In addition, courses on Mythology and Iconography were integral to the broader curriculum—reflecting a Hacettepe-style emphasis on visual literacy and symbolic reading. With the arrival of Varinlioğlu, teaching responsibilities were rebalanced. “I handed the architectural courses over to Günder,” Koroğlu noted, “and I focused more on the decorative arts.” Varinlioğlu, trained in architecture, introduced courses in technical drawing, survey methods, and digital documentation, while continuing core classes on Religious and Secular Architecture. At the graduate level, she developed integrative seminars such as *From Rome to Byzantium: The City as a Concept*, encouraging engagement across periods and scales.⁶⁸⁵ A comparable pattern emerged at Anadolu, where Olcay Uçkan teaches Byzantine Painting, Decorative Arts, and Anatolian Glasswork, while her colleague Zeliha Demirel Gökalp introduced Byzantine Numismatics after completing her doctorate.⁶⁸⁶ Together, they expanded the range of topics and enabled deeper specialization for students.

These cases underscore the stark contrast between universities where a lone Byzantinist carries an unsustainable workload and those where multiple faculty can share

⁶⁸³ İşler, interview.

⁶⁸⁴ Koroğlu, interview.

⁶⁸⁵ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁶⁸⁶ Olcay Uçkan, interview; Demirel Gökalp, interview.

responsibilities. The former often depend on extraordinary individual commitment to keep Byzantium visible; the latter allow for specialization, thematic differentiation, and curricular resilience. Both models reveal the precarious yet persistent ways Byzantine art and archaeology continue to be taught across Türkiye's higher education system.

Student Interest

Student engagement with Byzantine studies across Turkish universities varies widely, shaped by several intersecting factors: the visibility of the field in secondary education, the approach of individual instructors, the linguistic demands of course materials, and the proximity of students to Byzantine heritage. Oral history accounts reveal both recurring challenges and promising patterns in how students encounter the subject.

At the undergraduate level, Byzantium typically enters the curriculum through broad survey courses, with more specialized electives—sometimes nominally “elective” but effectively mandatory—appearing in later years. Depth depends heavily on the presence of trained Byzantinists; in their absence, courses are often taught by faculty from adjacent fields.

Language remains one of the most persistent barriers. “Byzantine studies weren't popular at the undergraduate level—not when I was a student, and not now, as a teacher,” recalled Olcay Uçkan.⁶⁸⁷ “Most sources are in foreign languages, and that intimidates students. It's not ideological—it's practical.” By contrast, at the graduate level interest often intensifies: “In our MA and PhD programs, there's much more interest in Byzantium. I see it now, and I saw it when I was a student.” As will be discussed in more detail in later sections, the difficulty is twofold: the scarcity of Turkish-language resources and the demanding acquisition of source languages such as Ancient Greek, Latin, or Syriac. Together, these linguistic barriers significantly shape both entry and persistence in the field.

Pedagogy is equally decisive. Burcu Ceylan Duggan emphasized that enthusiasm often stems less from the subject than from the lecturer's performance: “It's not that they love or hate Byzantium. It's about how the instructor presents it. They like theatrical, animated teaching. That draws them in.”⁶⁸⁸ The very novelty of Byzantium also attracts curiosity: after years of exposure to Ottoman and Seljuk history, students find Byzantium

⁶⁸⁷ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

⁶⁸⁸ Ceylan Duggan, interview.

unfamiliar and intriguing. The near-total absence of the subject in secondary school amplifies this effect. “No one talked about Byzantium in our history classes,” Ceylan Duggan recalled. “It was just something to be conquered. Students today are often surprised—and curious—when they encounter it for the first time.”

Geography further shapes engagement. Proximity to monuments and landscapes encourages interest, as instructors repeatedly stressed. “Being in Istanbul is a huge advantage,” said Çömezoğlu Uzbek, noting that courses tied to site visits were especially effective⁶⁸⁹ Keser Kayaalp observed a similar dynamic in Mardin: “Student interest was very high—especially because we took them to the sites. We visited monasteries, we organized trips to Diyarbakır and Urfa. They were deeply engaged.”⁶⁹⁰ Uyar echoed this for Cappadocia: “After Istanbul, this is probably the richest Byzantine region. The material is right there—it makes our job easier.”⁶⁹¹

In sum, student interest in Byzantium is not static but responsive to pedagogy, institutional context, and geography. While structural obstacles such as language barriers and curricular marginality persist, compelling instruction and site-based learning can transform initial unfamiliarity into lasting academic commitment.

Structural Deficits

Despite the variety of curricula described above, several cross-cutting deficits continue to limit the infrastructure of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. The first is the scarcity of reliable, up-to-date teaching materials in Turkish. As İşler observed, “There’s no general textbook that covers Byzantine architecture or painting. Students already struggle with foreign languages... relying on untranslated material isn’t sustainable.”⁶⁹² “The one widely available translation—Cyril Mango’s *Byzantine Architecture* (1976)—remains in heavy use not because it reflects current scholarship, but because it is one of the few resources accessible to students.”⁶⁹³ Köroğlu added that efforts to produce collective reference works—such as a handbook on Byzantine decorative arts—have been hampered by a lack of coordinated initiative.⁶⁹⁴ Recent publications begin to fill the gap

⁶⁸⁹ Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

⁶⁹⁰ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁶⁹¹ Uyar, interview.

⁶⁹² İşler, interview.

⁶⁹³ Cyril Mango, *Bizans mimarisi*, trans. Mine Kadiroğlu, ed. Bülent İşler (Ankara: Rekmay, 2006).

⁶⁹⁴ Köroğlu, interview.

for Byzantine architecture, but they remain untranslated or not yet widely adopted.⁶⁹⁵ As a result, undergraduate instruction still depends on outdated or piecemeal sources, leaving teaching uneven and heavily reliant on the initiative of individual lecturers.

A second weakness lies in institutional design. The separation of archaeology and art history after the 1990s fractured what had once been a shared training environment. As Ayşe Çaylak Türker recalled, the earlier combined model allowed students to move across Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic traditions with greater ease: “When I look back, I realize how valuable it was to take courses in both Roman history and the broader traditions of Western and Eastern art.”⁶⁹⁶ The subsequent split narrowed horizons, encouraging specialization but reducing the interdisciplinary breadth on which Byzantine studies depends.

These gaps in both materials and institutional structure continue to constrain the pedagogical infrastructure of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Addressing them—through collaborative authorship of updated Turkish-language textbooks and more integrated curricular frameworks—remains essential for the field’s long-term strength. They also help explain why students encounter Byzantium in fragmented ways: through outdated texts, improvised syllabi, or curricula bounded by disciplinary silos. Even the strongest programs often rely on informal networks, site-based training, or mentor-driven initiatives to compensate. In this sense, these structural deficits remain as decisive as staffing and curricular design in shaping how Byzantium is taught and reproduced. If curricula have been the scaffolding of Byzantine studies—fragile, uneven, but persistent—the next question turns to the people themselves: how scholars became Byzantinists in the absence of formal pipelines.

6.2.2 *Becoming a Byzantinist: Disciplinary Orientation*

Byzantine studies in Türkiye lacks structured programs and standardized pipelines. Instead, scholars have entered the field through mentorship, personal initiative, and opportunistic pathways. Training has been uneven, language instruction limited, and methodological preparation often improvised. This section examines how scholars

⁶⁹⁵ Robert G. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture: The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighboring Lands* (Oxford University Press, 2019); Alp A. Oğuz, *Erken Hristiyan ve Bizans mimarlığına giriş* (Eskişehir: Dorlion Yayınevi, 2022).

⁶⁹⁶ Çaylak Türker, interview.

became Byzantinists in the absence of formalized tracks, showing how careers were shaped by mentorship, intellectual reorientation, and contingent opportunities.

Historical and Textual Studies

Early figures such as Akdes Nimet Kurat and Şerif Baştav—trained abroad under the Republic’s nation-building vision—laid the initial groundwork for Byzantine historical studies. Kurat, in particular, shaped the academic trajectory of Melek Delilbaşı, whom he encouraged from her high school years through a family connection.⁶⁹⁷ His mentorship, anchored in rigorous source work and philological training, oriented her toward Byzantium from the very beginning of her university career and became the foundation of her scholarship

For more than three decades after Delilbaşı, no new Byzantinist emerged from DTCF. It was in this long institutional silence that Nevra Necipoğlu charted her own path, reengaging Byzantine history from a markedly different trajectory. After graduating from Robert College in 1978, she pursued higher education in the United States, motivated by political unrest in Türkiye and by the rigid university system that offered little scope for interdisciplinary study.⁶⁹⁸ Initially planning to double major in economics and philosophy at Wellesley College, she entered history almost by accident—taking an upper-level intellectual history course when scheduling conflicts left her with few options. Despite being the only freshman in the class, she thrived, thanks to supportive mentoring.

By the end of her undergraduate years, personal memories of Istanbul’s monuments and a growing interest in Byzantine–Ottoman continuity directed her toward Byzantium.⁶⁹⁹ Graduate applications revealed both ambition and the field’s disciplinary gatekeeping: Peter Brown rejected her proposal at Berkeley; Walter Kaegi at Chicago declined her for lack of Greek but passed her file to Halil İnalcık, who suggested Ottoman history instead. She refused, determined “to be a Byzantinist who engages with the Ottomans, not the reverse.” Accepted at Harvard, she entered a combined MA–PhD program under Angeliki Laiou, focusing on Byzantine–Ottoman relations and Mediterranean urbanism. Required to train in three secondary fields—Roman history, medieval Western Europe, and early Ottoman history—she deliberately constructed a comparative framework that linked Byzantium’s antecedents, contemporaries, and

⁶⁹⁷ Delilbaşı, interview.

⁶⁹⁸ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁶⁹⁹ Necipoğlu, interview.

successors. This broad formation, she later emphasized, was crucial for sustaining Byzantine history in institutional contexts where it rarely stood alone.

If Necipoğlu's trajectory was shaped by international education and deliberate intellectual positioning, Turhan Kaçar's entry into the field unfolded more gradually within Türkiye's public university system. Raised at İvriz Teacher High School, a state-run teacher-training boarding school in rural Konya, he found his earliest inspiration in historical novels and the well-stocked school library.⁷⁰⁰ After graduating from Istanbul University's Faculty of Letters (1985–1989), he worked as a high-school teacher before receiving a state scholarship through YÖK's centralized staffing system in 1994. He was assigned to Balıkesir University with two options: Ancient History in Balıkesir or General History in Çanakkale. Choosing Balıkesir for pragmatic reasons, he nonetheless began moving toward late antiquity.

Byzantium entered his intellectual field more decisively during graduate study at Swansea University under Stephen Mitchell, where interdisciplinary training in late antiquity and the history of Christianity redirected his focus. A pivotal moment came when he encountered Prince Charles's speech on "Islam and the West." Kaçar recalls asking himself: "If Islam is so important for the West, why isn't Christianity important for the East—or for Türkiye?"⁷⁰¹ This realization crystallized his commitment to restore Christianity, and with it Byzantium, to the historical consciousness of Anatolia. His subsequent work on Church councils, especially the Council of Nicaea, reflects this orientation. Looking back, he credits his UK training with instilling both methodological seriousness and intellectual freedom. Without that international formation, he believes, he might never have become a Byzantinist at all.

While Kaçar's shift into Byzantium came through international reorientation, other figures trained within Türkiye inherited older institutional frameworks. The Medieval History Chair at Istanbul University, despite its diminished role, still shaped the trajectory of Ebru Altan. Enrolling in the History Department in the late 1980s, Altan absorbed a tradition deeply rooted in the 1946 university reform, which had established medieval history as one of seven foundational subfields.⁷⁰² This lineage emphasized three axes—Islamic history, Seljuk studies, and Byzantine/Crusader history—carried forward from

⁷⁰⁰ Kaçar, interview.

⁷⁰¹ Kaçar, interview.

⁷⁰² Altan, interview.

Mükremin Halil Yinanç through Fikret Işıltan to Işın Demirkent. “Professors like Işıltan and Demirkent placed special emphasis on Byzantine and Crusader studies,” Altan recalled, describing her education as less about content than about genealogical continuity. Graduate training, in her words, was a form of scholarly induction into a multigenerational academic culture.

Altan’s own orientation was decisively shaped by Işın Demirkent’s mentorship. In her second year, Demirkent directed her systematically into medieval and Crusader history, assigning her the translation and annotation of William of Tyre’s *Historia Rerum in Partibus*.⁷⁰³ “It was like being thrown into the sea to learn how to swim,” Altan remembered of this early immersion in Latin sources. Although undergraduate interest in Byzantium was low—“in the course on twelfth-century Turkish–Byzantine relations, we were only ten students, and I was the only one from my cohort”—Altan pursued the field with singular focus. Her graduation yearbook captures the anomaly: she was described as “famous for taking courses no one else even knew existed” and dubbed “Professor Demirkent’s favorite student.” The only other scholar to emerge from this lineage was Birsal Küçüksipahioğlu, who also studied under Demirkent and continued the Crusader studies tradition within medieval history.

By the 1990s, Byzantine history had largely stagnated at Istanbul University and DTCF, even as art history and archaeology gained momentum at institutions like Hacettepe and ITU. Renewal in historical studies came less from these traditional centers than through individual mentorship, above all the close advising of Necipoğlu at Boğaziçi. Among her first students, Buket Kitapçı Bayrı and Durak illustrate how Byzantium drew new entrants through methodological openness and affective resonance.

Kitapçı Bayrı came to Byzantine studies after an early career outside academia. Initially trained in tourism and working in the private sector, she returned to Boğaziçi with long-standing interests in religion, society, and historical transitions, shaped in part by authors like Kemal Tahir and Halikarnas Balıkcısı.⁷⁰⁴ Under Necipoğlu’s guidance, she discovered Byzantium as a field both “mysterious and thrilling.” Her MA thesis, on the Bogomils and Sheikh Bedreddin, bridged Byzantine and Ottoman religious heterodoxy while reflecting Şerif Mardin’s critique of rigid categories of orthodoxy. She

⁷⁰³ Altan, interview.

⁷⁰⁴ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

later pursued a *cotutelle* PhD between Boğaziçi and the Sorbonne under Michel Kaplan, combining Byzantine hagiography with Islamic-Turkic epics to explore religious transformation in the late medieval Balkans and Anatolia. Her trajectory highlights how intellectual curiosity, interdisciplinary mentorship, and transnational training converged to shape a distinctive scholarly path.

Durak's path into Byzantine studies exemplifies a late disciplinary turn shaped by long-standing personal interest, pragmatic redirection, and decisive mentorship. Although deeply fascinated by history and archaeology since childhood—spurred by early visits to sites like Hierapolis and by popular media such as *Indiana Jones*—he entered Boğaziçi University in 1994 as an International Relations and Political Science major.⁷⁰⁵ The choice reflected family advice and the higher prestige and perceived job security rather than his own intellectual priorities. By the end of his undergraduate years, however, he grew increasingly disillusioned with the career paths associated with his major. That discontent rekindled his earlier historical interests and pushed him toward academic study. A childhood visit to the Chora Museum, which had left a lasting visual and emotional imprint, resurfaced with new intensity, reinforcing his attraction to Byzantium as a “forgotten and marginalized” history that demanded recovery. Despite prevailing biases that privileged Antiquity, he came to see Byzantium's institutions and culture as equally compelling.

Durak's MA application to the Boğaziçi History Department was welcomed, and he began graduate study under Necipoğlu, then the department's sole Byzantinist. As he later reflected, “Had there been a Roman historian, I might have become a Romanist instead.”⁷⁰⁶ This contingency, coupled with Necipoğlu's mentorship, set the stage for his doctoral training at Harvard University, where he shifted his focus from late Byzantine–Turkish relations to Byzantium's engagement with the early Islamic world. Co-supervised by Angeliki Laiou and Roy Mottahedeh, his dissertation explored Byzantine perceptions of the Arab-Islamic world between the seventh and eleventh centuries. He framed this research as an exploration of Anatolia and the Middle East “before the Turks,” challenging nationalist narratives and foregrounding the region's entangled histories. Durak's trajectory underscores how Byzantine studies in Türkiye often emerges not from

⁷⁰⁵ Durak, interview.

⁷⁰⁶ Durak, interview.

early specialization but from lateral entry, cross-disciplinary curiosity, and the catalytic presence of committed mentors.

At DTCF, the reproduction of Byzantine historical scholarship stalled for more than three decades after the early contributions of Delilbaşı. The gap was broken only in the early 2000s, when a small but committed cohort—Murat Keçiş, Şahin Kılıç, and Ferhan Kırılıkdökme Mollaoğlu—emerged under her mentorship. Their academic trajectories, each shaped by different disciplinary origins but converging within DTCF’s evolving ecosystem, illustrate how mentorship, structural opportunity, and personal resolve together reanimated the field at a moment of institutional transition.

Keçiş’s path into Byzantine history combined an early love of the past with a decisive turn during graduate training. His fascination began in high school, where a particularly inspiring teacher animated history with narrative depth and enthusiasm.⁷⁰⁷ “It’s something many students say—and it was true for me too: the way our teacher told history with such passion drew us in.” Nearly all his university preferences were for history programs. He enrolled at Cumhuriyet University in Sivas, where limited social life and long winters fostered an intense reading habit. Keçiş gravitated toward medieval history early on, especially the Seljuks, but hesitated to commit fully, daunted by the prospect of learning Arabic, Persian, Greek, or Latin. Without access to formal training in these languages, he concentrated instead on building a broad reading foundation and graduated at the top of his class.

Appointed in 1998 as a research assistant through YÖK’s centralized placement system, Keçiş was assigned to Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University’s Medieval History Division, and from there directed to pursue graduate study at DTCF. Choosing to work with Delilbaşı, he later described this as “perhaps the best decision of my life.”⁷⁰⁸ He recalled seeing Byzantine studies in Türkiye as “severely underdeveloped” and Delilbaşı as a rare opportunity to contribute to the field. Under her guidance, what had once been a peripheral interest became his central scholarly commitment. Her mentorship—anchored in methodological clarity, archival rigor, and linguistic training—profoundly shaped his approach: “She opened a path for us—a direction. And everything I’ve done in my

⁷⁰⁷ Keçiş, interview.

⁷⁰⁸ Keçiş, interview.

academic career since 2000 has been about carrying forward the light and methodology I received from her.”

Keçiş went on to become one of the most structurally embedded and pedagogically influential figures in the Byzantine studies network in Türkiye. As discussed in chapter 5, he ranks among the most central nodes in the thesis supervision network and has frequently served on dissertation committees at both Hacettepe and Ankara. Together with peers from DTCF, he helped cultivate what he calls a school—a cohesive intellectual and mentoring community spanning multiple institutions. “We raised each other’s dissertations like children,” he recalls, emphasizing the collaborative and affective ties of the cohort.⁷⁰⁹ As both a product and perpetuator of this revived lineage, Keçiş stands as a central figure in the contemporary genealogy of Byzantine historical training in Türkiye.

Kılıç’s pathway into Byzantine history was shaped by structural constraints, late disciplinary redirection, and sustained familial support.⁷¹⁰ Like many students in Türkiye, he entered art history not out of personal preference but through the centralized university placement system, enrolling first at Trakya University. With only two faculty members covering most courses, resources were limited. Yet his interest in Byzantine material culture was sparked by vivid, field-based instruction from Özkan Ertuğrul and Engin Bektaş, whose site visits and excavation work encouraged hands-on learning. Seeking stronger academic grounding, Kılıç transferred to Istanbul University. Working in publishing alongside his studies limited his academic immersion, but his older sister—a historian of Central Asia at Uludağ University—became a key source of intellectual guidance, shaping his reading habits and steering him toward graduate study.

After passing the exam, Kılıç was appointed as a research assistant at Uludağ University, where he completed an MA in Byzantine history. The absence of a doctoral program there, however, led him to pursue his PhD at Ankara University’s DTCF.⁷¹¹ There he joined a small but dynamic cohort under the mentorship of Delilbaşı, alongside Keçiş and Kırıldökme Mollaoğlu. Entering without prior training in classical languages or Byzantine-specific methods, he approached the field with idealism and a sense of disciplinary vacancy. “It was a field everyone feared to touch,” he reflected, “but it also offered a chance to stand out.” After completing his doctorate, Kılıç returned to Uludağ,

⁷⁰⁹ Keçiş, interview.

⁷¹⁰ Kılıç, interview.

⁷¹¹ Kılıç, interview.

where he built his academic career. Although all three members of this cohort ultimately pursued careers outside DTCF, their shared formation left a lasting imprint. The emphasis on source languages, textual engagement, and methodological rigor fostered under Delilbaşı's mentorship carried forward the intellectual ethos of the institution, helping to revitalize Byzantine historical studies across multiple universities.

The final case in this section, Kutlu Akalın, illustrates how a sustained engagement with languages could gradually redirect a scholar into Byzantium. Initially drawn to European history, Akalın never abandoned his linguistic studies: "I never let go of Ancient Greek—I kept reading classical texts, started looking into Byzantine sources, and even practiced a little Modern Greek once or twice a week. That mix of experiences really helped."⁷¹² As his immersion deepened, he recognized a gap in Turkish historical education: "Just like I once turned to European history because I saw how absent it was in middle and high school, now I saw how urgent the need was for Greek and Byzantine history in the context of Türkiye's own past." This was both an intellectual and civic realization. "It became a question of being a historian of the country—not just pursuing personal curiosity. I thought, maybe I'd be more useful in Türkiye if I worked on Byzantine history."

Although he had originally chosen International Relations for pragmatic reasons of prestige and job security, his longstanding passion for history resurfaced just like Durak. His eventual switch to a master's in history at Bilkent University, though initially resisted by his family, gained acceptance over time.⁷¹³ As noted above in section 6.1.5, Bilkent's flexible seminar system and rich infrastructure—library collections, language courses, and funded research trips—created the environment in which Akalın redirected his career. Although the university lacked a Byzantinist, his advisor Evgenia Kermeli Ünal supported him, arranging a comparative thesis with David Thornton. For Akalın, her model of multilingual scholarship—inhabiting multiple traditions at once—was decisive, reinforcing his belief in the value of crossing disciplinary and linguistic boundaries.

During his doctoral studies at Princeton, Akalın expanded his repertoire further by learning Ancient Syriac.⁷¹⁴ "We started this amazing Syriac journey—and I really embraced it. Once I understood the grammar behind the prayer verses I had memorized

⁷¹² Akalın, interview.

⁷¹³ Akalın, interview.

⁷¹⁴ Akalın, interview.

as a kid, I thought, this is fantastic—I should really pursue this.” Mastering Syriac offered not just linguistic training but a strategic edge, expanding his source base and scholarly distinctiveness. Akalın’s path illustrates how sustained mentorship, linguistic dedication, and access to structured academic environments can converge to shape a scholar’s entry into Byzantine studies.

Despite their diverse backgrounds—ranging from regional universities to elite transnational institutions—all these scholars entered Byzantine history without formalized pipelines. In the absence of dedicated programs, specialization emerged through lateral entry, linguistic dedication, and the catalytic role of mentors. These trajectories show that Byzantine history in Türkiye has been sustained less by institutional structures than by individual initiative and contingent opportunities.

Material and Visual Culture Studies

Semavi Eyice—whose fascination with the history of Istanbul began in childhood—entered Byzantine studies through a gap rather than a plan. When he enrolled at Istanbul University during the war years, the curriculum required a “Byzantine certificate” for graduation, but no professor or course existed.”⁷¹⁵ After he passed the exam, his professors urged him to teach it himself under their supervision, effectively making him the first Byzantinist in the department. From this accidental beginning, Eyice carried the field at Istanbul University for decades, inspiring students such as Ayla Ödekan and Ebru Parman, who both completed senior theses under his guidance. Neither could remain at Istanbul University alongside him, but each went on to shape new spaces for Byzantine art history elsewhere.

Following the 1982 reforms that abolished autonomous chairs, opportunities for early specialization narrowed. Many students encountered Byzantium only through graduate electives or the charisma of particular mentors. At Hacettepe University, Yıldız Ötüken became the decisive figure in this regard. Former students consistently describe her as demanding yet generous, expecting linguistic and methodological rigor but also opening her home, organizing field trips, and fostering an intellectual community that blurred the line between formal and informal learning. Alongside her, Parman was remembered as equally energetic and devoted, particularly in the decorative arts. Together, they cultivated a generation—Zeynep Mercangöz, Sacit Pekak, Sema Doğan, Yelda Olcay

⁷¹⁵ Eyice, interview.

Uçkan, Nilay Çorağan, Meryem Acara Eser, Burcu Ceylan Duggan, among others—who went on to establish Byzantine art divisions across Anatolia.⁷¹⁶

The Demre excavation, directed by Ötüken from 1989 to 2009, embodied her pedagogical ethos. Students arrived after months of preparation—ceramic drawing, stone documentation, reviewing earlier reports—and were asked to choose areas of specialization. They then apprenticed under more advanced researchers: for instance, Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek chose glass and was mentored by Olcay Uçkan, who was then writing a dissertation on the subject.⁷¹⁷ Daily routines mixed excavation, cataloguing, and seminars where all finds were presented and debated, creating what Çömezoğlu Uzbek described as “a school on-site.” The rigor was matched by discipline: Ötüken reviewed diaries daily, supervised trenches directly, and sometimes took part in the digging herself. Students recalled being challenged but also taken seriously—an experience that gave them both confidence and commitment. For some, this was decisive. Bülent İşler, who had just finished an MA on Turkish art, turned toward Byzantium after Demre, crediting Ötüken with making that shift possible.⁷¹⁸ Through this mentorship and the intellectual community surrounding Ötüken—particularly figures like Mine Kadiroğlu—İşler would eventually specialize in Georgian and Armenian visual culture.

Ötüken' students later reproduced this model in their own projects. At Kadıkalesi (Anaia), Mercangöz created what she called “another kind of school,” where students trained across multiple periods but were anchored by the site's Byzantine fortress and church. At Olympos, Olcay Uçkan built a team that has remained together since the early 2000s, with several members who advanced in faculty positions.⁷¹⁹ Both sites became long-term pedagogical laboratories, sustaining continuity in a context where no formal graduate pipelines existed.

Yet not all entries were born of vocation. Some were shaped by institutional assignment. As discussed in section 6.1.3, Ayşe Çaylak Türker's redirection into Byzantium came through departmental staffing needs at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart, where

⁷¹⁶ Parman, interview; Mercangöz, interview; Pekak, interview; Doğan, interview; Çaylak Türker, interview; Acara Eser, interview; Çorağan, interview; Demirel Gökarp, interview; Ceylan Duggan, interview; İşler, interview; Coşkun, interview; Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

⁷¹⁷ Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

⁷¹⁸ İşler, interview.

⁷¹⁹ Gökçen Kurtuluş Öztaşkın and Muradiye Bursalı at Pamukkale University and Seçkin Evcim at Ordu University.

she was asked to balance coverage in the new art history program.⁷²⁰ Engin Akyürek, after an undergraduate degree in International Relations at Middle East Technical University (ODTU) and a master's thesis that drew more on philosophy and sociology than on Byzantium, entered the field because an assistantship post opened in the Byzantine Art Division at Istanbul University. He later reflected: "If it weren't for the assistantship, I wouldn't say I had a lifelong passion for Byzantium... these accidents charted the course of my life. That's how it is for most people, actually."⁷²¹

Other cases highlight lateral disciplinary shifts into Byzantine studies. Tolga Uyar, first trained in Italian philology at Istanbul University, later moved to France, where he retrained in art history under Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, a leading authority on Cappadocian studies. He emphasizes his literary background not as a detour but as an intellectual asset, giving him interpretive flexibility and maturity.⁷²² His path was also shaped by formative experiences as a tour guide, early encounters with monuments, and the influence of French secondary-school teachers—especially a Jesuit priest—who nurtured his historical imagination. At the Sorbonne, Jolivet-Lévy's mentorship provided the decisive framework for his scholarly orientation toward Cappadocian art and architecture. Reflecting on his trajectory, Uyar encourages students to see interdisciplinary origins as strengths, pointing to figures such as İlber Ortaylı and Gilbert Dagron who likewise entered Byzantine studies through other fields. In his own case, a blend of literary sensibility, field immersion, and international mentorship gave rise to a distinctive approach to Byzantine art history grounded in both analytical rigor and experiential depth.

Architecture provided another entry point. Günder Varinlioğlu, Suna Çağaptay, Elif Keser Kayaalp, and Ufuk Serin—trained at Bilkent or ODTU—brought habits of thinking about space, design, and construction into Byzantine studies. As noted above, Ricci's courses at Bilkent were decisive in steering students toward Byzantium, but their impact unfolded differently across individuals. Varinlioğlu, initially focused on Roman architecture, shifted to Byzantine themes during her MA under Ricci, reinforced by peer conversations and growing interest in late antiquity.⁷²³ Çağaptay's trajectory was even more circuitous: after training as a nurse, she reentered university to study archaeology

⁷²⁰ Çaylak Türker, interview.

⁷²¹ Akyürek, interview.

⁷²² Uyar, interview.

⁷²³ Varinlioğlu, interview.

and art history, where Ricci's teaching, combined with a pivotal seminar by Robert Ousterhout on Cappadocian architecture as inhabited space, crystallized her direction.⁷²⁴ She later pursued a PhD with Ousterhout at Illinois, examining the late Byzantine to early Ottoman transformation of northwestern Anatolia. These intertwined paths reflect both Ricci's catalytic role at Bilkent and the growing internationalization of Byzantine studies in Türkiye through networks of mentorship.

While Varinlioğlu and Çağaptay exemplify Bilkent's humanities infrastructure, Keser Kayaalp and Serin represent the architectural tradition at ODTU. Raised in Diyarbakır, Keser Kayaalp combined early familiarity with the region's Christian and Islamic heritage with architectural training. After practice as an architect, she turned to architectural history, eventually completing a PhD at Oxford under Marlia Mango on Syriac church architecture in northern Mesopotamia. Her trajectory highlights how regional rootedness and overlooked traditions can provide distinct entry points into Byzantine studies when combined with international mentorship.

Serin, by contrast, was initially drawn to archaeology but entered ODTU's architecture program under family influence. Graduate training in restoration deepened her interest in early Christian architecture, leading to study in Paris and later at the Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana in Rome. Though her early focus was on Roman and early Christian material, her immersion in international research environments gradually expanded into Byzantine themes.

Finally, Zeliha Demirel Gökalp and Ceren Ünal illustrate yet another pathway: art history and numismatics. Demirel Gökalp, though initially interested in economics, entered the Art History program at Anadolu University, where Parman's mentorship proved formative. At Hacettepe she specialized further, eventually writing a dissertation on Byzantine coinage that merged her economic interests with Byzantine studies. Ünal, inspired early by her father's library, studied archaeology at Bilkent and then joined the Byzantine Art Division at Ege University. There, under Mercangöz, she shifted from Roman to Byzantine numismatics, focusing on sacred iconography in coinage.

These cases show how Byzantine material and visual culture studies in Türkiye developed not through standardized pipelines but through a patchwork of disciplinary shifts, mentor-driven redirection, and institutional contingencies. Excavations such as

⁷²⁴ Çağaptay, interview.

Demre, Kadıkalesi, and Olympos provided crucial training spaces in the absence of formal programs, while architecture, philology, and art history each offered alternative entry points. Across these diverse pathways, mentorship consistently functioned as the enabling force, sustaining the field where institutional structures fell short.

These narratives reveal not a single pathway into Byzantine studies, but a repertoire of academic improvisations. Some, like Delilbaşı and Ödekan, were sustained by early mentorship; others, such as Necipoğlu and Kitapçı Bayrı, shifted course through curricular encounters. For Durak and Çağaptay, affective memory prompted reorientation, while Akyürek and Çaylak Türker entered through institutional assignment. Kaçar combined state-sponsored study abroad with autodidactic reading, while such programs allowed many to pursue graduate training and join supportive cohorts.

Among these varied routes, Hacettepe University stands out as the most sustained locus of formation. As shown in chapters 4 and 5, its Byzantine Art Division functioned as a central node in Türkiye's academic genealogy. This was less the product of formal graduate structures than of strong leadership and mentoring continuity, especially from Ötüken and Parman. Ötüken, remembered for her expansive pedagogy, created what Çaylak Türker calls "a de facto center for Byzantine research in Ankara." The Demre St. Nicholas excavation became a training ground that substituted for absent institutional pipelines, fostering belonging through fieldwork and collaboration. In this way, Hacettepe exemplifies how even partial institutionalization, when coupled with mentorship and material engagement, can generate a durable lineage that continues to shape the field.

These are, however, the trajectories of those who persevered. The parallel stories of those discouraged or diverted remain largely unwritten. What propelled the scholars here was not only commitment to Byzantium but the capacity to recognize and act upon opportunities where few formally existed.

6.2.3 Domestic Training and Graduate Studies

Entry Conditions & Structural Context

Undergraduate and graduate training in Byzantine studies in Türkiye unfolds within an uneven academic landscape where departmental structures, admissions mechanisms, and broader cultural perceptions shape who enters the field and how prepared they are. Unlike disciplines with dedicated units, Byzantium is institutionally dispersed, finding its home

within programs of history, art history, archaeology, and, more occasionally, architecture. This dispersion reflects the field's inherently interdisciplinary character, but it also leaves graduate study especially dependent on the broader priorities of host departments rather than on coherent disciplinary scaffolding.

Admissions into these units at the undergraduate level are governed by centrally administered entrance exams, which allocate students to programs according to score type, quota, and preference. The structure itself produces significant asymmetries. History and art history fall under the verbal track, archaeology under equal weight, and architecture under numerical. The latter enjoys consistently high prestige, with programs at ITU, ODTU, Bilkent, and Yıldız Technical Universities drawing students from the top 1–5% of national exam rankings. By contrast, most history, archaeology, and art history programs outside elite institutions are populated by students with far lower scores—frequently those who missed their first-choice fields. The relative prestige and demand for architecture is the reason why Günder Varinlioğlu was directed by her family to study architecture rather than archaeology during her undergraduate studies.⁷²⁵

This produces a systemic problem of input quality. As Buket Coşkuner observes, many students end up in these departments “not out of enthusiasm, but because they couldn't get into another program.”⁷²⁶ Bülent İşler echoes this view, stressing that students often begin without knowing what the field even entails.⁷²⁷ Sacit Pekak quantifies the imbalance starkly: “If we calculate based on 80 students, one or two choose the field willingly. Maybe three if we're counting in hundreds.”⁷²⁸ This skew—disciplinary entry by default rather than design—marks undergraduate training from the outset, shaping student motivation and preparation. Ceren Ünal contrasted this with her own trajectory: “When I chose Bilkent's Archaeology and Art History program, it was deliberate—I loved it. That kind of conscious entry is rare today.”⁷²⁹

The contrast with elite institutions is striking. At Koç, Boğaziçi, and Bilkent, English-medium instruction, internationally trained faculty, and interdisciplinary curricula attract

⁷²⁵ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁷²⁶ Coşkuner, interview.

⁷²⁷ İşler, interview.

⁷²⁸ Pekak, interview.

⁷²⁹ Ceren Ünal, “Oral History Interview with Ceren Ünal,” interview by Şebnem Dönbekçi, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 26 November 2022, 2022, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/ceren-unal/>.

high-achieving students who enter with deliberate academic interest. Koray Durak similarly stressed that Boğaziçi students were generally well-prepared and capable, with the undergraduate Byzantine sequence often serving as a gateway into graduate study.⁷³⁰ On the other end of the spectrum are regional universities outside main metropolitan hubs.⁷³¹ Yet, paradoxically, these same peripheral universities have produced disproportionate numbers of graduate theses in Byzantine history.⁷³²

Massified enrollment compounds these disparities. Departments are routinely assigned far more students than they request. Pekak recalls requesting cohorts of fifteen and receiving eighty. Zeliha Demirel Gökalp describes first-year lecture courses with 150 students: “We teach with slides, the lights are off, and we have no way of communicating with students in the back rows.”⁷³³ Ünal reports similar overflow: although her department is set for forty to forty-five students, quotas raise the number to over sixty.⁷³⁴ By the second year, attrition cuts this in half, and only three or four display sustained interest in Byzantium.

Meryem Acara Eser contrasted today’s abundance of digital resources with the scarcity of her own student years, when she crossed Ankara to consult rare books at the Turkish Historical Society. “Now everything is available as a PDF,” she noted, “but students don’t use it. Even when you present them with knowledge distilled from years of reading, most won’t take it.”⁷³⁵ For her, the bottleneck is not access but engagement. Pekak identifies “curiosity” as the irreplaceable core of academic life.

⁷³⁰ Durak, interview.

⁷³¹ Placement data from the 2024 entrance exam highlights sharp stratification. At the elite level, Koç University admitted two full-scholarship students to History with an average ranking of 35,000, and Boğaziçi admitted thirty at 73,000. By contrast, Istanbul and Ankara Universities admitted cohorts at 213,000 and 250,000, respectively. Similar disparities appear in Archaeology and Art History: Koç (71,000) and Bilkent (109,000) stand far above Mimar Sinan (291,000), Ankara (307,000), Hacettepe (322,000–372,000), and Istanbul (397,000). At the lowest tier, Atatürk (1,249,000) and Yüzüncü Yıl (1,359,000) underscore the gulf between elite, metropolitan, and peripheral institutions See, YÖK, “Yükseköğretim program atlası.”

⁷³² Despite low undergraduate entrance scores, peripheral universities in Eastern Anatolia have produced substantial graduate-level Byzantine scholarship. Fırat University in Elazığ (History) has generated 26 theses on Byzantine history; Atatürk University in Erzurum (Art History/Archaeology) has produced 19; and Yüzüncü Yıl University in Van (Art History) has produced 13. Although graduate admissions follow a separate process, it is unlikely that the academic profile of incoming students differs significantly from that of undergraduates. This contrast underscores a structural tension: while undergraduate indicators suggest limited initial preparation, the high volume of graduate theses points to strong institutional investment—though the depth and durability of this output remain open questions.

⁷³³ Demirel Gökalp, interview.

⁷³⁴ Ünal, interview.

⁷³⁵ Acara Eser, interview.

Pekak identifies “curiosity” as the irreplaceable core of academic life. At the beginning of every course, he writes the word on the board, calling it “the golden key to life.” In his view, curiosity precedes and sustains everything else: “If it’s there, the rest—scholarships, books, translations, fieldwork—will follow.” Without it, even diligent work becomes mechanical and unproductive. This emphasis positions internal intellectual motivation as the core determinant of academic success, particularly in demanding fields like Byzantium.⁷³⁶ These dynamics turn teaching into crowd management and leave faculty unable to engage students individually, especially in the fragile first years when disciplinary orientation should be strongest.

The mismatch between admissions structures and career realities also erodes motivation. Pekak sympathizes with students who see little employment future in art history: “If a student cannot practice what they’ve studied for four years, of course motivation will suffer. That’s deeply human.”⁷³⁷ This sense of precarity feeds back into recruitment, discouraging even well-prepared students from pursuing Byzantine studies.

Family and social environments reinforce the perception of the humanities as risky or marginal. Nevra Necipoğlu recalls that her choice of history disappointed her family, who expected a career in business.⁷³⁸ Murat Keçiş describes his father’s quiet disapproval; Durak heard warnings that leaving International Relations for history meant giving up stability.⁷³⁹ Yet Kutlu Akalın’s trajectory shows how visibility can shift perceptions: although his family initially opposed his switch from International Relations to history at Bilkent, their attitude softened when they saw his professors appear on television during the Yugoslav Wars.⁷⁴⁰ “That’s our professor,” he recalled saying proudly, noting how public figures like Halil İnalcık lent legitimacy to the field. Demirel Gökalp still recalls the same skeptical question from her own school years: “What will you do after you graduate?”⁷⁴¹ Even Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek, with a supportive family, faced dismissive comments from acquaintances who asked why she studied art history at all.⁷⁴²

Together, these accounts reveal an environment marked by contradictory pressures: overcrowded and under-prepared cohorts at most public universities; selective,

⁷³⁶ Pekak, interview.

⁷³⁷ Pekak, interview.

⁷³⁸ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁷³⁹ Keçiş, interview; Durak, interview.

⁷⁴⁰ Akalın, interview.

⁷⁴¹ Demirel Gökalp, interview.

⁷⁴² Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

internationally connected programs at a small handful of elite institutions; and pervasive cultural skepticism toward the humanities. Within this fragmented terrain, graduate training begins not with uniform preparation but with starkly divergent entry conditions that profoundly shape the pathways and possibilities available to aspiring Byzantinists.

Graduate-Level Training Models

Structured graduate programs in Byzantine art history remain rare in Türkiye. Among all institutions, Ege University stands out as the only one to have historically hosted a dedicated MA and PhD track in Byzantine art. As Ünal recalls, when she joined the department in 2001 it still operated under a tripartite structure: Turkish-Islamic Art, Western and Contemporary Art, and Byzantine Art.⁷⁴³ “Graduate admissions were based on these subdivisions,” she explained. “We only took courses from faculty in our own area... all of my graduate courses came from Professors Mercangöz and Doğer. There were no electives outside Byzantine art.” This structure created coherence and depth but has since been dissolved. Today, Ege follows a general art history model in which students take courses across subfields. Ünal considers this a loss: “We were 100% focused on Byzantium. Today’s students might take one or two Byzantine courses, but the rest will be from elsewhere. Our program created real depth.”

No other Turkish university currently offers a graduate program specifically devoted to Byzantium. At best, specialization emerges within general art history or archaeology MA/PhD tracks, dependent on faculty expertise and departmental openness. A partial exception is Koç University, where the Archaeology and History of Art (ARHA) program offers a concentration in Late Antique and Byzantine Art and Archaeology (Figure 6.1). Yet even here, Byzantium remains a track within a broader framework rather than a standalone division.

The expansion of faculty with Byzantine expertise has nonetheless enabled advanced field-specific courses at MA and PhD levels, especially when teaching loads are shared across colleagues. In cases where such structures are absent, specialization develops through cross-institutional coursework, mentorship, and personal initiative. Keçiş recalls how his advisor Melek Delilbaşı urged him to look beyond a single university: “She said, it won’t be enough to just take our classes.”⁷⁴⁴ Following her advice, he enrolled in

⁷⁴³ Ünal, interview.

⁷⁴⁴ Keçiş, interview.

courses across Seljuk, Ottoman, Islamic, and Byzantine history, studying with Ali Sevim, Özer Ergenç, Kenan Birici, Kazım Yaşar Koprman, and Yıldız Ötüken. “We constantly tried to diversify our academic basket,” he reflected, describing DTCF as “a school in itself,” where coursework was supplemented by mentorship from retired and visiting scholars.

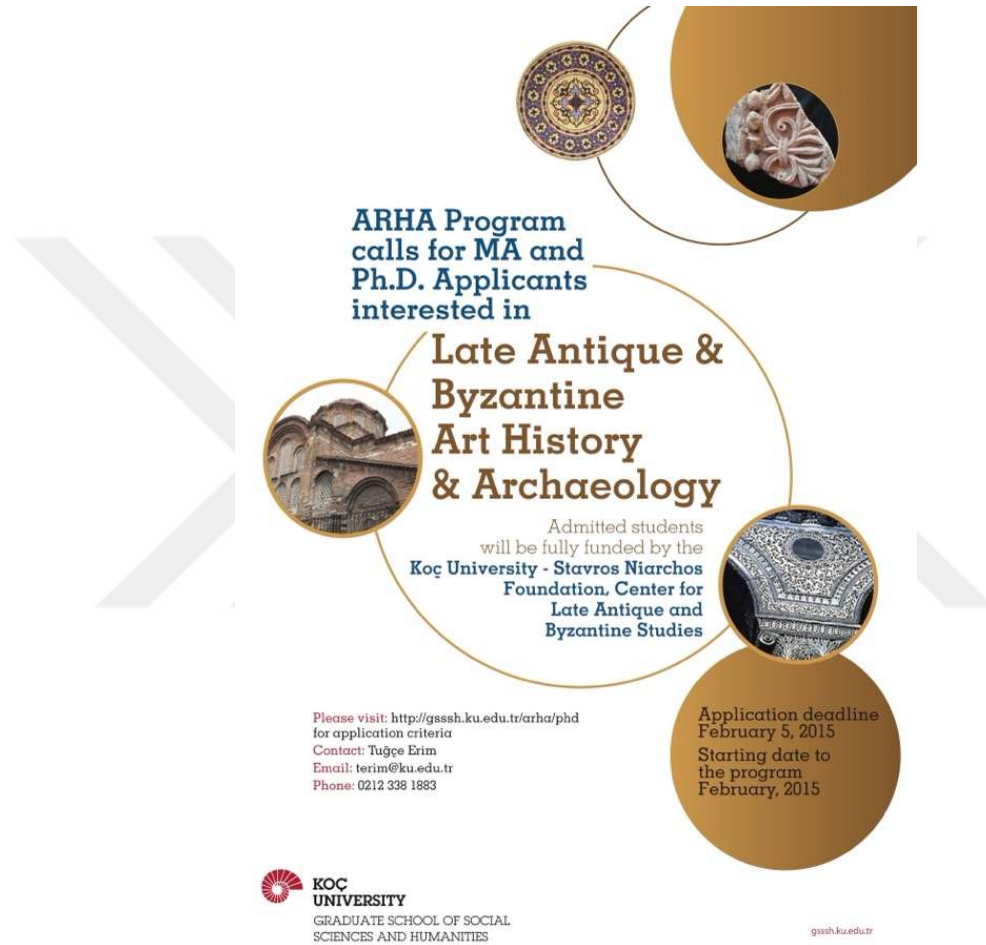


Figure 6.1: Poster for the ARHA program at Koç University.
(MA and PhD applications in Late Antique and Byzantine Art History and Archaeology)

A similar interdisciplinarity shaped Ayşe Çaylak Türker’s training. While doing her MA at Gazi University, she also took courses at DTCF, and during her PhD at Hacettepe, she attended ODTU seminars.⁷⁴⁵ “I took Professor Ömür Bakırer’s course on medieval ceramic and glass technologies,” she explained, noting how her focus on Byzantine material culture drew her to instructors with expertise in medieval Islamic building

⁷⁴⁵ Çaylak Türker, interview.

techniques. “This flexibility was one of Ankara’s strengths. You could learn across institutions.” She recalls that Ötügen’s doctoral seminars became a regional draw, attended by students from multiple universities and, at times, even hosted in her house.

Other scholars describe comparable forms of self-directed specialization. Çömezoğlu Uzbek remembered that during her doctoral coursework at Istanbul University Byzantine offerings were minimal: “I took Professor Akyürek’s seminar on Byzantine archaeology in Anatolia, but the rest were largely focused on Ottoman art.”⁷⁴⁶ To supplement, she enrolled in a Glass Technology course at Mimar Sinan’s Department of Ceramics and Glass. “When you’re working with materials, you need to understand how they were made. That kind of technical knowledge was essential.”

In the absence of dedicated programs, specialization thus depends on informal networks, flexible mentorship, and institutional permeability. The closure of Ege’s Byzantine art graduate track marked a loss of coherence but not of continuity. Committed students continue to carve pathways across institutions, even if the routes remain uneven and largely self-charted.

Linguistic Bottlenecks in Graduate Training

For Turkish Byzantinists, language acquisition is not an auxiliary skill but the bedrock of academic formation. As Durak emphasizes, “the first major advice we’d give to young aspiring Byzantinists is: language, language, language.”⁷⁴⁷ He frames this not as a phase to be completed but as a lifelong process, “something that continues even into retirement.” The field’s linguistic demands, he notes, are as intense as those of Central Asian or early modern European history, where both research and source languages are complex and varied.

Modern languages are indispensable for navigating secondary literature. English dominates the field today, but French, German, Russian, and Italian remain critical in particular subfields: “for economic or urban history, German often dominates; for art history, it might be French,” Durak explains.⁷⁴⁸ His own path illustrates this scaffolding: having studied International Relations, he had already begun French and German before entering Byzantine studies. As his research turned toward Byzantine–Islamic encounters, he added Arabic at Harvard alongside Greek at Boğaziçi. “These two—Greek and

⁷⁴⁶ Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

⁷⁴⁷ Durak, interview.

⁷⁴⁸ Durak, interview.

Arabic—are my core research languages,” he reflects, while acknowledging that Syriac or Judeo-Arabic would also have been valuable—”but a human life just isn’t enough.” For Durak, spoken fluency is not the measure of competence. What matters is functional reading knowledge, the ability to access scholarship and primary texts directly: “you just need to be able to read and work with the material.”

Turhan Kaçar voices a similar conviction. “At least one Western European language is indispensable,” he insists—English above all, but German and French retain their importance in particular fields.⁷⁴⁹ He himself began German in secondary school and later continued coursework during a doctoral exchange at Münster. His experience echoes a broader disciplinary pragmatism: conversational ability is secondary; the minimum standard is “the ability to read scholarship and primary texts with a dictionary.”

These accounts establish the foundational rule of the field: languages are not optional add-ons but non-negotiable tools of scholarly survival. The specific combinations vary, but the principle is the same. Modern and source languages form the scaffolding of scholarly credibility, shaping not only what research questions can be asked but also whether one can participate in the international community of Byzantine studies.

If modern and source languages are non-negotiable, graduate training in Türkiye makes this clear through everyday pedagogical practice—sometimes bluntly. Yelda Olcay Uçkan recalls her first seminar with Ötügen at Hacettepe: “On the first day of the MA, she handed us a German book. We protested, ‘But we don’t know German.’ She replied, ‘That’s not my concern. At this level, you’ll find a way.’”⁷⁵⁰ The message was unmistakable: linguistic competence is assumed from the start. Graduate study is not a space to begin language learning but to apply it, even if the process is uncomfortable.

Pekak, drawing on decades of teaching, confirms both the necessity and the difficulty of this standard. He identifies language requirements as one of the greatest structural barriers to student success. Byzantine studies, he stresses, is uniquely demanding: “You need English and German—and for Cappadocia, often French too.”⁷⁵¹ Yet most students arrive unprepared. His own experience illustrates the problem: although he can read both English and German, he admits his spoken skills are weak, and the two languages sometimes interfere with each other. “That’s the result of never really mastering either

⁷⁴⁹ Kaçar, interview.

⁷⁵⁰ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

⁷⁵¹ Pekak, interview.

one,” he reflects, tracing the problem back to the poor foundations of his secondary schooling.

Ötügen’s tough stance and Pekak’s candid self-diagnosis both point to the same norm: in Byzantine studies, language is not treated as an optional skill but as the baseline expectation of scholarly work. Students are expected to reach for foreign scholarship—even if it means paying for translations, as earlier generations sometimes did—because without this, serious academic participation is impossible. These anecdotes reveal the tacit disciplinary ethos. Graduate study assumes linguistic competence as a given; when it is absent, the burden falls squarely on the student to “find a way.”

If the disciplinary ethos demands language competence, the pipeline that feeds graduate programs often fails to deliver it. The result is a deeply uneven landscape where a handful of students arrive well-prepared while the majority struggle from the start. At the elite end, universities with English-medium instruction—preceded by a rigorous preparatory year—such as Boğaziçi, ODTU, Bilkent, and Koç stand out. It gives students what Durak calls “enormous freedom.”⁷⁵² “It expands what you can assign. You can give them articles straight from *Speculum* or *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, and they can handle it. That changes the whole thing.”

In contrast, most public universities lack such scaffolding. İşler recalls how difficult it was to confront foreign-language readings as a young student from a rural background: “We were given English and German texts regardless. Sometimes we paid to have them translated. That’s how much we wanted to understand.”⁷⁵³ The problem, he notes, has not gone away: students still arrive with little preparation, and those with strong secondary-school training in languages tend to pursue law, international relations, or medicine instead.

Optional language prep years, where they exist, do little to close the gap. Zeliha Demirel Gökalp points to Anadolu University as an example: “We offer an English prep year, but it’s not compulsory. And of course, the ones who most need it are the ones who skip it—because of money, or because they don’t see the value. Then they start their coursework already handicapped.”⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵² Durak, interview.

⁷⁵³ İşler, interview.

⁷⁵⁴ Demirel Gökalp, interview.

This creates a structural disadvantage: students from elite schools or elite universities enjoy an enduring advantage, while others fall behind regardless of their intellectual potential. The consequences are visible in classroom dynamics. Varinlioğlu explains that without a language requirement, even assigning English articles becomes impossible: “If I give them an article in English, most just can’t read it. So, I don’t assign it. That’s the reality. Only students from elite schools progress quickly. Others might catch up eventually, but those are rare cases—they’re not the product of institutional structures.”⁷⁵⁵

For Burcu Ceylan Duggan, the stakes are even higher. She admits she often has to reject motivated graduate applicants because of language deficits: “You can’t finish a thesis just reading Turkish sources. It’s impossible. I’ve had to turn away brilliant, hardworking students because they simply couldn’t read in English or German.”⁷⁵⁶ She adds that part of the difficulty is cultural. In her view, Turkish students often treat language performance as a matter of pride or shame rather than a functional skill: “We’re terrified of making mistakes, even in casual speech. That holds people back. They’d rather say nothing than risk embarrassment.” Olcay Uçkan echoes this observation, recalling that even students who have some competence often refuse to use it. “It’s not about ability,” she says, “it’s about fear.”⁷⁵⁷

These accounts show how structural inequalities in language preparation are reinforced by cultural inhibitions. Students at elite English-instruction institutions enter graduate study with the confidence to use languages, while their peers elsewhere face both institutional deficits and cultural hesitation. The result is a sharply stratified environment where opportunity hinges not only on intelligence or effort but also on access to linguistic infrastructure and the confidence to use it.

Where institutional scaffolding falls short, students and young scholars often take matters into their own hands. Graduate training in Byzantine studies in Türkiye is full of stories of improvisation—au pair work abroad, late-night self-study, or paying for translations—all reflecting how much depends on personal initiative rather than systematic support.

Nilay Çorağan, for example, supported herself as an au pair while living in Oxford and simultaneously audited university courses to strengthen her English. She recalls that

⁷⁵⁵ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁷⁵⁶ Ceylan Duggan, interview.

⁷⁵⁷ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

she wanted “to follow lectures, to read scholarship directly,” and that meant sitting in on courses even without formal enrollment.⁷⁵⁸ It was, as she put it, “exhausting—working during the day, studying at night—but it was the only way to get my English to the level I needed.”

Çömezoğlu Uzbek frames language requirements as a layered challenge. In her view, English is the bare minimum, but genuine scholarly work often requires a second language—typically German for art history.⁷⁵⁹ “You need English, but that’s not enough,” she insists. “For real depth, you need German. And very few students come already prepared.” She herself had to take private Modern Greek courses “just to be able to read inscriptions and make sense of names,” noting that even a semester or two of Greek can make a difference.

Ünal echoes this concern, emphasizing how many students arrive in graduate study blocked by inadequate English. She recalls a brilliant student—“hardworking, sharp, with an incredible eye for visual analysis”—whose academic potential was held back by language limitations.⁷⁶⁰ Efforts to secure formal support brought no results, leading Ünal to remark that “if we could have sent her to Athens for a year, to the Byzantine Museum, she’d have had to use English every day. That kind of immersion changes everything.”

Together, these accounts show that while institutional frameworks are weak, individuals frequently carve their own paths—through au pair jobs abroad, private courses, repeated applications for scholarships, or sheer persistence. Yet the stories also underline the inequity: only those with personal resources, family support, or lucky opportunities manage to overcome the barriers. For the rest, linguistic deficits remain one of the most decisive bottlenecks blocking entry into Byzantine scholarship.

If modern languages are the bridge into secondary scholarship, source languages such as Ancient Greek, Latin, and Syriac form the bedrock of Byzantine research. Their absence can derail an aspiring Byzantinist before the dissertation stage. Durak calls this the “most basic shortcoming” in Türkiye: even at Boğaziçi, students often complete undergraduate study without exposure to Greek or Latin.⁷⁶¹ To mitigate this, the department recently allowed students to substitute Ottoman Turkish with Latin or Greek

⁷⁵⁸ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

⁷⁵⁹ Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

⁷⁶⁰ Ünal, interview.

⁷⁶¹ Durak, interview.

in their final two years, producing what Durak describes as “mid-level competence” at best. Yet he situates the problem in a wider decline of classical education: “Even in Germany and France, students no longer arrive at university with Greek or Latin.”

Ebru Altan is more blunt: doctoral research that bypasses primary sources is simply not credible. “Producing original scholarship takes years,” she insists, and must involve working with texts directly.⁷⁶² At the MA level, translations may suffice, but by the doctorate “you must at least compare them with the original and cite both.” For her, terminological precision and awareness of textual nuance are non-negotiable.

The career of Necipoğlu illustrates how robust scaffolding makes serious source work possible. She entered graduate school with no Greek and turned to Ihor Ševčenko for advice.⁷⁶³ His recommendation was strategic: begin with New Testament Greek at Harvard Divinity School before moving to classical and Byzantine Greek. She followed this path, adding four semesters of Latin, Ottoman Turkish, and even medieval Italian palaeography. Harvard granted her a third funded year devoted solely to languages, which she later described as decisive: “If I had rushed into exams and writing after two years, I would have struggled with primary sources.” At Boğaziçi, she reproduced this scaffolding, securing Onassis Foundation support for visiting instructors in Greek and embedding philological training into the program.

Other trajectories reveal the improvisational side of language learning. Akalın began with fragments of Greek at Bilkent, taught himself Latin in the library, and later, during his PhD at Princeton, added Syriac.⁷⁶⁴ Yet he is sharply critical of minimal training in Türkiye: “Three hours a week of Greek, even at Boğaziçi—it’s nothing. Sometimes I feel like telling students not to bother rather than give them something so minimal.” His solution is collective: a consortium pooling instructors of Greek, Latin, Syriac, Hebrew, and Arabic to raise standards across institutions.

For Keçiş, the turning point came when his advisor Delilbaşı insisted: “If you’re going to work on Byzantium, you have to concentrate on Greek.”⁷⁶⁵ His early courses at Ankara left little impression—“we sat in class, but nothing stayed with me”—so he turned to self-study in Birmingham and attended Anthony Hirst’s Byzantine Greek Summer School in

⁷⁶² Durak, interview.

⁷⁶³ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁷⁶⁴ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁷⁶⁵ Keçiş, interview.

Belfast five times over a decade. Eventually he taught Greek I and II himself, turning a weakness into a strength.

Şahin Kılıç's entry into the field was even more precarious: "no Greek, no Latin, and barely any English."⁷⁶⁶ A chance encounter led him to Evgenia Kermeli, who informally taught him Modern Greek in her Ankara home. Later he secured a Greek government scholarship, spending nearly two years in Athens, where he attended intensive courses and used the Gennadius Library. Encounters with Elisabeth Zachariadou, who welcomed him deepened his commitment. Delilbaşı's standards left no room for shortcuts: "If your Greek wasn't strong enough, she would redirect you to Ottoman tax registers." Determined not to be sidelined, Kılıç re-enrolled in beginner courses repeatedly, took both Modern and Classical Greek at DTCF, and built his dissertation on short chronicles around the skills he gradually acquired.

These stories underscore both the fragility and the resilience of Byzantine historical training in Türkiye. Without Greek or Latin, doctoral research collapses; yet systematic instruction is rare. Students cobble together training through summer schools, mentors, and self-study. The paradox is clear: the field demands philological rigor but provides little structural support. Those who succeed do so through persistence, mobility, and mentorship, turning personal resourcefulness into the foundation of their scholarly formation.

For art historians and archaeologists, the thresholds are more flexible but not absent. As İşler notes, "Students working on Islamic art are always taught Ottoman Turkish, but for Byzantium there's simply no one to teach Greek or Latin."⁷⁶⁷ The gap is deeply felt by Demirel Gökalp, who admits, "Looking back, I think it's my greatest academic deficiency."⁷⁶⁸ She stresses that in some European universities knowledge of a source language is a formal doctoral requirement—something she wishes had been enforced in Türkiye. Today she urges students to take Greek or Latin electives from other departments, but, as she laments, "We practically beg them to go... it rarely works."

Others describe patchier but more hopeful beginnings. Gülgün Köroğlu notes that history and archaeology departments at her university now offer Greek and Latin: "It's

⁷⁶⁶ Kılıç, interview.

⁷⁶⁷ İşler, interview.

⁷⁶⁸ Demirel Gökalp, interview.

not heavy instruction, but it's a start."⁷⁶⁹ She sees promise in students with strong English who are increasingly curious about Greek. Still, she insists that "one language is not enough," and advocates required prep years. Ceylan Duggan recalls her own improvised path into Latin through Ankara University, stressing that "reading ancient texts scientifically requires a lifetime of exposure."⁷⁷⁰

Çömezoğlu Uzbek illustrates the same gap. Her program included Ottoman Turkish but no Greek or Latin, so she took private modern Greek courses. "Even just recognizing the spelling of an ancient city's name is important," she argues, adding that a two-semester introduction would make a dramatic difference.⁷⁷¹ For Olcay Uçkan, the scarcity of trained Byzantine Greek readers is acute in fieldwork: "At Olympos we struggled to find anyone who could really handle the inscriptions."⁷⁷² Yet she rejects fatalistic claims that there are "no Byzantinists in Türkiye because no one knows the language," advocating instead collaborative models where art historians work with philologists.

Pekak agrees, stressing it is "unrealistic and even unfair" to expect art historians to master Byzantine Greek in all its evolving registers. "It's a separate field—*Byzantinistik*," he explains, best left to specialists. Collaboration, he argues, is the practical model: "Expecting every art historian to reach philological precision is not viable."⁷⁷³

Finally, Varinlioğlu situates the issue in the broader institutional landscape. While Byzantine programs have expanded in geography and quality, Medieval Greek instruction remains "fragmented or simply absent."⁷⁷⁴ Students often rely on private lessons or summer schools abroad. "Books and libraries are now accessible," she notes, "but real philological skills still require structure—and that we don't have."

Taken together, these reflections reveal a persistent paradox. In HTS, source languages are existential: without them, research collapses. In material and visual studies, thresholds are more flexible, yet even minimal familiarity with Greek or Latin is essential for rigor. The gap is not simply about individual capacity but about systemic neglect. As long as language training remains patchy and optional, art historians and archaeologists

⁷⁶⁹ Koroğlu, interview.

⁷⁷⁰ Ceylan Duggan, interview.

⁷⁷¹ Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

⁷⁷² Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

⁷⁷³ Pekak, interview.

⁷⁷⁴ Varinlioğlu, interview.

will continue to depend on collaboration, improvisation, and individual determination rather than consistent institutional scaffolding.

Across both HTS and MVCS, language emerges as the single most decisive—and most fragile—dimension of graduate training in Byzantine studies in Türkiye. The voices of faculty and students converge on one refrain: languages are non-negotiable. Without them, research questions shrink, and scholarly credibility falters.

In HTS, the absence of systematic training in Greek and Latin undermines the very possibility of independent doctoral work. Necipoğlu's carefully scaffolded path at Harvard—three years of languages before research—shows how institutional support can create sustainable competence. By contrast, Kılıç's "mad courage," entering the field with no Greek, Latin, or even strong English, and surviving only through informal tutoring, scholarships, and sheer persistence, shows how fragile the Turkish system remains.

In MVCS, thresholds are more flexible, but even here scholars emphasize that minimal familiarity with Greek or Latin—recognizing inscriptions, names, and terminology—is indispensable. As Çömezoğlu Uzbek noted, even basic acquaintance with ancient languages, such as the ability to identify the name of a city, constitutes a necessary threshold of scholarly familiarity. Pekak pushes for a division-of-labor model, where art historians work collaboratively with philologists rather than chasing unattainable linguistic mastery. Yet even collaboration requires some institutional scaffolding, which remains patchy or absent.

The paradox is clear. Ambition and personal initiative abound: students chase summer schools abroad, take private lessons, or improvise through mentors. But the infrastructure to support them systematically is missing. Where elite universities provide mandatory prep years and international partnerships, the majority of institutions leave students to "find a way" on their own. This dependence on extraordinary commitment by individuals and mentors ensures survival, but at the cost of equity, continuity, and long-term sustainability.

Necipoğlu often stresses to her students that investing additional time in language study is never wasted. In Türkiye, however, that extra year is rarely available, much less supported. Until systematic provision of modern and source language training is embedded in graduate education, linguistic bottlenecks will remain the most enduring obstacle to the reproduction of Byzantine studies.

Experiential Training

Access to fieldwork, surveys, and site visits remains one of the most formative dimensions of graduate training in art history and archaeology. These experiences are not supplemental but central to how students develop intellectual focus, methodological awareness, and disciplinary identity. Yet in contemporary Turkish academia, the rising costs of participation—coupled with limited institutional funding—have rendered fieldwork less accessible, especially for students from working-class backgrounds. What was once a foundational rite of passage has become an uneven and fragile opportunity.

Demirel Gökarp reflects on how decisive field engagement was for her own trajectory. “These were all beautiful reasons to stay committed to the profession,” she recalls.⁷⁷⁵ “You’re working, you’re there with the professors, and you’re producing something together.” Such embodied experiences, she stresses, provided both technical skills and emotional grounding. Coşkuner describes a similar turning point: as an undergraduate, she joined Cappadocia trips organized by Pekak. These excursions combined the inspiration of the landscape with close mentorship. “If not Byzantine art,” she reflects, “it would have been Ottoman miniatures.”⁷⁷⁶

Such moments are increasingly difficult to sustain. İşler observes that student participation in excavations and trips has declined sharply—not out of disinterest but due to financial pressure. “They’re interested,” he says, “but the economic conditions don’t allow them to join.”⁷⁷⁷ For many, unpaid fieldwork is simply unaffordable. The thesis repository underscores how central these experiences once were: of 930 works on material and visual culture, nearly 300 are directly tied to excavation or survey projects, and about 80 focus on museum collections. Many more required extensive site visits—photographing monuments, documenting wall paintings, producing drawings and measurements—all activities that entailed significant financial costs.

Museum-based research brings its own set of challenges. Ünal recalls how access to collections often depended on personal relationships, with staff stretched thin between internal duties and field projects. Permissions, even when granted, were often accompanied by tight deadlines.⁷⁷⁸ As a graduate student, she could not extend her work

⁷⁷⁵ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁷⁷⁶ Coşkuner, interview.

⁷⁷⁷ İşler, interview.

⁷⁷⁸ Ünal, interview.

at the İzmir Archaeology Museum and ultimately shifted her dissertation topic: “Working in museums can wear you down.”

Acara Eser’s MA thesis on Byzantine metalwork required reaching out to 30 museums through the Ministry of Culture. “Some only allowed us to study vitrined objects, others brought pieces out from storage.”⁷⁷⁹ She describes hand-copying inventory books, repeated permission applications, and failed photo shoots due to analog equipment: “There were no cell phones... we developed the film, it came out blank, so we had to go back again with fresh approval.” Financially, she relied entirely on her family. “My scholarship came from my father,” she notes, explaining how she cut costs by traveling overnight, returning the same day when possible, and staying in guesthouses when necessary. Extended stays were rarely feasible, and access was closely supervised: “They assign someone to stay with you—you’re taking up their time.” Her account highlights how graduate research frequently depended on personal sacrifice, improvised logistics, and family support.

Demirel Gökalp echoes these experiences. Research trips often required unpaid labor, travel, and accommodation that students could not afford. Permissions from the Ministry of Culture created additional delays, while access to collections remained contingent on staff goodwill. She recalls museum cooperation as uneven and often reliant on informal networks.⁷⁸⁰ Even today, she says, persistence and initiative are indispensable: she cites one student who completed a project on Byzantine coins in Kocaeli, and another in Bolu—both made possible through unusually supportive museum staff.

Inclusion of students in field projects from early on remains one of the most effective forms of pedagogy. When students participate as excavators, survey assistants, or documentation specialists, they develop technical expertise and a sense of belonging that can be decisive in sustaining their interest. Yet assembling such teams requires steady funding and institutional commitment, both of which remain inconsistent across universities.

The result is a widening gap between the ideals of the discipline and its material realities. Fieldwork continues to serve as a defining element of scholarly formation in art historical and archaeological subfields, but it is no longer universally available.

⁷⁷⁹ Acara Eser, interview.

⁷⁸⁰ Demirel Gökalp, interview.

Increasingly, access depends not on merit or motivation but on class background and institutional scaffolding. A formative rite of passage has become a privilege—shaped less by intellectual ambition than by socioeconomic precarity. Like the linguistic bottlenecks discussed earlier, fieldwork thus illustrates how personal initiative and informal networks often compensate for systemic deficits, ensuring survival but undermining equity and continuity.

Mentorship and Informal Networks

Graduate training in Byzantine studies in Türkiye has long been shaped less by institutional scaffolding than by the initiative, generosity, and persistence of individual actors. In a landscape marked by uneven supervision, limited infrastructure, and scarce disciplinary pathways—particularly outside metropolitan centers—it is often mentors, not systems, who enable continuity. Academic formation unfolds through a layered mix of formal guidance, informal sponsorship, and interpersonal trust. While some students gain entry through structured programs and hands-on supervision, many others rely on encounters, networks, and the support of committed individuals operating beyond institutional obligation. Whether through a professor's decisive intervention, an informal Greek lesson at home, or access granted via personal ties abroad, mentorship—structured or improvised—emerges as the central engine of scholarly reproduction where systemic support remains weak.

Both Akalın and Kılıç navigated institutional deficiencies in curriculum, language instruction, and supervision, but found alternative routes through informal academic channels, particularly via Evgenia Kermeli Ünal.⁷⁸¹ Their shared connection to her, despite differing institutional settings, underscores how critical individual actors can be in sustaining scholarly reproduction where formal mechanisms fail. Kılıç's entry into Byzantine studies, for instance, was shaped not by institutional scaffolding but by informal mentorship and acts of personal generosity. After being dismissed by Işın Demirkent when he sought guidance for his master's thesis, he briefly considered leaving the field. Referred by Akalın, he connected with Kermeli Ünal, who taught him Modern Greek for free in her home—while pregnant—and helped him secure a Greek government scholarship. A formative year in Athens followed, where Zachariadou offered encouragement “without a hint of condescension.” These relationships not only opened

⁷⁸¹ Akalın, interview; Kılıç, interview.

doors to training and resources but also provided the validation denied to him earlier. Kılıç's experience exemplifies how informal networks can compensate for institutional exclusion.

Çorağan's story shows similar reliance on personal generosity. Living in the UK as an au pair, she could not afford formal enrollment at Oxford but approached Cyril Mango and Julian Raby, who welcomed her as an informal auditor.⁷⁸² Mango later issued a personal certificate of participation. These gestures, exceeding institutional obligation, left a deep imprint on her confidence and sense of belonging.

At the other end of the spectrum, strong mentorship within formal structures also proved decisive. Delilbaşı recalls her early training under Akdes Nimet Kurat, marked by rigor and philological depth. "Twenty to twenty-five of us began," she notes, "but only two remained." The attrition, she suggests, reflected Kurat's high standards rather than student disinterest. Yet within this demanding structure, she also fostered inclusion, inviting peers to attend Greek courses unofficially to build a learning community. Kurat's mentorship was not only about technical mastery but also about cultural literacy, shaping Delilbaşı's academic purpose and commitment. He later invited her to remain as an assistant, a decisive moment that launched her career. This model of apprenticeship—rigorous, selective, and opportunity-driven—would define her own approach as a mentor.

Delilbaşı later guided a generation of students, including Keçiş, Kılıç, and Ferhan Kırıldökme Mollaoğlu. Keçiş calls his decision to work with her "perhaps the best decision of my academic life," crediting her not only with supervision but with opening "a beautiful path for us... we've tried to carry forward the light and methodology we received."⁷⁸³ Her mentorship extended well beyond thesis advising into publishing, conference participation, and teaching. As director of Ankara University's Ottoman History Research Center, she enlisted her students as editorial secretaries: "We learned everything from proofreading to cover design—and we loved it," recalls Keçiş. She also encouraged early professional exposure, inviting him to teach and present at conferences while still a doctoral student. "By the time I became an assistant professor in 2011, I was fully prepared. I went to the classroom with enthusiasm."

⁷⁸² Çorağan, interview.

⁷⁸³ Keçiş, interview.

Internationally, Delilbaşı's students also benefited from targeted networks. In 2005, Keçiş received a TÜBA fellowship to study the Empire of Trebizond at Birmingham, motivated by Anthony Bryer's scholarship. Bryer, though retired, arranged the necessary invitation and hosted him regularly in his home, which doubled as an extraordinary private library. Keçiş describes days of structured work: research in a study room, followed by evening discussions in which Bryer pressed him on his readings and arguments. "If anything had ever been printed on Trebizond, Bryer had it," he recalls.⁷⁸⁴ Bryer's home became a site of rigorous inquiry and mentorship, conditions Keçiş emphasizes "could not have been matched by any formal institutional arrangement." Together, Delilbaşı and Bryer provided the layered support—domestic and international—that shaped his scholarly formation.

Delilbaşı also played a decisive role in structuring the next stage of Kılıç's development. His dissertation journey began with a proposal on *De Administrando Imperio*, but she urged caution: "If you think you can do it, try—but it's very difficult."⁷⁸⁵ After reassessment, he shifted to a more manageable topic, reflecting her supervisory style: encouraging ambition but anchoring it in realistic appraisals of linguistic and methodological readiness. She continued to press him on Greek and facilitated his first conference participation, curating a Byzantine panel hosted by Halil İnalcık and ensuring both Kılıç and Mollaoğlu were included. Her mentorship thus combined intellectual guidance with symbolic and professional inclusion.

Kılıç describes the broader culture of graduate supervision in Türkiye as "an apprenticeship," marked by hierarchical deference: "I've seen professors showing visible respect to their own former supervisors."⁷⁸⁶ While this ensured continuity, it could also restrict independence, particularly in conference participation and public presence. He contrasts this with peers trained in Anglo-American contexts, where earlier autonomy was encouraged. His reflections show how mentorship both sustains and constrains academic formation within Turkish institutions.

Other cases further illustrate the double-edged nature of mentorship. Kaçar guided İlhami Tekin Cinemre into late antique Armenian studies, encouraging intensive language

⁷⁸⁴ Keçiş, interview.

⁷⁸⁵ Kılıç, interview.

⁷⁸⁶ Kılıç, interview.

training abroad and helping him secure a TÜBİTAK fellowship at Oxford.⁷⁸⁷ Similarly, Pekak observes that students often choose their specialization less from systematic exposure than from affinity with particular professors: “They go into the field because they feel sympathy toward a certain professor.”⁷⁸⁸ As noted in numerous cases in the previous section on disciplinary orientation, many students entered Byzantine studies not through structured curricular design but through the influence and appeal of individual mentors. İşler candidly acknowledges his own limitations in mentoring Byzantinists, lacking philological skills for source languages and being the solo Byzantinist at his institution, but directs his students toward stronger programs or international opportunities—an honest, resource-aware model of advising.⁷⁸⁹

Altan’s account of her relationship with Işın Demirkent underscores a legacy model of mentorship rooted in loyalty and philological rigor. Demirkent invited Altan to pursue an academic career, an offer she had never extended to another student before.⁷⁹⁰ Their relationship was personal, directive, and long-term. Demirkent entrusted Altan with her unfinished multi-volume project on the Principality of Antioch, later pursued through a TÜBİTAK fellowship in London. Her mentorship was oral, recursive, and rigorous: “She read every line out loud, corrected it, commented, sometimes laughed at our mistakes.” Altan recalls her disdain for verbosity—“she would compress a page into a single paragraph and demand a sentence you could neither add to nor subtract from.” Demirkent also ensured Altan’s linguistic training, sending her to the British Council for intensive English and to courses in Arabic, Persian, Greek, and Latin. Despite institutional stagnation, Altan attributes her survival to “being guided by a supervisor who truly knew the field.”

Kermeli Ünal’s supervision of Akalın shows how mentorship often substitutes for institutional capacity. When Bilkent offered no funding for research abroad, she mobilized private networks to secure him a research stay in Athens.⁷⁹¹ This went beyond advising, encompassing logistics, networks, and access to archives. Akalın’s case underscores how effective supervision often hinges on a mentor’s ability to act as a bridge, connecting students to resources the institution cannot provide.

⁷⁸⁷ Kaçar, interview.

⁷⁸⁸ Pekak, interview.

⁷⁸⁹ İşler, interview.

⁷⁹⁰ Altan, interview.

⁷⁹¹ Akalın, interview.

Keçiş has in turn modeled proactive mentorship. He encouraged Hakan Kılıç to study Catalan in Spain and translate Ramon Muntaner's *Crònica*, producing a dissertation later published by the Turkish Historical Society.⁷⁹² With another student, Cüneyt Güneş, he supported a study of the Byzantine theme system, emphasizing its relevance to imperial traditions across Byzantium, the Seljuks, the Ottomans, and Rome. His mentorship style combines early identification of potential with strategic direction and deep personal investment. One undergraduate he guided through language exams, projects, and co-authored publications graduated as valedictorian. "They tell me, 'We're lucky to have been your students,' and I believe they mean it," he says. Even his criticism carries a paternal tone: "Think of me like your parents—when I get angry, it's for your good."

These portraits reveal both the enabling and fragile nature of mentorship. While mentors often provide transformative guidance, the absence of structured pipelines leaves outcomes inconsistent and inequitable. Voices such as Ufuk Serin, Altan, and Akalın point to weak supervisory standards, particularly in peripheral universities, where "copy-paste theses" and lack of methodological orientation are common.⁷⁹³ Akalın stresses the absence of an advising culture: "You come in like a stray mine," he quips, describing how even MA students sometimes lacked basic preparation. Serin critiques supervisors who permit linguistic shortcuts, allowing theses to be based on secondary works without language competence. Altan emphasizes the erosion of hands-on supervision and advocates a return to closer guidance: "Like our own mentors once did for us, we must track their development closely and offer the right guidance at every step."

From the periphery, Kılıç offers a sobering view: even motivated students, such as one from a Greek school background in Thrace, face fragile and ad hoc pathways.⁷⁹⁴ He and a colleague managed to send the student to Boğaziçi for a summer course in Byzantine Greek, but emphasizes, "These things happen one by one, not as a broader trend." His account underscores the systemic absence of sustainable mentorship infrastructure outside major centers.

⁷⁹² Keçiş, interview.

⁷⁹³ Ufuk Serin, "Oral History Interview with Ufuk Serin," interview by Şebnem Dönbekci, *Being a Byzantinist in Turkey Oral History Project*, 10 December 2022, 2022, <https://gabam.ku.edu.tr/en/research/projects/gabam-projects/being-a-byzantinist-in-turkey-oral-history-project/oral-history-videos/ufuk-serin/>; Akalın, interview; Altan, interview.

⁷⁹⁴ Kılıç, interview.

Taken together, these accounts reveal a structural paradox. Mentorship remains a powerful and often transformative tool, but its effectiveness depends too heavily on individual initiative and personal generosity. Exemplary mentors shape careers, but when excellence relies on chance rather than structure, graduate training becomes inconsistent and inequitable. The challenge, then, is not only to recognize the impact of outstanding mentors but to embed rigorous, sustained, and equitable supervision as a structural norm rather than an individual exception.

International Fellowships

While many graduate students in Byzantine studies complete their degrees within Turkish universities, international fellowships often play a crucial role in shaping the intellectual, linguistic, and methodological trajectories of their work. These fellowships—whether long-term research stays, summer programs, or informal sponsorships—offer opportunities that domestic programs may not consistently provide: access to primary sources, exposure to leading scholars, training in source languages, and integration into international scholarly networks. This section highlights how such experiences have compensated for gaps in domestic infrastructure, revealing both the transformative potential of international mobility and the resourcefulness required to access it.

Ebru Parman, a pioneer of Byzantine art history in Türkiye, also broke new ground in securing and utilizing international fellowships. Although her academic formation and career unfolded within Turkish institutions, these fellowships proved critical. She won a DAAD fellowship to study at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, where she spent ten months with scholars such as Richard Hamann-MacLean and Otto Feld. Entering with no German, she undertook the challenge because of the language's centrality to art history: "The foundations of art history as a scientific field were laid by the Germans," she recalled.⁷⁹⁵ The fellowship offered travel, immersion, and professional networking, though she noted such opportunities were rare and competitive—"They offer the chance, but only sparingly. You have to be quick to grab it."

Pekak's development was similarly shaped by a DAAD doctoral fellowship, which covered travel, living expenses, and six months of language training. "It was a doctoral scholarship, but they also provided a language grant... I received those too," he

⁷⁹⁵ Parman, interview.

explained.⁷⁹⁶ During his stay, he worked with Urs Peschlow, Paul Speck, Otto Feld, and Horst Hallensleben, gaining access to mentorship and scholarly networks difficult to replicate in Türkiye.

İşler also benefited from two international fellowships. While completing his doctorate at Hacettepe, he spent a year in Mainz on a DAAD fellowship under Peschlow, including four months of intensive German language classes and access to rare literature and archives. Later, he studied with Hermann Goltz at Martin Luther University in Halle: “He helped me a great deal with liturgy, church rituals, and even the Bible. We sat together and discussed so many things.”⁷⁹⁷ These exchanges enriched his understanding of Orthodox liturgy and continued into later collaborations. A postdoctoral fellowship from the Getty Trust brought him briefly to the American Academy in Rome, where he studied architectural restoration and monuments. Though only six weeks, the experience proved valuable. His trajectory illustrates how international fellowships expand both thematic and methodological horizons.

Taken together, these cases underscore how DAAD scholarships and connections to German academic networks accelerated the training of Hacettepe-affiliated scholars, compensating for domestic gaps and reinforcing the centrality of philological rigor, archival depth, and interdisciplinary dialogue in their scholarly formation.

Delilbaşı provides another early example. Trained in Ankara, she overcame resource limitations by securing a fellowship at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, where she studied under Dimitri Karayannopoulos and joined paleography workshops in Thessaloniki and Athens. Already trained in Classical Greek by Suat Sinanoğlu, she quickly acquired Modern Greek, even competing with philology students in grammar contests—often outperforming them. These experiences equipped her to work with Byzantine sources and contribute original research to Turkish historiography. After completing her doctorate in 1973, she spent a year at King’s College London and the British Museum, focusing on Greek in Seljuk and Ottoman diplomacy. “There was nothing here—we had to collect everything abroad,” she recalled.⁷⁹⁸ Seminars with Donald Nicol and access to UK archives deepened her expertise, showing that fellowships were not supplements but essential enablers of scholarship.

⁷⁹⁶ Pekak, interview.

⁷⁹⁷ İşler, interview.

⁷⁹⁸ Delilbaşı, interview.

Keçiş's career also shows how mentorship combined with fellowships reshaped domestically rooted training. Though supervised by Delilbaşı in Ankara, she urged him to pursue international experiences. He attended Byzantine Greek summer schools in Belfast, Birmingham, and Dublin under Antony Hirst, which offered intensive philological training and networking. A defining moment came at Heathrow, when Delilbaşı saw him reviewing Greek grammar cards: "She said, 'What are those?' I said, 'Professor, I wrote down Greek on these cards.' She said, 'Alright... good.'"⁷⁹⁹ With TÜBİTAK and university support, he later spent 15 months in the UK with Anthony Bryer and another 12 with John Haldon. These fellowships provided opportunities unavailable at home.

Engin Akyürek's doctoral experience offers another model. Though formally enrolled at Istanbul University, he received a scholarship to study with Herbert Kessler at Johns Hopkins. Kessler invited him to PhD seminars, secured departmental support, and met with him weekly for close feedback. Akyürek also visited Dumbarton Oaks, meeting Henry Maguire and Robert Ousterhout.⁸⁰⁰ Later, a TÜBA fellowship supported a project on the Church of St. Euphemia in Sultanahmet; with Ousterhout's help, he spent three months at Illinois, producing a book on his return. These experiences introduced him to the intellectual culture and networks of U.S. Byzantinists, laying foundations for long-term collaboration.

Kılıç's trajectory illustrates the value of short, targeted fellowships. Supported by a Greek state scholarship, he spent 8–9 months in Athens, using the Gennadius and University of Athens libraries and meeting Alexis Savvidis and Zachariadou, whose encouragement proved formative.⁸⁰¹ The stay provided the linguistic and archival access necessary for his dissertation—showing how even modest funding can yield major dividends.

Çorağan's doctorate on the wall paintings of St. Nicholas in Myra was enriched by multiple short fellowships. She spent nine months in Venice on an Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs grant, working with Gianclaudio Macchiarella on Romanesque wall paintings. In 2006 she held an Onassis Foundation fellowship in Athens with Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, comparing Greek and Anatolian wall painting. In 2009, a month at

⁷⁹⁹ Keçiş, interview.

⁸⁰⁰ Akyürek, interview.

⁸⁰¹ Kılıç, interview.

Dumbarton Oaks gave her access to resources and a chance to present her research. “Meeting these scholars and adopting their methodologies... these were pivotal moments that shaped and advanced my academic career,” she reflected.⁸⁰²

Finally, Köroğlu’s month-long fellowship at Lecce, facilitated by archaeologist Isabella Caneva from the Yumuktepe excavations, enabled her to lecture, pursue comparative research on material culture, and connect with scholars like Paul Arthur.⁸⁰³ Though short, the stay opened networks unavailable at her home institution.

These examples show how international fellowships—whether year-long residencies or brief research stays—have functioned as essential supplements to graduate education and scholarship of Turkish Byzantinists. They provided language training, archival access, mentorship, and scholarly belonging. In a field where domestic infrastructure often falls short, such opportunities emerge not as optional enhancements but as foundational tools for academic formation and continuity.

At the same time, the reliance on such opportunities underscores the fragility of the domestic system. As noted, graduate training in Türkiye is marked less by systematic provision than by improvisation and individual initiative. Student recruitment at undergraduate level often reflects exam placement rather than academic interest; language instruction remains uneven, with students left to navigate modern and source languages largely on their own; and access to fieldwork or museum research increasingly depends on financial resources. In this uneven landscape, mentorship and fellowships take on disproportionate importance—compensating for structural gaps but also reproducing inequalities, since not all students can access them.

In short, international fellowships have enabled growth and network, but under exceptional rather than systematic conditions. Without stronger institutional scaffolding in language training, mentorship, and field-based learning, the reproduction of the field will remain precarious, dependent on chance and the generosity of individuals rather than durable structures. The next section turns to those who pursued entire graduate degrees abroad and encountered distinct academic environments, expectations, and supervisory models that shaped their scholarly identity in different ways.

⁸⁰² Çorağan, interview.

⁸⁰³ Köroğlu, interview.

6.2.4 International Graduate Programs

Mapping the Scope and Diversity of Graduate Training Abroad

The cohort of Turkish Byzantinists who pursued doctoral education abroad provides a window into the range of institutional settings, disciplinary formations, and funding ecologies that have shaped the field since the 1980s. Across the oral histories, ten individuals stand out, representing diverse geographies—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy—and spanning three decades of training. Their trajectories are not just biographical anecdotes but comparative cases that illuminate how international graduate education reshaped scholarly identity and intellectual practice.

One of the earliest and most distinctive paths is that of Nevra Necipoğlu, who entered Byzantine studies through the American liberal arts system. Having completed her undergraduate degree in economics and history at Wellesley College, she began her doctoral studies at Harvard University in the early 1980s. Unlike peers who typically transitioned from Turkish universities to foreign doctoral programs, Necipoğlu's formation was anchored entirely in North America, with institutional funding and mentorship embedded in elite networks from the outset. Her case is exceptional both chronologically and structurally, standing apart as an early model of immersion in international academia at a time when few Turkish students pursued Byzantium abroad.

By contrast, Turhan Kaçar represents a different kind of pathway: state-sponsored doctoral training in the United Kingdom. Supported by a government scholarship, he earned his MA and PhD at Swansea University. His experience underscores the formative role of state programs in opening doors to international study during the 1990s and early 2000s, even as such initiatives remained uneven and contingent.

Most of the remaining scholars followed hybrid models, completing their master's degrees in Türkiye before pursuing doctoral training abroad through fellowships, cotutelle arrangements, or institutional awards. Ufuk Serin, for example, enrolled in the Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana in Rome, specializing in Christian archaeology. Elif Keser Kayaalp, after earning her MA at ODTU, entered Oxford University's doctoral program, benefiting from the depth and breadth of one of Europe's strongest environments for Byzantine studies. Similarly, Suna Çağaptay, Günder Varinlioğlu, and Kutlu Akalın all transitioned from Bilkent University to doctoral

programs in the United States, where they encountered well-funded, interdisciplinary ecosystems that contrasted sharply with their earlier experiences in Türkiye.

In France, two distinct patterns emerged. Buket Kitapçı Bayrı pursued her doctorate through a cotutelle arrangement between Boğaziçi University and Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, navigating dual institutional frameworks and alternating funding streams. Tolga Uyar, by contrast, undertook his entire graduate formation in France, completing both MA and PhD degrees within the French academic system and supported by bursaries from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Their cases highlight the variety of institutional logics and academic cultures encountered by Turkish Byzantinists abroad: from France's flexible but bureaucratically dense doctoral structures to the U.S. system's coursework-intensive and fellowship-driven approach.

These trajectories illustrate not only geographic breadth but also disciplinary diversity—ranging from textual and historical research in history departments, to art historical and archaeological work, to projects bridging philology, epigraphy, and material culture. In each case, the institutional context shaped not only the thematic scope of their dissertations but also the methodological and intellectual repertoires they carried back into Turkish academia.

What unites these otherwise divergent stories is the role of international graduate training as both a structural workaround and an intellectual reorientation. For some, like Necipoğlu and Kaçar, it provided an initial entry into Byzantine studies. For others, it offered the linguistic scaffolding, methodological breadth, and professional networks that domestic institutions could not reliably sustain. Mapping the scope and diversity of these pathways thus sets the stage for closer examination of how access, funding, pedagogy, and institutional culture abroad collectively reshaped the contours of Byzantine studies for a generation of Turkish scholars.

Access Pathways and Funding Landscapes

For Turkish students, access to international graduate programs in Byzantine studies has rarely depended on academic merit alone. Entry often required navigating institutional flexibility, strategic networking, and fragmented funding systems. Their narratives reveal how opportunity was shaped as much by improvisation and persistence as by intellectual capability.

Necipoğlu's undergraduate experience at Wellesley College illustrates how liberal arts institutions could create improvised pathways into underrepresented fields. With no Byzantinist on staff, she nonetheless wrote an honors thesis on Byzantium under a non-specialist mentor, supported by an external reader at Harvard. The temporary arrival of Dimitri Obolensky proved decisive: "Naturally, I immediately took his course," she recalled.⁸⁰⁴ Informal mentorship outside of class deepened her formation and strengthened her graduate school applications. Despite lacking training in Ancient Greek, she secured multiple fully funded offers by presenting herself as determined and strategically prepared. Her case exemplifies how institutional openness and merit-based frameworks could enable mobility for students from nontraditional backgrounds.

Other experiences underscore the structural necessity of external bursaries. Uyar emphasized that for him, a French Ministry of Foreign Affairs scholarship was not a supplement but a prerequisite: "Without it, I couldn't have gone."⁸⁰⁵ He stressed that such awards were rarely accessible to students who remained in Türkiye, and that securing one depended as much on interpersonal networks as on research quality: "Networking is very important... these scholarships aren't always awarded purely based on the quality of your research." His decision reflected both intellectual ambition and structural constraints: "I didn't just want to become a Byzantinist, I wanted a different educational environment."

Kitapçı Bayrı's doctoral training, through a cotutelle program between Boğaziçi University and Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, illustrates a hybrid model sustained by overlapping fellowships. France's flexible, exam-free system contrasted with the coursework-heavy structure of Boğaziçi, forcing her to navigate dual bureaucracies.⁸⁰⁶ She alternated funding from the French government and Institut français d'études anatoliennes (IFEA), later supplemented by Koç University Anatolian Civilizations Research Center (ANAMED), Boğaziçi, and ARIT. Her experience reflects how Turkish students abroad often relied on layered, improvised scaffolding rather than a single grant.

For some, this patchwork was even more precarious. Serin described how her entire career unfolded as a succession of short-term fellowships: "Without a bursary, entry was impossible."⁸⁰⁷ She moved between awards from the French and Italian governments, a

⁸⁰⁴ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁸⁰⁵ Uyar, interview.

⁸⁰⁶ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

⁸⁰⁷ Serin, interview.

Vatican-affiliated foundation, a German research institute, and FIAT International via the Koç Foundation. Twice admitted to doctoral programs in France, she had to withdraw for lack of funding: “Had I stayed longer, maybe things would have worked out, but I had no bursary—I had to return.” The precariousness became so constant that her father joked: “If you keep this up a little longer, you’ll be able to retire as a bursary holder.” Serin’s trajectory highlights the endurance and logistical agility required to sustain scholarship through fragmented support.

In sharp contrast, Akalın’s doctoral studies at Princeton reveal the stability of well-endowed institutions in the United States. He was surprised to find that full funding was guaranteed for all PhD students, with assistantships framed as pedagogical opportunities rather than financial lifelines. Assisting Peter Brown, for example, meant leading discussions rather than administrative tasks. “There were no hidden tricks,” he observed.⁸⁰⁸ Stipends were transparent, and additional summer funding could be secured through simple project proposals: “You just write what you want to do—study French in Paris, for instance—submit the costs, and they’ll cover it.”

Keser Kayaalp likewise emphasized how robust funding ecosystems facilitated expansive training at Oxford. “All my fieldwork was financially supported... this might have been very difficult to do in Türkiye.”⁸⁰⁹ Conference travel was equally encouraged: “They want you to attend conferences... I went to Canada, Spain, Edinburgh thanks to them.” Such provisions were not incidental but embedded in the institution’s ethos, allowing students to integrate into international networks early in their careers.

Taken together, these accounts demonstrate how funding shaped not just access to international study, but its very conditions. For some, the constant hustle of fellowships defined the rhythm of their academic lives; for others, institutional endowments provided security, transparency, and intellectual freedom. In every case, financial structures determined the scope, sustainability, and direction of scholarly formation abroad.

Linguistic Training: Burden and Foundation

For Turkish scholars pursuing graduate education abroad, linguistic training was not a peripheral requirement but the bedrock of scholarly formation. Source languages—Greek, Latin, Syriac—and major scholarly modern languages structured their intellectual

⁸⁰⁸ Akalın, interview.

⁸⁰⁹ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

development, while also creating heavy emotional and logistical burdens. The depth of this training varied across institutions, but in every case it profoundly shaped research possibilities and scholarly identity.

Necipoğlu's experience underscores how institutional flexibility and sustained investment in language training can transform an initial disadvantage into long-term strength. Although she began graduate study without Greek, Harvard's structured progression and the provision of an additional funded year enabled her to build competence across multiple languages and paleographic skills.⁸¹⁰ This extended preparation not only shaped her own scholarly trajectory but also informed her later commitment to embedding rigorous philological training into Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

For others, language training proved more burdensome. At Swansea University, Kaçar completed two years of Ancient Greek, one during his MA and another during his PhD coursework. But the workload was overwhelming: "I took Greek as part of the program, but I didn't take Latin—it was just too much."⁸¹¹ Balancing Greek, English-language coursework, and dissertation preparation left him stretched thin. His case shows how, even when structurally provided, classical language training could be exhausting for students from non-classical backgrounds within compressed timelines.

At Oxford, Keser Kayaalp faced a different kind of intensity. "I was dashing between classes trying to learn four different languages," she recalled.⁸¹² These included German for Classicists— "just reading and text analysis, it really helped," —beginner French, Ancient Greek with Ida Toth, and four years of Syriac with David Taylor, beginning with one-on-one tutorials and later group reading sessions. The sheer volume was daunting, but it also equipped her with the multi-language competence essential for her later research. Her experience exemplifies the immersive, resource-rich linguistic environments available in elite programs abroad.

Akalın's linguistic formation began informally at Bilkent. At Princeton, his repertoire expanded systematically. Encouraged by his advisor, he began Ancient Syriac with Emmanuel Papoutsakis.⁸¹³ Combined with earlier training in Greek, Latin, and French,

⁸¹⁰ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁸¹¹ Kaçar, interview.

⁸¹² Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁸¹³ Akalın, interview.

Syriac opened new comparative avenues for his dissertation. His trajectory shows how tailored mentorship in well-resourced institutions can turn personal initiative into structured linguistic competence.

For Çağaptay, graduate study in the United States offered a decisive breakthrough. “When I first arrived, I couldn’t read German or French... I had some Greek, some Latin, and Ottoman.”⁸¹⁴ Over time, however, she gained the ability to work across languages with ease: “Now, if I want to write on a topic, I can open a source in any language and use it.” She contrasted this with the situation in Türkiye, where students often struggle to meet language requirements without sustained institutional support: “Except maybe at Koç, most students don’t get the encouragement or support they need from their advisors to pass English proficiency exams—especially if they’re writing their thesis in Turkish.”

Taken together, these accounts demonstrate that linguistic training abroad was more than a technical hurdle. It was a profound form of apprenticeship, shaping scholarly confidence, access to sources, and disciplinary belonging. Whether through carefully scaffolded programs, relentless multitasking, or self-directed initiative amplified by mentorship, language acquisition defined the conditions of intellectual independence for Turkish Byzantinists trained abroad.

Institutional Pedagogies and Intellectual Formation

Graduate training abroad exposed Turkish Byzantinists to pedagogical cultures very different from those at home. These environments shaped not only their academic knowledge but also their professional identity, research habits, and sense of scholarly community. Across the accounts, the contrasts with Turkish institutions emerge clearly: smaller cohorts, intensive mentorship, interdisciplinary supervision, and early integration into scholarly life.

At Harvard in the early 1980s, Necipoğlu encountered a program that was both fragile and formative. When she began, Angeliki Laiou had just arrived to replace Robert Lee Wolff, and Necipoğlu became her first doctoral student.⁸¹⁵ For most of her PhD, only one other student specialized in Byzantine history, so her training often took the form of individualized tutorials. On the art history side, there was a gap after Kurt Weitzmann and Ernst Kitzinger until Ioli Kalavrezou arrived, while Ihor Ševčenko offered Byzantine

⁸¹⁴ Çağaptay, interview.

⁸¹⁵ Necipoğlu, interview.

Greek and literature through classics. The institutional infrastructure was thin, but the intellectual quality was exceptional. “I was lucky to study closely with both Laiou and Ševčenko,” she reflects, noting that this intimacy provided a strong foundation even as the field itself remained small. In retrospect, she emphasizes the difference with today: “Interest in Byzantine history—both in Türkiye and abroad—has definitely grown since then.”

In France, Kitapçı Bayrı experienced a system that demanded early public engagement. She recalls how doctoral students were expected to present at conferences and publish from the start. “I speak too fast and stare at my notes,” she remembered thinking at first, but these repeated exposures built her confidence and presentation skills.⁸¹⁶ For her, this was transformative, showing how pedagogical cultures that normalize early participation foster durable habits of professional engagement.

The structure of doctoral committees also played a major role in shaping scholarly horizons. In the United State, Çağaptay’s committee included scholars across medieval manuscript studies (Anne D. Hedeman), Islamic architecture (Dede Ruggles), theology (Rick Layton), and Byzantine architecture (Robert Ousterhout). “Ruggles probably understood hybridity in art and architecture better than anyone on the committee,” she notes.⁸¹⁷ By contrast, she reflected, had she pursued the same project in Türkiye, her supervision would likely have remained narrowly within Byzantine architectural history. The interdisciplinary committee at her institution forced her to frame her work in broader comparative terms, fostering methodological innovation.

Kitapçı Bayrı’s reflections also reveal the cultural codes embedded in academic life. She recalls a Sorbonne seminar that began with a professor apologizing for a misplaced accent in an email. “That kind of attention to language really affected me,” she explains.⁸¹⁸ Initially, she asked questions in halting French—“just blurted out questions with my broken French”—which surprised her peers but marked her as engaged. Over time, she learned the decorum and rigor of the system, which contrasted with the more egalitarian, informal classroom discussions she had experienced at İzmir American College and Boğaziçi University. For her, graduate study in France was not only

⁸¹⁶ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

⁸¹⁷ Çağaptay, interview.

⁸¹⁸ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

methodological training but also an education in academic presence and identity within a codified scholarly culture.

These accounts highlight how institutional pedagogies abroad offered more than access to resources. They provided formative encounters with disciplinary values, evaluative rigor, and professional norms that shaped both the content of students' dissertations and their sense of themselves as scholars. Whether through individualized tutorials at Harvard, structured public engagement in France, or interdisciplinary committees in the U.S., these pedagogical environments reoriented Turkish Byzantinists toward more expansive, confident, and globally legible forms of scholarship.

Institutional Ethos and Daily Academic Life

Beyond formal coursework and supervision, what struck many Turkish Byzantinists abroad was the ethos of their host institutions—the everyday codes of interaction, respect, and collegiality that shaped their experience as much as curricula. These environments often contrasted sharply with the hierarchies and opacity they had known in Türkiye, offering instead cultures of humility, openness, and student-centered support.

At Oxford, Keser Kayaalp found herself immersed not only in rigorous coursework but also in a collegial academic atmosphere. Enrolled at Exeter College—long associated with Cyril Mango and Elizabeth Jeffreys—she joined Greek reading seminars with Jeffreys and remembers the effort it took: “Struggling, yes—I was trying to read a bit.”⁸¹⁹ Even small gestures left an imprint. Mango’s “Good luck with your work!” delivered in Turkish always lifted her spirits, while Marlia Mango’s farewell gathering at her departure, prompted by family circumstances, symbolized the institution’s ability to humanize elite academic spaces. “They don’t throw a farewell party for every student,” she reflected, “and it was very precious. I still feel very lucky.” For her, Oxford was not only a training ground but a community that combined intellectual challenge with emotional support. This sense of collegiality extended into daily life. “Whenever something was on your mind, you could really find supportive people around you,” she recalls. The environment was one of encouragement, where peers and faculty alike “truly wanted to see you do well.” Such openness and generosity, she notes, were not always as evident in Türkiye, making Oxford’s ethos formative for her confidence and academic identity.

⁸¹⁹ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

At Swansea University, Kaçar also encountered a culture of accessibility and respect. His MA coursework included a celebrated “Late Antiquity” class co-taught by Stephen Mitchell and Kerry Davies, balancing political-military history with close readings of Augustine and Boethius. He describes this as “my ideal of historical instruction,” where methodological breadth was both encouraged and expected.⁸²⁰ Weekly advisor meetings with Mitchell provided structure and accountability: “We met every week. I would report on what I had done, what I planned to do, and go over my reading list.” Beyond pedagogy, what struck him was the modesty of academic leadership. “Our department head was also the university’s rector, but you’d never know it. He had a very simple car and behaved like any other professor.” For Kaçar, these small details exemplified an institutional ethos that valued scholarship over hierarchy, and student development over administrative distance.

Similar impressions shaped Varinlioğlu’s training in the United States. She recalls the balance between rigor and collegiality: “They made us take all the tests—no exceptions—but they also saw us as young researchers who would produce even better work.”⁸²¹ This dual expectation, demanding yet affirming, contrasted sharply with the hierarchical cultures she had known in Türkiye, where recognition often comes only after years of seniority. In the U.S., she experienced being treated as a colleague in formation, not simply as a subordinate.

The ethos of academic life abroad—whether in Oxford’s traditions, Swansea’s modest collegiality, or American faculty’s partnership-oriented approach—profoundly shaped the formation of Turkish Byzantinists who pursued degrees abroad. These cultures of openness, humility, and respect fostered a sense of belonging and scholarly seriousness that extended far beyond formal pedagogy. For many, this was as transformative as the training itself, offering models of academic community that they would later measure against the more hierarchical or opaque environments they returned to in Türkiye.

Scholarly Immersion and Intellectual Networks

International graduate training offered more than coursework: it immersed Turkish Byzantinists in dense intellectual communities that reshaped their research agendas and professional identities. Whether in Paris, Oxford, or Washington, D.C., access to seminar

⁸²⁰ Kaçar, interview.

⁸²¹ Varinlioğlu, interview.

cultures, libraries, and informal mentorships created opportunities difficult to replicate in Türkiye.

For Necipoğlu, a fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks immediately after her qualifying exams became a formative turning point. Most fellows used the award for dissertation completion, but she chose to start her research there—gaining exposure to leading Byzantinists such as Alexander Kazhdan and Cyril Mango and embedding herself in an international scholarly milieu.⁸²² This immersion contrasted sharply with Harvard's small Byzantine cohort, offering both resources and a functioning intellectual community. It was also made possible by Laiou's advice to apply early and her ongoing mentorship, which provided not only scholarly direction but also a model of female visibility at the highest levels of academia.

Koray Durak likewise highlights the catalytic role of Dumbarton Oaks. Early summer programs in Greek there and in the United Kingdom strengthened his language base, while a dissertation-year fellowship freed him from teaching and placed him in a high-density research environment.⁸²³ For him, sustained access to such institutions compensated for gaps in Turkish academia and provided continuity through networks of peers and mentors.

Kaçar's immersion at Swansea University shows how seminar culture and mentorship could converge into a coherent academic formation. Weekly meetings with his advisor structured his work, while conference presentations—such as his first at Oxford—offered early professional visibility. He recalls Mitchell with striking affection: “The most wonderful person I’ve ever known... If he hadn’t been created as a human, he would have been created as an angel.”⁸²⁴ Such mentorship shaped not only his graduate work but also his confidence as a scholar. Reflecting later, he concluded, “Had I stayed in Türkiye, I wouldn’t have worked on Christian history. There was neither the infrastructure nor the academic guidance for such a topic.”

Kitapçı Bayrı's years in Paris illustrate how immersion extended beyond formal study into everyday scholarly life. Alongside paleography courses with Brigitte Mondrain and seminars with Michel Kaplan, Jacques Lefort, Marie-France Auzépy, and Gilbert Dagron, she recalls the importance of “coffee chats, spontaneous questions, and the network of

⁸²² Necipoğlu, interview.

⁸²³ Durak, interview.

⁸²⁴ Kaçar, interview.

scholars that opened up my perspective.”⁸²⁵ Figures such as George Kiourtzian—a librarian at the Byzantine studies section of the library in College de France and a respected epigraph—acted as community connectors, linking her to materials and collaborations. Equally important were the friendships with fellow doctoral students—many of whom later became prominent Byzantinists themselves—which turned Paris into a long-term intellectual home.

Uyar also emphasizes the vibrancy of Parisian academic culture, from seminars with Jean-Pierre Sodini, Kaplan, and Jean-Michel Spieser to the specialized Byzantine library he ranks alongside Dumbarton Oaks as the world’s best.⁸²⁶ Exposure to scholars like Nicole Thierry and Denis Feissel deepened his training in archaeology and epigraphy. While impressed by France’s continuity and institutional support, he later reflected on its contrasts with Anglophone systems, noting how its stipend-based, tradition-driven environment operated within a very different academic logic.

At Oxford, Keser Kayaalp experienced an equally intense immersion. Motivated by gaps in her earlier training, she “took courses like crazy,” ranging from Roman archaeology with Janet DeLaine to Islamic art with Oya Pancaroğlu and Zeynep Yürekli, alongside Byzantine seminars with Marlia Mango besides language classes.⁸²⁷ “At the time I felt like a headless chicken running from class to class,” she recalled, but the breadth became foundational for her later scholarship. The Oxford Centre for Late Antiquity, frequent visiting speakers, and peer networks created what she called a “very lively academic environment,” impossible to replicate in Türkiye at the time.

Varinlioğlu’s doctoral years in the United States similarly combined disciplinary and technical breadth. Faculty like Lee Striker, Renata Holod, and Ann Kuttner provided feedback across fields, while GIS specialists at the Penn Museum helped her apply new tools to aerial photography.⁸²⁸ These encounters expanded her research methods beyond the possibilities then available in Türkiye. “That kind of research and academic environment is rare in Türkiye,” she noted, suggesting that only a few institutions like Bilkent could approach it.

⁸²⁵ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

⁸²⁶ Uyar, interview.

⁸²⁷ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁸²⁸ Varinlioğlu, interview.

Finally, Akalın's Princeton years reveal how institutional culture itself could be formative. Coming from Bilkent, he was familiar with Westernized academic settings but quickly saw deeper contrasts: decentralized governance, transparent progression, and high expectations that demanded constant self-assessment.⁸²⁹ These differences, he later reflected, redefined his sense of what rigorous graduate education could be.

The immersion of graduate students abroad was not merely about resources or coursework. It meant joining scholarly networks, accessing seminar cultures, and experiencing institutional practices that nurtured intellectual breadth, confidence, and professional socialization. For many, these environments redefined what it meant to be a Byzantinist, embedding them in global academic communities and giving them tools and perspectives unavailable at home.

Peer Cohorts and Informal Scholarly Community

Beyond formal training, informal peer networks and chance encounters often sustained Turkish Byzantinists abroad. These ties—sometimes fleeting, sometimes lasting decades—provided both solidarity and practical support in otherwise isolating academic settings.

Necipoğlu recalls her first academic kinship with Delilbaşı during her early years at Harvard. Encouraged by Halil İnalcık, she visited Delilbaşı at Dumbarton Oaks and even stayed at her home. This brief but formative meeting exemplified how informal gestures could anchor a young scholar navigating a new academic world.

By the 2000s, a loosely connected cohort of Turkish Byzantinists was taking shape across the institutions in the United States. Varinlioğlu recalls friendships with Durak and Ece Turnator at Harvard, Akalın at Princeton, and Çağaptay and Ayşe Henry working with Robert Ousterhout.⁸³⁰ “We all became friends eventually,” she notes, with Dumbarton Oaks often serving as a hub that reactivated ties to the Turkish community.

Workshops also facilitated peer connections. Akalın remembers his first meeting with Keser Kayaalp through an Oxford-Princeton workshop, after initial exchanges on a mailing list.⁸³¹ Keser Kayaalp describes the encounter as formative: “It was my first year of doctoral study, and meeting him in person made a big difference.”⁸³² Other ties

⁸²⁹ Akalın, interview.

⁸³⁰ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁸³¹ Akalın, interview.

⁸³² Keser Kayaalp, interview.

emerged through Oxford's seminar culture—whether with visiting Turkish scholars like Örgü Dalgıç or through gestures of solidarity, such as Varinlioğlu sending Keser Kayaalp her dissertation while she was writing her own. Keser Kayaalp also recalls guiding Turkish archaeologists who arrived on Martin Harrison bursaries, introducing them to Oxford libraries and routines.

In France, peer ties were fewer but still meaningful. Kitapçı Bayrı describes a sparse Turkish presence during her doctoral years in Paris, limited largely to herself and Uyar. Yet informal bonds with scholars such as Ivana Jevtic, Anestis Vasilakeris, and Brigitte Pitarakis created what she calls a form of “academic companionship.”⁸³³ Uyar initially felt isolated but gradually built connections toward the end of his PhD—joining Yıldız Ötüken's excavations at St. Nicholas in Myra and working on projects with Engin Akyürek.⁸³⁴ These collaborations eased his reintegration into Turkish academia later.

Informal mentorship also extended across generations. Serin recounts approaching senior Turkish scholars while searching for a dissertation topic in Rome. Figures such as Semavi Eyice, Metin Ahunbay, Haluk Abbasoğlu, Ötüken, and Sacit Pekak—none of them formally tied to her program—welcomed her, opened their personal libraries, and offered advice.⁸³⁵ Pekak even invited her into his home, sharing resources from his private collection. In parallel, Italian Byzantinists Alessandra Guiglia and Maria Andaloro provided sustained intellectual and emotional encouragement. These gestures of generosity, Serin reflects, were as crucial as institutional training itself.

Informal communities—peer friendships, cross-generational generosity, and spontaneous solidarity—provided the affective infrastructure for survival and growth abroad. They gave Turkish Byzantinists not only access to resources but also a sense of belonging in the fragmented world of international scholarship and a gateway to Turkish academic networks upon their eventual return.

Reflections on Return: Influence and Repercussions

The effects of international graduate training did not end with the doctorate. For Turkish Byzantinists, returning home meant carrying new intellectual orientations into institutions often ill-prepared to accommodate them. Their accounts highlight both enrichment and

⁸³³ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

⁸³⁴ Uyar, interview.

⁸³⁵ Serin, interview.

friction: transformed research agendas on the one hand, and institutional rigidity or cultural dissonance on the other.

For Kaçar, studying in the UK fundamentally shaped both his research and identity. His doctoral work on early church councils could not have been pursued in Türkiye, where neither the infrastructure nor the expertise existed.⁸³⁶ Alongside rigorous scholarly habits, immersion in English eased the language hurdles that later hampered his peers. Reflecting back, he insists: “I’m really glad I studied in England—and even more so, that I worked with Stephen Mitchell.”

Akalın, by contrast, recalls a kind of reverse culture shock after returning from Princeton. Though Bilkent had offered a Westernized academic environment, he found American doctoral culture radically different—marked by decentralized governance, transparent funding, and selective progression.⁸³⁷ At Princeton, some students left or were advised out; in Türkiye, by contrast, almost everyone graduated, regardless of performance. This structural difference sharpened his critique of Turkish academic culture: a system that favored retention over rigor, bureaucracy over intellectual independence.

These contrasts underscored not only gaps in resources but also differences in ethos. Abroad, doctoral training emphasized fairness, accountability, and student autonomy; at home, returnees often encountered opaque procedures and rigid hierarchies. Adapting back could be as demanding as adapting abroad.

These reflections show how studying abroad reshaped more than individual expertise: it recalibrated expectations of academic life. Upon return, scholars confronted the limitations of Turkish academia with fresh eyes—sometimes adapting, sometimes resisting, but always measuring their experience against the models they had encountered elsewhere. The result was not simply a transfer of knowledge but a shift in standards that would shape how they taught, mentored, and trained the next generation of Byzantinists.

In this sense, international graduate programs provided not just resources—sustained language formation, interdisciplinary breadth, transparent funding, and collegial academic cultures—but also a reorientation of scholarly identity. They fostered confidence, autonomy, and methodological range rarely achievable at home. Yet their

⁸³⁶ Kaçar, interview.

⁸³⁷ Akalın, interview.

very success highlights the paradox: world-class Byzantinists have emerged from Türkiye, but often because they temporarily stepped outside its academic constraints. As the next section shows, the challenge lay in translating these formative experiences into sustainable academic trajectories upon return.

6.3 Entry Bottlenecks

This section examines the mechanisms through which individuals enter Byzantine Studies as an academic profession in Türkiye. It traces how aspiring Byzantinists move from graduate training into institutional positions, and how formal structures like centralized staffing programs, localized recruitment systems, and informal mentorship networks shape their early career trajectories. By analyzing patterns of both inclusion and exclusion, the section highlights how institutional channels, interpersonal dynamics, and disciplinary norms together regulate access to the field.

6.3.1 State-sponsored Programs

In addition to the creation of new departments, a number of institutional mechanisms played a pivotal role in sustaining the training and circulation of scholars in Byzantine studies—particularly in the absence of robust pipelines and widespread staffing opportunities. Chief among these were Article 35 of Law No. 2547, the Faculty Training Program (ÖYP), and international scholarship schemes such as the Overseas Graduate Education Scholarship (YLSY). Though differing in structure and duration, all three enabled junior scholars to pursue graduate education at more established universities, typically with the expectation of returning to their home institutions. They thus functioned as corrective mechanisms for institutional inequality, serving not only as gateways to advanced training but also as instruments of disciplinary integration, granting access to intellectual communities, mentorship, and peer networks absent in many local universities.

Article 35, a long-standing provision in Turkish higher education law, facilitated the temporary transfer of research assistants' positions from newly established or under-resourced universities to more established institutions for graduate study. Scholars remained officially affiliated with their home institutions and were expected to return upon completion of their degrees his pathway was followed by many Byzantinists. Zeliha Demirel Gökalp, for instance, began as a research assistant at Anadolu University and

was transferred to Hacettepe, later converting her position into a lectureship upon return after completing course requirements and comprehensive exams.⁸³⁸ Ceren Ünal, appointed at Manisa Celal Bayar University before an art history department existed there, transferred to Ege University in Izmir for graduate study.⁸³⁹ Şahin Kılıç was reassigned from Uludağ to Ankara University's DTCF under Melek Delilbaşı's supervision.⁸⁴⁰ Others, such as Ayşe Çaylak Türker and Bülent İşler, were sent to Hacettepe, forming a sizeable doctoral cohort. Çaylak Türker recalled: "From that point onward, we were a large group of doctoral students placed under Article 35."⁸⁴¹ İşler completed both MA and PhD at Hacettepe, remarking, "For ten years, I worked at Hacettepe."⁸⁴² These testimonies show how Article 35 embedded scholars in central intellectual communities and provided continuity otherwise impossible at peripheral universities.

In the early 2000s, ÖYP expanded on the Article 35 model with a more structured and resource-intensive framework. Launched at Middle East Technical University and later extended to other leading universities, it aimed to address academic staff shortages and promote equitable access. It offered project and travel funding, supported domestic and international research stays, and provided thesis research support (up to three months for MA students and one year for PhD students). It also prioritized language training. The program was formally discontinued in 2015.

Murat Keçiş's trajectory illustrates its impact. Entering academia in 1998 through a centralized YÖK-administered process, he was placed at Muğla University, sent to an intensive English preparatory course at ODTU, and later assigned to a vibrant DTCF cohort that included Ferhan Kılıdökme Mollaoğlu, Richard Dietrich, Şahin and Ayşegül Kılıç.⁸⁴³ "We were perhaps her [Delilbaşı's] last full cohort—students from the most mature phase of her advising career," he noted. By the time he graduated, he felt thoroughly prepared for teaching, having been immersed in a mature academic environment.

⁸³⁸ Demirel Gökalp, interview.

⁸³⁹ Ünal, interview.

⁸⁴⁰ Kılıç, interview.

⁸⁴¹ Çaylak Türker, interview.

⁸⁴² İşler, interview.

⁸⁴³ Keçiş, interview.

At their best, Article 35 and ÖYP embedded aspiring scholars in core intellectual communities—Hacettepe for Byzantine art history, Ankara DTCF for Byzantine history—where they gained mentorship, peer networks, and a sense of disciplinary belonging. Yet both programs also exposed vulnerabilities. Because employment was tied to temporary Article 50/D status, graduates often faced legal and bureaucratic limbo. Keçiş recalled: “I was caught in limbo. They said, ‘We can’t appoint you, because you’re obligated to return. But we can’t take you back either, because you’re 50/D—and if we rehire you, we have to fire you.’” Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek encountered similar risks when her student status lapsed between degrees.⁸⁴⁴ Others, like Ünal, were denied conference support because they were not “staff” of their host university.⁸⁴⁵ These experiences underline the paradox of state-sponsored mobility: while they enabled graduate training, they also left participants precarious.

Alongside domestic mechanisms, YÖK’s YLSY offered a pathway for study abroad. In 1994, Turhan Kaçar was one of just two history candidates selected from more than 300 applicants. Sent to the University of Wales, Swansea, he completed his PhD in Classical and Late Antique History in 2000 and returned to Balıkesir University. “I think that was the biggest success of my life,” he recalled.⁸⁴⁶ More recent examples illustrate continuity in this trajectory: Ahmet Arı, a graduate of Uludağ University, completed his master’s and doctoral studies at the University of Sussex before returning to Türkiye to take up a position at the Department of Art History at Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University in 2020. Similarly, Tülay Yeşiltaş, who earned her undergraduate and master’s degrees at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, pursued her PhD at the University of Birmingham and joined the Department of Art History at Hitit University in 2022.⁸⁴⁷ Despite such cases, YLSY’s overall impact on Byzantine studies has been modest. Few recipients have returned to work in the field, and the scheme has often favored other disciplines.

⁸⁴⁴ Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

⁸⁴⁵ Ünal, interview.

⁸⁴⁶ Kaçar, interview.

⁸⁴⁷ There is no publicly accessible database or repository where one can systematically search for YLSY or similar state-funded study-abroad scholarships by field or outcome. I learned of Ahmet Arı’s and Tülay Yeşiltaş’s YÖK-funded doctoral studies through personal encounters—at the Byzantine Greek Summer School in Birmingham (2015) and the Cappadocia in Context Summer School (2018), respectively. There may well be other Byzantinists who studied abroad through such funding, but none emerged during the course of my research.

Taken together, Article 35, ÖYP, and YLSY were pivotal in shaping a generation of Byzantinists, enabling mobility from peripheral universities to central hubs, supporting language acquisition, and facilitating international exposure. They built bridges where domestic pipelines were weak. Yet with the abolishment of ÖYP in 2015 and the decline of Article 35 placements, opportunities have contracted sharply.

Turkish graduate students now rely on university-specific hiring (*cari usul*) and a patchwork of competitive scholarships. Research assistant positions are posted and administered locally, with selection based on academic records, centralized exam scores, language proficiency, and interviews. Candidates must typically meet moderate language scores.⁸⁴⁸ This system, however, has reintroduced risks of inequality. Positions are not always filled by the most appropriate specialists, while localized hiring reinforces academic familism and inbreeding. Relaxed language requirements and limited opportunities for training abroad further undermine scholarly quality, producing dissertations reliant solely on Turkish-language sources.

Partial alternatives, such as the YÖK 100/2000 Doctoral Scholarship, have limited effect.⁸⁴⁹ Targeted mainly at STEM fields like artificial intelligence and biomedical engineering, the program excludes the humanities. As Çaylak Türker noted, despite strong student enthusiasm for Byzantium—"I'm currently supervising four doctoral dissertations and six master's theses"—her students struggle to find positions because Byzantine art is not recognized as a priority field.⁸⁵⁰

The closure of structured, state-supported pathways has significantly reduced opportunities for aspiring Byzantinists to integrate into core intellectual networks. The shift to localized recruitment has further fragmented the field, increasing inequality and reinforcing institutional isolation. As shown by the social network analysis in chapter 5, scholars who remain at peripheral universities without access to wider networks risk becoming disconnected from the discipline's core.

⁸⁴⁸ Typically, 50-70 threshold in Foreign Language Proficiency Exam, a standardized test held twice a year by to assess candidates' proficiency in foreign languages, required for graduate programs and academic appointments.

⁸⁴⁹ The Council of Higher Education's 100/2000 Doctoral Scholarship Program: Launched in 2016, this program aims to train 100,000 PhDs in priority fields by 2023, supporting 2,000 doctoral candidates annually. It targets strategic areas aligned with Türkiye's national development plans—mainly in STEM and applied disciplines such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, biotechnology, health sciences, and engineering. The scholarship covers tuition and provides monthly stipends for students enrolled in designated doctoral programs at Turkish universities.

⁸⁵⁰ Çaylak Türker, interview.

6.3.2 Local Recruitment and the Role of Mentorship/Patronage

In the absence of centrally coordinated programs like ÖYP and Article 35, access to academic careers in Byzantine Studies has come to rely increasingly on localized hiring and informal relationships cultivated within departments. The shift toward university-specific recruitment, discussed at the close of the previous section, has rendered undergraduate and early graduate affiliations far more consequential in shaping long-term academic trajectories. In this context, mechanisms of entry are often driven by mentorship, patronage, and loyalty—dynamics that can override genuine disciplinary orientation or merit-based evaluation. These informal architectures function as powerful channels of institutional integration but also carry the potential for exclusion.

A pervasive belief among scholars—particularly those trained in the 1990s and early 2000s—is that securing a career in academia often depends on affiliating oneself with a senior professor. As Turhan Kaçar notes, the prevailing assumption at the time was that “you had to be close to a professor, become intimate with them, gain their protection—only then could you think of getting a position or becoming a research assistant.” This dynamic reflects a system where mentor figures act as both symbolic guardians and practical gatekeepers, often facilitating appointments, offering insider knowledge, and granting access to networks.

Yet, alongside this patronage model, another pattern emerges—one defined not just by institutional loyalty but by deeply affective, intergenerational bonds. This phenomenon, which can be analytically distinguished from academic inbreeding, may be more aptly described as academic familism. While inbreeding refers to the structural reproduction of institutions through internal hiring (e.g., remaining at the same university from undergraduate through doctoral studies to faculty), familism describes the social and intellectual reproduction of disciplines through long-standing mentorship lineages. In many interviews, foreign-trained scholars expressed unease with the insularity that inbreeding produces. “It’s a very safe route,” Tolga Uyar reflected, “but also a conformist one.”⁸⁵¹ He noted that his decision to pursue a doctorate abroad was driven in part by a desire to break from this model, to expand his perspective beyond the closed circuits of his home institution. Ufuk Serin echoed this, suggesting that although many students

⁸⁵¹ Uyar, interview.

chose to stay at their institutions for the security it offered, doing so often limited their intellectual horizons.⁸⁵²

Academic familism, however, is not merely a mechanism of constraint. It also serves as a vehicle of continuity and care—especially in fields like Byzantine Studies, which have historically operated from a small number of institutional centers. What emerged as the “Hacettepe Axis” in the social network analysis of this study, for instance, represents a cohesive scholarly lineage that has played a central role in the development of Byzantine art history in Türkiye. This cluster, grounded in thick mentor–mentee ties, ensured a stable pedagogical tradition and created a shared disciplinary language and community. As noted in curricular reflections, sometimes even course titles and content remained unchanged over decades, reinforcing a sense of lineage and academic inheritance. The emotional dimensions of this continuity are not merely symbolic.

Zeliha Demirel Gökalp’s testimony exemplifies this dynamic. After completing her undergraduate studies at Anadolu University, she never considered applying anywhere other than Hacettepe for her graduate education. “The year I graduated, there was no master’s program yet—the department was very new. I completed my master’s, then started my PhD at Hacettepe... My professors were all graduates of Hacettepe. And there was a legendary figure at Hacettepe, Yıldız Ötüken—that was probably why.”⁸⁵³ When asked whether she considered Istanbul University, despite the presence of Semavi Eyice, she emphasized that her professors hadn’t pressured her to choose one path but admitted: “I guess I just thought you had to go to Hacettepe to study Byzantium.” Nilay Çorağan likewise recalled of the First Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium: “It was a beautiful moment I experienced at the Sevgi Gönül Symposium. In our panel, all four participants were students of Yıldız Ötüken. It moved both our professor and us deeply to be there together.”⁸⁵⁴

A similar pattern of lineage-based cohesion is visible in Byzantine history at Istanbul University. Here the legacy of Işın Demirkent demonstrates how academic familism could also take profoundly personal forms. Ebru Altan described how her supervisor’s relationship with her own mentor, Fikret Işıltan, shaped her entire academic outlook. Demirkent, she recalled, visited Işıltan weekly after his retirement and called him almost

⁸⁵² Serin, interview.

⁸⁵³ Demirel Gökalp, interview.

⁸⁵⁴ Çorağan, interview.

daily; after his death, she continued this devotion by stopping at his grave on her way home. “It was deeper than family,” Altan reflected, adding that Demirkent would still share what Işıltan had said, including the occasional scolding, “as if she were still his student.” This enduring dialogue with her mentor—both in life and in memory—formed the ethical and emotional foundation of Demirkent’s scholarly world, and by extension Altan’s own.

The same intimacy characterized the relationships of Yıldız Ötüken and Ebru Parman with their students. Yelda Olcay Uçkan described how Parman knew her students’ strengths and weaknesses “as if we were her children.” Sema Doğan remembered Ötüken as a “bad-day friend”—present not only in academic crises but also in personal illness or loss. Ayşe Çaylak Türker recalled how Ötüken would stay with students’ families when visiting their hometowns for conferences, making it impossible to separate her academic and private life. These accounts reveal a mode of academic socialization that blurred professional and familial boundaries, creating both solidarity and discipline.

Such emotional closeness produced strong disciplinary cohesion. Students of the same lineage often worked on similar topics, using comparable methods, and reproducing their mentors’ intellectual stance. Işın Demirkent, for instance, supervised only nine theses (two doctoral) in four decades, yet her authoritative presence shaped her mentees decisively. Both of her PhD students, Altan and Birsal Küçüksipahioğlu, continued her focus on the Crusades. “I continued in the same path,” Altan explained, “the 11th–13th century triangle of Turks, Byzantines, and Crusaders.”⁸⁵⁵ We can never quite get out of it... Most of my work still follows what Professor Demirkent assigned to me—‘You’ll do this, this, and this in these years,’ she had said.” Demirkent often reminded her students that “geographically, culturally—we are the heirs of Byzantium.” Yet her lineage remained limited: as Table 6.7 shows, only two out of 21 full professors at Istanbul University specialized in Byzantine history, more specifically the history of the Crusades, Altan and Sipahioğlu. At times, her exclusivity became gatekeeping. Şahin Kılıç—then a master’s student at a Uludağ University—recounted visiting her for guidance, only to be told: “My child, you should give up on this field.”

At the same time, there are rare instances of scholars who entered the field outside of these tight networks. One such case is Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek, who began her academic

⁸⁵⁵ Altan, interview.

career without the backing of an institutional patron or mentor. After completing her master's degree, she found herself at a crossroads: "I wanted to pursue a PhD after my MA, but I didn't have a job... I had to enter a profession somehow... But I was absolutely unwilling to give up on art history or Byzantium."⁸⁵⁶ While applying to various positions, she came across an open call at Istanbul University: "Just as I was about to finish my MA, a research assistant position opened up at Istanbul University. I didn't know anyone there personally—only by name—but I applied for the exam." She secured the position on merit and began her doctoral studies there. Yet her trajectory remained hybrid: although institutionally at Istanbul University, she continued working on the Demre excavation led by Hacettepe faculty, and her dissertation was co-supervised by Engin Akyürek and Ötüken.

The following section shifts focus to those who enter the field through entirely non-traditional routes—independent returnees from abroad and lateral entrants from other disciplines—tracing how their attempts to build careers in Byzantine Studies unfold amid institutional inertia and disciplinary gatekeeping.

6.3.3 Independent Returnees and Lateral Entrants

Among the earliest lateral entrants were two colleagues whose paths intertwined at Hacettepe University: Yıldız Ötüken and Mine Kadiroğlu. Both began from linguistic backgrounds and reshaped Byzantine art history through determination and the cultivation of new intellectual spaces. Ötüken had initially studied German literature before turning to art history in Germany; on her return she applied unsuccessfully to Istanbul University, encountering resistance that reflected entrenched preferences and, possibly, gender bias.⁸⁵⁷ Kadiroğlu's route was equally unconventional. Trained as an English teacher, she later enrolled in art history at Hacettepe. Sema Doğan recalls that despite their age difference, she, Ötüken, and Sacit Pekak formed a close study group at the British Institute Library in Ankara.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵⁶ Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

⁸⁵⁷ As detailed in in chapter 3 of this study, Eyice consistently prioritized logistical support in fieldwork, expressing a preference for male assistants due to the practicalities of traveling and lodging in rural areas. At the time of these decisions, his only prior female assistant, Yıldız Demiriz, had already left the department in 1970 for personal reasons that remain undocumented—leaving a long-standing absence of women among his closest academic collaborators except for her assistant Münevver Dervişbey.

⁸⁵⁸ Eyice, interview.

Kadiroğlu's master's thesis on churches in Tao and PhD on Georgian monasteries were based on original fieldwork—pioneering work outside her mentor's own focus. Her independence did not mean isolation: she was remembered as a generous mentor, helping students access sources, improve languages, and secure scholarships. Bülent İşler described her as “supportive from day one,” while Pekak credited her with co-founding *Anadolu ve Çevresinde Ortaçağ*, one of the few Turkish journals on medieval studies.⁸⁵⁹ Despite starting her PhD in her late thirties, she became a central figure in the study of Georgian art, bridging generations and disciplines. Together, Ötüken and Kadiroğlu exemplify how personal initiative and interdisciplinarity could institutionalize more flexible academic cultures at Hacettepe, even within a field dominated by lineage-based hiring.

Engin Akyürek's trajectory is another striking example. A graduate of ODTU in International Relations and Political Science, he worked in the private sector before turning to Byzantine art—an interest sparked partly through his spouse's studies in sculpture. His application to Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University was rejected outright because his undergraduate degree lay outside accepted disciplines. A similar experience shaped the author of this study, likewise barred from Mimar Sinan but admitted to Koç and Istanbul Universities.

At Istanbul University, Akyürek again encountered resistance. Semavi Eyice dismissed him with, “Go elsewhere—you can't do this here,” reflecting disciplinary exclusivity rather than merit. Yet not all faculty agreed. Ayla Ödekan encouraged him to sit the exam; with support from peers he studied the curriculum independently and produced what Eyice later admitted was the strongest entrance paper. Ödekan's mentorship and merit-based system enabled his admission, though Eyice and another senior faculty member later tried to block his assistantship. Only Nurhan Atasoy's insistence on respecting exam results secured his post. Even then, Akyürek recalls continued marginalization: “That department didn't want me... there are still people who don't consider me a Byzantinist, just because I didn't study it as an undergraduate.” His case shows how gatekeeping, more than policy, often regulated entry.

By contrast, Ödekan herself embodied openness. Drawing on her master's degree in the U.S. and her mentor Doğan Kuban's interdisciplinary vision, she helped build ITU's

⁸⁵⁹ İşler, interview; Pekak, interview.

graduate program, introducing philosophy, law, and theory into the art history curriculum.⁸⁶⁰ This created space for students from physics, cinema, or history, turning ITU into a rare institutional alternative to rigid disciplinary ecosystems.

Other cases show that more flexible departmental cultures—especially in elite universities—could ease lateral entry. Koray Durak and Kutlu Akalın, both shifted fields from International Relations and Political Science to history with relative ease.⁸⁶¹ Nevra Necipoğlu, Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, Tolga Uyar, and Suna Çağaptay redirected into Byzantium in their careers, often during or just after their undergraduate studies.⁸⁶² These non-linear pathways have become more normalized where institutions emphasize language training, international exposure, and research promise over disciplinary pedigree.

Ironically, many who now dominate Byzantine art history or history initially aimed for law or international relations but were rerouted by entrance exam scores. Conversely, those who turned to Byzantium from other disciplines often did so deliberately—bringing strong foreign languages, broader perspectives, and sometimes professional training. Such entrants enriched the field, though, as Akyürek’s story shows, they could also provoke discomfort in lineage-bound departments where outsiders challenged hierarchies.

Despite these obstacles, optimism persists. Akyürek points to a post-2000 cohort of young scholars, often trained abroad and fluent in multiple languages, capable of producing globally competitive work: “Some have already entered universities, others haven’t yet found a way in. But this group shows that Turkish Byzantinology is reaching a level where it can stand alongside its international peers.”⁸⁶³ Still, reintegration has been uneven for returnees trained abroad without state sponsorship. Without lineage backing, many relied on fellowships or temporary posts. Elif Keser Kayaalp noted that returnees often found themselves “no one’s student,” awkwardly competing against insiders.⁸⁶⁴ Günder Varinlioğlu and Çağaptay described long waits for permanent posts, even when departments expressed interest.⁸⁶⁵ As Ufuk Serin and Uyar explained, opportunities often

⁸⁶⁰ Ödekan, interview.

⁸⁶¹ Durak, interview; Akalın, interview.

⁸⁶² Necipoğlu, interview; Kitapçı Bayrı, interview; Uyar, interview; Çağaptay, interview.

⁸⁶³ Akyürek, interview.

⁸⁶⁴ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁸⁶⁵ Varinlioğlu, interview; Çağaptay, interview.

came instead through informal professional networks or faculty allies.⁸⁶⁶ In some cases, horizontal mentorship mitigated these gaps. Akalın, starting at the newly founded Mardin Artuklu University, relied on informal guidance from Turhan Kaçar, who advised him on balancing teaching and research.⁸⁶⁷ This collegial support created intellectual scaffolding where formal structures were lacking, later leading to joint projects and colleagueship.

Challenges also extended abroad. Many returnees trained in top programs found Byzantine studies too niche for long-term hiring internationally, especially for Turkish applicants, who were often steered toward Ottoman or Islamic history, as Kitapçı Bayrı noted.⁸⁶⁸ Even highly qualified Byzantinists redirected into adjacent fields or left academia. Uyar and Keser Kayaalp both described their return as shaped by limited global prospects as much as by personal choice.⁸⁶⁹

Structural necessity has also broadened the field's openness. Weak language preparation in Turkish programs has made it difficult for students to advance directly to graduate study. As Doğan observed, "Nearly all our MA and PhD students now come from other disciplines—physics, cinema, even engineering."⁸⁷⁰ While this fosters interdisciplinarity, it also reflects continuing pipeline weaknesses.

These varied trajectories underscore both the limits and possibilities of non-traditional entry into Byzantine Studies in Türkiye. Driven by intellectual curiosity, interdisciplinary strength, or institutional contingency, lateral entrants and returnees expanded the field's boundaries and challenged its genealogical orthodoxy. Yet their stories reveal the costs of entering without sponsorship: vulnerability in a patronage-driven system, persistent gatekeeping, and long periods of uncertainty. While peer mentorship and new institutional models offer partial remedies, the field's long-term vitality depends on whether infrastructures can embrace diversity not as exception but as standard.

In conclusion, the pathways into Byzantine Studies in Türkiye reveal a field shaped by both structural frameworks and informal relationships. While state-sponsored programs once facilitated integration, their decline has left localized recruitment and mentorship networks to bear the weight. Academic familism offers stability but risks reinforcing uniformity. Lateral entrants and internationally trained returnees, meanwhile,

⁸⁶⁶ Serin, interview; Uyar, interview.

⁸⁶⁷ Akalın, interview.

⁸⁶⁸ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

⁸⁶⁹ Uyar, interview; Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁸⁷⁰ Eyice, interview.

point to alternative models—more diverse, flexible, and globally connected. Their experiences underline the need for openness, not only for fairness but to foster the pluralism essential for the field’s sustainability in a changing academic landscape.

6.4 Discursive Bottlenecks

6.4.1 Center-Periphery Asymmetry

Despite the diversification of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, enduring center–periphery asymmetries continue to structure the field. These hierarchies appear across several scales: between metropolitan hubs and provincial universities, elite private institutions and under-resourced state campuses, and Turkish academia and global centers of Byzantinism. What follows traces how these asymmetries operate in practice—shaping institutional resources, professional networks, and scholarly opportunity—and how they are navigated, contested, and occasionally bridged by individual actors.

Istanbul’s Centrality and the Dominance of Elite Institutions

Byzantine studies in Türkiye remains heavily concentrated in Istanbul, where elite universities and research centers anchor much of the field’s visibility and resources. This centrality reflects both the city’s imperial legacy and the accumulation of financial, institutional, and network capital over recent decades.

Koç University and Boğaziçi University—key nodes in the Connected Center cluster—are widely recognized for their advantages. They benefit from superior funding, archival access, and infrastructure, often underwritten by philanthropic and international foundations. As Buket Coşkuner observed, “Creating a research center is not easy. It requires serious financial support... and that support has flowed into Istanbul.”⁸⁷¹ The Sevgi Gönül Center for Byzantine Studies at Koç, backed by the Stavros Niarchos and Vehbi Koç Foundations, and the Byzantine Studies Research Center at Boğaziçi, supported by the Mellon Foundation, have embedded Byzantine themes into institutional life through fellowships, training programs, and high-profile events.⁸⁷²

Centrality is also networked. As chapter 5 demonstrated, Istanbul institutions—particularly those in the Connected Center—hold strategic positions in mentoring and hiring networks. Symposia such as the International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies

⁸⁷¹ Coşkuner, interview.

⁸⁷² The Stavros Niarchos Foundation’s support is discontinued.

Symposium or ANAMED workshops not only host scholarly exchange but also construct visibility and legitimacy.

Yet barriers persist despite formal inclusivity such as Koç University Sevgi Gönül Research Center for Byzantine Studies' (GABAM) open calls Coşkuner, reflecting on her move from Hacettepe to Koç, recalled her frustration: "I'd invite them once, twice—but if they never came, what more could I do?"⁸⁷³ Her comments illustrate how logistical and symbolic obstacles persist even amid goodwill. For Ceren Ünal, the issue lies deeper: "I don't think the Istanbul school shows much interest in what's being done outside their networks... I've even stopped following their activities—why should I, when our work is disregarded?"⁸⁷⁴ Ünal highlights how asymmetries are sustained through selective recognition as much as resources. She calls for a more inclusive scholarly culture that values diverse training and research foci.

Sacit Pekak added a longer historical perspective: "For years, Istanbul treated us in Ankara, Eskişehir—everywhere else—as provincial. As if nothing meaningful could be produced outside of the center."⁸⁷⁵ Collaborative initiatives across universities often failed to materialize, underscoring geographic and symbolic distance.

Others reframed the issue as geographic redistribution. Elif Keser Kayaalp asked, "Everything is happening in Istanbul, but why not take Byzantium to Mardin, to Diyarbakır—where its traces are visible on the ground?"⁸⁷⁶ Her proposal underscores the possibility of mobilizing the country's wider historical landscape rather than reinforcing metropolitan dominance.

Finally, Istanbul-based institutions act as gateways to global networks. Collaborations between GABAM, ANAMED, Koç University Suna and İnan Kıraç Research Centre for Mediterranean Civilizations (AKMED), Koç University Vehbi Koç Ankara Studies Research Center (VEKAM), Koç University Mustafa V. Koç Maritime Archaeology Research Center (KUDAR), and foreign institutes in Istanbul, and Boğaziçi's ties to Harvard, Villa I Tatti, Nafplio's CHS, and the Orient-Institut, have increased Türkiye's international visibility. Yet these advantages also reinforce exclusivity: access to

⁸⁷³ Coşkuner, interview.

⁸⁷⁴ Ünal, interview.

⁸⁷⁵ Pekak, interview.

⁸⁷⁶ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

resources and networks often remains bounded within Istanbul, leaving scholars elsewhere struggling for recognition.

Peripheral Positions and Regional Challenges

Outside Istanbul and Ankara, the picture is shaped less by privilege than by scarcity. Heavy teaching loads, weak infrastructures, and limited mentorship define the everyday academic realities of regional scholars. As Sema Doğan bluntly noted the problem is systemic, “In the provinces, buildings are empty, there are no faculty... Not just in Byzantine studies, in every field.”⁸⁷⁷

These divides are genealogical as well as geographic. As chapter 5 mapped, Istanbul-trained scholars, particularly from the Connected Center and Istanbul Legacy clusters, sustain visibility through reciprocal networks. By contrast, peripheral academics often lack both vertical mentorship and horizontal peer communities. Bülent İşler likened the situation to the empire itself: “We can speak of two schools of Byzantine education in Türkiye—the Ankara school and the Istanbul school. Like in the Byzantine Empire itself, we see a capital and a periphery.”⁸⁷⁸ While shaped by foundational figures such as Semavi Eyice in Istanbul and Yıldız Ötüken or Ebru Parman in Ankara, more recent Anatolian formations often lack direct lineage. As İşler noted, “There’s a new wave in Anatolia... scholars trying to pursue Byzantine topics without ever having trained under a Byzantinist.” This independent trajectory, reflected in the Eastern and Western Belt clusters, is admirable but also symptomatic of a fragmented field.

Tolga Uyar stressed that pedagogy must adapt to these contexts: “Teaching Byzantium in a provincial university is very different from teaching it at Boğaziçi or Koç.”⁸⁷⁹ Without the cultural capital or student familiarity present in Istanbul, faculty must work harder to cultivate interest and navigate sensitivities, often privileging engagement over confrontation.

Positive collaborations exist—such as fieldwork in Cappadocia and an archaeology–Byzantine partnership in Aksaray, where İşler joined Osman Doğanay’s survey team—but remain rare.⁸⁸⁰ Despite occasional successes, most peripheral scholars carry the

⁸⁷⁷ Doğan, interview.

⁸⁷⁸ İşler, interview.

⁸⁷⁹ Uyar, interview.

⁸⁸⁰ İşler, interview.

double burden of sustaining research while compensating for structural neglect—a condition that highlights how unevenly opportunity is distributed.

Bridging the Divide: Collegial Networks, Strategic Mobility, and Resource Asymmetries

Amid these divides, individual initiative and collegial ties can create connective tissue. Mentorship, cross-institutional collaboration, and strategic mobility sometimes mitigate the structural gaps.

The partnership between Kutlu Akalın and Turhan Kaçar, also noted above, illustrates this. Trained at Bilkent, Akalın built a long-term alliance with Kaçar, a fellow late antiquity specialist. Their careers intersected at Istanbul Medeniyet and Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Universities, fostering a durable mentorship. “It’s as if we’re supposed to be conjoined academic twins,” Akalın remarked, referencing their shared affinities and lineages—Peter Brown and Stephen Mitchell.⁸⁸¹

Murat Keçiş, a senior figure in the Republican Core, similarly demonstrates how scholars outside Istanbul can act as bridges. Ranking second in the thesis network in betweenness centrality, Keçiş sustains doctoral supervision across institutions, serving on committees from Muğla to Ankara. His case shows that centrality can be structural as much as spatial, rooted in sustained participation in mentorship and academic reproduction.

Still, these bridges rely on personal effort and cultural capital rather than systemic support, making them fragile rather than transformative.

Language Capital and International Confidence

Language training remains a hidden but decisive axis of inequality. Proficiency in English and access to primary sources open doors to international collaboration, yet such training is unevenly distributed.

As Buket Kitapçı Bayrı recalled, even at Boğaziçi in the early 2000s, language posed challenges. She and several peers initially considered Byzantium but turned to other fields due to “language limitations” and weak institutional support.⁸⁸² The episode highlights the fragility of scholarly interest in Byzantium where institutional support is inadequate.

⁸⁸¹ Akalın, interview.

⁸⁸² Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

Akalın emphasized how Bilkent’s environment enabled his entry into the field.⁸⁸³ Suna Çağaptay’s trajectory underscores this. Entering Bilkent without prior English, she painstakingly worked through Krautheimer’s essay line by line.⁸⁸⁴ Access to international faculty, library holdings, and language instruction made her progress possible—opportunities many students elsewhere never access. In contrast, Şahin Kılıç remembered Uludağ University: “There were no sources, no library.”⁸⁸⁵ Even with supportive advisors, structural deficits rendered advanced research nearly impossible.

İşler candidly noted another consequence: “We’re still behind when it comes to self-confidence... People hesitate to go abroad, to present, to submit projects. There’s fear: what if we’re criticized harshly? What if we get attacked?”⁸⁸⁶ Unequal training environments produce unequal dispositions toward international engagement—not out of lack of ability but due to uneven preparation. Burcu Ceylan Duggan reinforced the point from fieldwork experience: Turkish scholars often struggle to engage fully with international research teams, not due to lack of expertise, but because “language and a culture of open debate are missing.”⁸⁸⁷ She praised initiatives like the Sagalassos and Ephesus excavations, where early-career scholars, once included and linguistically prepared, gained international fellowships and doctoral opportunities. Yet, she emphasized, these pathways remain contingent on “filling a quota” rather than structural equality—further illustrating how linguistic and institutional gaps shape scholarly futures.

The result is not a lack of talent but an uneven confidence in global arenas—an asymmetry that continues to shape trajectories from the earliest stages of academic formation.

The center–periphery divide in Byzantine studies is neither static nor inevitable. Istanbul institutions retain disproportionate influence through infrastructure and symbolic capital, yet their authority is increasingly negotiated by scholars outside the metropolis. Peripheral academics face structural disadvantages in resources, networks, and language training, but they also cultivate resilience through mentorship, collaboration, and bottom-up initiatives. The sustainability of the field will depend on whether such efforts receive

⁸⁸³ Akalın, interview.

⁸⁸⁴ Çağaptay, interview.

⁸⁸⁵ Kılıç, interview.

⁸⁸⁶ İşler, interview.

⁸⁸⁷ Ceylan Duggan, interview.

broadier institutional support and recognition, enabling Byzantine studies in Türkiye to evolve into a more integrated and inclusive scholarly landscape.

6.4.2 Intellectual and Institutional Isolation

Despite the diversification of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, structural and epistemic fragmentation continues to impede cohesion and global integration. Interviews reveal a persistent sense of isolation—geographic, institutional, disciplinary, and generational—that shapes scholarly trajectories and the circulation of knowledge. This section examines four interconnected forms of fragmentation: institutional insularity, interdisciplinary deficits, structural constraints, and educational lineage divides.

Institutional Insularity and Fragmentation

Institutional isolation remains a defining feature of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Even within resource-rich universities, insularity often curtails collaboration both across and within institutions. Kutlu Akalın recalled his time at Bilkent: “I had no contact with Professor Delilbaşı—even though she was based in Ankara. And I had no links with Hacettepe or ODTU either... There was never a real connection.”⁸⁸⁸ He described a mentality of self-sufficiency: “We were blinkered—like, why would we need anything else? Our library had everything, our professors were enough, and the day ended there.” His account illustrates how self-contained excellence can erode cohesion and limit outreach.

Although Akalın’s experience dates back several decades, the pattern of insularity persists. Recent initiatives such as Byzantium at Ankara have begun to disrupt these silos by fostering dialogue across institutions. While still limited, they mark a shift toward a more connected research environment in the capital. Yet, as many scholars emphasize, such openings remain fragile; the legacy of institutional isolation continues to shape academic trajectories and visibility.

Elif Keser Kayaalp pointed to segmentation within the field itself: “Even within Byzantine studies, late antiquity and Byzantium are often kept apart.”⁸⁸⁹ In art history, those working on the West rarely mix with those in Islamic or Turkish-Islamic art.” While occasional events, such as the 2016 Boğaziçi conference, created rare moments of cross-pollination, they remain exceptions.

⁸⁸⁸ Akalın, interview.

⁸⁸⁹ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

This sense of isolation is compounded by the absence of domestic support structures. As Suna Çağaptay lamented, “We don’t have a platform where we can pass around materials, ask for dating help, or support each other.”⁸⁹⁰ Without such infrastructures, scholars rely on conferences or newsletters for contact. Visibility, she added, often depends on foreign affiliation: “If your advisor is Turkish, your excavation is a local project, and no foreign scholars are involved, it’s very difficult to become visible.”

Isolation also arises from symbolic marginalization. Ufuk Serin recalled that initial student interest in Byzantine topics was high, but over time, institutional labeling narrowed perceptions of her scholarly role: “They were told I wouldn’t be interested,” despite her supervising theses on diverse subjects such as heritage interpretation and post-1920s urban change.⁸⁹¹ In her view, this reflects both structural neglect and reputational barriers that further isolate Byzantinists within established programs.

The consequences extend beyond the national sphere. Tolga Uyar stressed the importance of international collaboration, praising Boğaziçi’s Byzantine Studies Research Center for “bringing the latest international developments to Türkiye.”⁸⁹² Yet he warned of the sharp decline in foreign missions: “It eliminates valuable spaces for debate, communication, and interaction... it leads to insularity.”

Amid these structural gaps, informal connections sometimes bridge divides. Meryem Acara Eser emphasized the role of personal rapport: “I don’t think a message would go unanswered.”⁸⁹³ Compared to earlier decades, she sees a clear improvement: “Now we’re only an email or text away.” Her remarks highlight how much scholarly life depends on trust and willingness to connect, even in the absence of institutional scaffolding.

What emerges is a landscape where prestige coexists with disconnection—limited infrastructures, symbolic marginalization, and reputational barriers collectively narrow visibility and cohesion.

Interdisciplinary Deficits

Although Byzantine studies in Türkiye spans history, archaeology, art history, architecture, and conservation, true interdisciplinarity remains elusive. Projects often present parallel expertise rather than integrated analysis.

⁸⁹⁰ Çağaptay, interview.

⁸⁹¹ Serin, interview.

⁸⁹² Uyar, interview.

⁸⁹³ Acara Eser, interview.

Çağaptay pointed to the compartmentalization of archaeology and history: “It feels like we’re working in compartments,” she said, noting that fieldwork results are rarely integrated into broader narratives.⁸⁹⁴ Slow publication and the lack of real-time collaboration deepen this disconnect.

Engin Akyürek described similar segmentation within art history, where ceramics, architecture, epigraphy, and numismatics often operate in parallel rather than in concert.⁸⁹⁵ Akyürek highlights the rarity of collaborative projects involving researchers from outside the traditional art historical domain, such as sociologists or musicologists. He cites a recent project on Byzantine musical instruments as a notable exception in bringing together diverse disciplinary perspectives. Still, he acknowledges that such examples remain “still not at the desired level.” Even in conservation-oriented projects, such as the restoration of frescoes at the Euphemia Church, data produced by interdisciplinary teams tends to be absorbed into existing silos, rather than reshaping broader research paradigms.

The gap between “multidisciplinarity” and true interdisciplinarity is also emphasized by Günder Varinlioğlu, who poses a central question: “We bring in different disciplines, but does everyone just present their own work side by side?”⁸⁹⁶ Her critique underscores the absence of shared methodological languages and joint research questions—a condition she views as endemic not only in Türkiye but globally. “Are we actually developing a shared language?” she asks. According to her, the persistence of parallelism renders much interdisciplinary work superficial in practice, even when it appears collaborative on paper. Her call for more dialogue and conceptually rigorous partnerships highlights the need to rethink project structures from the ground up.

Serin provided a longer perspective, recalling her doctoral research in the 1990s at Yasos: “Even being part of an excavation team didn’t always lead to integration with other disciplines.”⁸⁹⁷ More recent surveys at Mandalya Bay, Milet, and Sagalassos involved botanists and geoarchaeologists but suffered from irregular participation, delayed publications, and limited synthesis. “Only architectural remains and pottery won’t suffice,” she insisted, calling for comprehensive, contextual data.

⁸⁹⁴ Çağaptay, interview.

⁸⁹⁵ Akyürek, interview.

⁸⁹⁶ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁸⁹⁷ Serin, interview.

The field's disciplinary depth is undeniable, but without methodological convergence and institutional reform, interdisciplinarity risks remaining more rhetorical than real.

Structural Constraints and Workload Pressures

Beyond disciplinary silos, structural and institutional pressures shape what kinds of research can be pursued. Heavy workloads, fragile networks, and bureaucratic caution routinely obstruct collaboration.

Yelda Olcay Uçkan emphasized how workload pressures restrict project-based research.⁸⁹⁸ The absence of collaboration, she argued, reflects not disinterest but an academic climate where time and resources for collective work are unavailable. "It can be done," she affirmed, "but it needs a solid budget and a team of young researchers." She cited the TAY Project—a long-running, regionally scaled inventory—as a replicable model, though she admitted she could not undertake such work alone: "If you asked me to do it myself? I'd have to think about it." Her comments underscore the need for enabling frameworks to sustain collective ambition.

Burcu Ceylan Duggan pointed to the absence of robust scholarly networks: "Even a basic messaging failure becomes an issue," she observed, adding that such efforts often feel dominated by "the usual crowd."⁸⁹⁹ Her account highlights both institutional overextension and the insider dynamics that marginalize researchers outside dominant clusters.

Structural barriers also obstruct international collaborations. Keser Kayaalp recalled how her attempt to work with Dutch researchers stalled when she was warned that permits would be nearly impossible to obtain.⁹⁰⁰ "If these contradictions are resolved," she insisted, "the potential is immense... perhaps the Ministry should recognize this and revise its regulations accordingly." Her experience illustrates how regulatory caution can stifle even well-conceived projects.

Not all accounts were pessimistic. Akyürek also highlighted the TAY Project as a rare example of long-term infrastructural investment.⁹⁰¹ Originally focused on prehistoric sites, it expanded under his leadership to Byzantine architecture, documenting structures across Marmara, Central Anatolia, and the Mediterranean. The team compiled published

⁸⁹⁸ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

⁸⁹⁹ Ceylan Duggan, interview.

⁹⁰⁰ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁹⁰¹ Akyürek, interview.

data, conducted on-site documentation, and built a bilingual open-access database now covering an estimated 80% of known Byzantine architecture in Türkiye. Akyürek acknowledged that the effort diverted energy from individual publications but insisted its cumulative contributions were far greater.

Still, projects like TAY demonstrate that with sustained frameworks, collective work can flourish. The challenge lies in recalibrating academic structures to make such initiatives the norm rather than the exception.

Educational Lineage Divides

Divides between scholars trained abroad and those educated domestically remain one of the most consequential sources of fragmentation in the field. These are reinforced by generational gaps and disciplinary boundaries.

Çağaptay reflected on her sense of exclusion: “Sometimes I feel like an outsider,” she admitted, having completed much of her education abroad without Turkish mentors.⁹⁰² The absence of shared institutional spaces reinforces this divide: “There’s no space where people working in different fields and from different training backgrounds regularly come together to share findings or ask for help.” She proposed that mid-career scholars—“not quite young, not quite senior”—are best placed to bridge these gaps.

This disconnect, Uyar added, has grown into a “communication breakdown” between cohorts. Divergent academic norms and expectations have produced “factionalization,” with limited interaction despite two decades of active scholarship.⁹⁰³ For him, progress requires recognizing shared disciplinary stakes and creating deliberate spaces for dialogue.

Zeynep Mercangöz offered a more ambivalent view. In her experience, returnees from international programs sometimes bring strong expectations that clash with local norms. Still, she argued, openness must flow both ways: “Why shouldn’t they be involved in our projects—at any moment, in any context?”⁹⁰⁴

Serin described the misalignment she faced upon returning from abroad. Despite rare expertise in Byzantine architecture, she was assigned unrelated teaching for nearly a decade: “Had I continued abroad, I might have avoided years of exhaustion and

⁹⁰² Çağaptay, interview.

⁹⁰³ Uyar, interview.

⁹⁰⁴ Mercangöz, interview.

marginalization.”⁹⁰⁵ Her case shows how even established institutions can underutilize specialized expertise. Yet she also emphasized the long-term benefits of international training, noting that her students’ participation in foreign-led excavations has sustained valuable networks.

Lineage divides are further compounded by generational and disciplinary cleavages. Çağaptay highlighted the lack of interaction among archaeologists, art historians, and Byzantine specialists.⁹⁰⁶ Although the Boğaziçi conference of 2016 successfully convened scholars across subfields and generations, creating a rare moment of intellectual exchange, she advocated for structured platforms bringing together excavation directors, museum specialists, and theoretically oriented scholars. Uyar stressed the urgency of building communication among the “well-trained generation” of the past 15–20 years.⁹⁰⁷

Taken together, these divides highlight that the field’s future depends less on producing more data than on cultivating scholarly communities and institutional frameworks capable of sustaining dialogue across lineages, generations, and subfields. Whether such conditions can be created will determine if Byzantine studies in Türkiye evolves from fragmentation into a more connected and resilient scholarly community.

6.4.3 Ideological Barriers

Despite its recent growth and diversification, Byzantine studies in Türkiye remain shaped by enduring ideological constraints. As outlined in chapter 3, the “triple barrier of nationalism”—operating across ethno-religious, historiographical, and institutional registers—frames Byzantium as foreign, Christian, and misaligned with dominant narratives of Turkish identity. The following subsections examine how these entanglements manifest in cultural suspicion, disciplinary marginalization, and heritage politics.

National Historiography and Civilizational Framing

In Turkish academia, Byzantine studies remain embedded in historiographical and civilizational narratives that cast them as marginal or ideologically suspect. Testimonies point to how such framings shape curricula, institutional decisions, and broader public perceptions of Byzantium.

⁹⁰⁵ Serin, interview.

⁹⁰⁶ Çağaptay, interview.

⁹⁰⁷ Uyar, interview.

Ufuk Serin offers a stark example of curricular marginalization at a major technical university. When she proposed a course on late antique and Byzantine urbanism, the dean rejected it with the question: “Will we present Istanbul as a Christian city now?”⁹⁰⁸ She stresses that this reflected the outlook of a short-lived administrator rather than institutional policy, and the course was later approved under a revised title. Still, she notes that Byzantine content is routinely viewed as “unnecessary, if not outright marginal,” especially compared to the privileged status of Ottoman and Seljuk material. Even when courses are accepted, they receive little institutional support, and students usually arrive with no foundation in Byzantium—requiring significant pedagogical effort to build even a basic framework.

This marginalization extends beyond curricula and reflects broader ideological and economic forces. Buket Coşkun stresses that Byzantine studies, like all academic fields, are shaped by the political climate and neoliberal policies.⁹⁰⁹ She highlights the global and domestic rise of ethno-religious nationalism, which has placed Byzantine heritage in symbolic and political crossfire. Hagia Sophia exemplifies this tension: even before its 2020 reconversion, she recalled, the prospect of hosting an academic event there could spark fears of protest. The reconversion intensified such anxieties and contributed to relocating the 24th International Congress of Byzantine Studies from Istanbul to Venice and Padua. While recognizing the impressive growth of Byzantine scholarship in both quantity and quality, Coşkun questions its wider resonance: “Everyone in Türkiye more or less knows Hagia Sophia, but if you asked people on the street which period it belongs to, I’m not sure how many would say the Byzantine era.” The gap between academic achievement and public knowledge underscores the precarious place of Byzantium in cultural and political discourse.

In non-humanities settings, Byzantine studies are often viewed as irrelevant or unpatriotic, tied to a “defeated” and “foreign” civilization. Kutlu Akalın recalls a STEM student questioning why Türkiye should excavate Byzantine shipwrecks, suggesting such work should be left to Europeans—a reflex that, for Akalın, reveals how nationalist frameworks shape even casual views of cultural stewardship.⁹¹⁰ This disconnection is not merely theoretical but evident in the severe knowledge gap among students. Sacit Pekak

⁹⁰⁸ Serin, interview.

⁹⁰⁹ Coşkun, interview.

⁹¹⁰ Akalın, interview.

recalls asking first-year students to write three factual sentences about Byzantine history or art, only to find most could mention little beyond “1453” or a vague link to Christianity.⁹¹¹ Such anecdotes highlight systemic educational shortcomings that prevent deeper cultural understanding.

This cultural distance is also embedded in academic training. As Şahin Kılıç recalls (and as discussed in chapter 3), earlier generations were taught to use Byzantine chronicles mainly to illuminate Turkish–Byzantine encounters, subordinating them to national historiography and undermining the development of an autonomous field.⁹¹² Elif Keser Kayaalp echoes this concern, noting that Byzantium remains “othered” in both public perception and scholarly valuation.⁹¹³ The association of Byzantium with Christianity contributes to its perception as foreign and unworthy of investment, disadvantaging students who pursue it while Turkish–Islamic history promises more predictable careers.

The marginalization of Byzantine studies is also evident in academic events. Yelda Olcay Uçkan contrasts the scholarly decorum of international symposia on Medieval and Turkish period excavations with those where Byzantium is ideologically sidelined.⁹¹⁴ From dismissive opening remarks to biased panel discussions, she recalls Byzantine heritage being portrayed as alien or irrelevant. This marginalization, she notes, intensifies when Byzantium’s influence on Seljuk art is acknowledged, since it unsettles nationalist narratives that favor clear civilizational binaries.

Bülent İşler broadens the discussion by pointing to the lack of cultural ownership of Byzantium in Türkiye.⁹¹⁵ Although the empire was centered in Anatolia, it is more commonly associated with Greece in both public imagination and academic practice. He argues that Greek institutions have actively embraced this role, while Turkish academia has done little to claim Byzantium as part of its legacy. This detachment, he suggests, is not only a missed academic opportunity but also a failure of national identity formation. He calls for reasserting Byzantine heritage as a shared inheritance to be preserved and celebrated alongside other Anatolian civilizations.

⁹¹¹ Pekak, interview.

⁹¹² Kılıç, interview.

⁹¹³ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁹¹⁴ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

⁹¹⁵ İşler, interview.

Many scholars also point to disciplinary pressures that shape research agendas. Particularly in public universities, there is a pervasive expectation that Byzantine scholarship must connect to Turkish or Islamic history. This framing determines which topics are considered legitimate, which proposals gain support, and which career paths remain viable. While such norms are increasingly challenged, their persistence reveals the deep entrenchment of nationalist paradigms in graduate training and academic structures.

Nevra Necipoğlu observes that students often feel they “must choose a topic that links Byzantium to Turkish history,” shaped by both internalized norms and external pressures.⁹¹⁶ She encourages them to pursue “purely Byzantine topics,” reinforcing the view that Byzantium deserves study as a global and autonomous field. Koray Durak adds that the discipline has historically clustered around late Byzantine–early Ottoman intersections, not only because of language access but also due to limited historiographical alternatives.⁹¹⁷ Encouragingly, he sees a new generation turning to themes such as women’s history and urban life, which transcend nationalist frames.

Buket Kitapçı Bayrı likewise resists reductive periodizations. Her dissertation on heterodox religious figures across Byzantine and Turkish landscapes grew from existential questions of identity and collective memory.⁹¹⁸ She views Byzantium not only as a historical subject but as a lens to interrogate modern Turkish cultural amnesia. Her emphasis on the personal and affective dimensions of scholarship provides a powerful counter-narrative to ideologically narrow historiographies.

Taken together, these accounts reveal not only how civilizational framings restrict the scope of Byzantine studies but also how scholars are challenging them—through inclusive teaching, new research agendas, and efforts to reassert Byzantium as an autonomous and integral part of Anatolia’s past.

Heritage and Preservation Politics

Heritage preservation in Türkiye is marked by persistent asymmetries. Byzantine monuments receive less funding, weaker institutional support, and less symbolic recognition than their Turkish–Islamic counterparts, reflecting both ideological selectivity and aesthetic hierarchies.

⁹¹⁶ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁹¹⁷ Durak, interview.

⁹¹⁸ Kitapçı Bayrı, interview.

Günder Varinlioğlu captures the multilayered disadvantages faced by Byzantine projects, which are sidelined both ideologically and aesthetically.⁹¹⁹ State institutions, she observes, show far greater readiness to support Turkish–Islamic initiatives, while Byzantine conservation remains peripheral. This imbalance reflects disciplinary legacies in archaeology that privilege “classical” forms—monumental, symmetrical, and visually commanding—over the modest, vernacular, and fragmentary remains typical of Byzantine settlements. Surveying irregular village houses, she recalls, offers little of the drama funders expect: “Ah, if only I could find a mosaic,” she thought, noting how a mosaic uncovered at Kalenderhane once secured a project’s survival. She stresses that this aesthetic devaluation is not unique to Türkiye. Globally, archaeology has long bypassed Byzantine layers in search of earlier, “more important” strata, often destroying them in the process. The result is enduring institutional marginality.

This marginality is not only structural but also affective. Presenting a project as “Byzantine,” she explains, often evokes discomfort among local authorities and collaborators. Euphemisms such as “Eastern Roman” are suggested to sidestep the ideological charge of “Byzantium.” Though she encounters no outright hostility, she describes the prevailing climate as “not hatred, but a mixture of fear and hesitation.” Naming itself becomes political terrain: “These naming decisions should be left to scholars,” she insists, not shaped by administrative or political calculus.

Burcu Ceylan Duggan critiques the uneven landscape of cultural heritage preservation. Attitudes toward Byzantine monuments, she notes, shift with political administrations and often hinge on perceived beauty or tourism potential.⁹²⁰ While visually striking sites in Istanbul may be preserved, fragmentary or remote structures are neglected or concealed. She compares this to early Republican architecture—likewise devalued despite its historical significance—arguing that heritage policy is guided more by aesthetics and national symbolism than by scholarly evaluation.

Zeynep Ahunbay highlights how political climates derail conservation efforts.⁹²¹ She recalls projects at the Theodosian Land Walls and Zeyrek Camii that were suspended mid-implementation due to political turnover or the appearance of non-Islamic elements such as mosaics. This negligence, she argues, stems not from lack of expertise—“Türkiye

⁹¹⁹ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁹²⁰ Ceylan Duggan, interview.

⁹²¹ Ahunbay, interview.

has many trained specialists in Byzantine architecture”—but from discomfort with the material’s non-Muslim, non-Turkish associations. The recent reconversions of the Ayasofyas in Iznik and Trabzon back into mosques exemplify the fragility of pluralist heritage under nationalist-religious politics. For Ahunbay, reframing such monuments exclusively through an Islamic lens erases the layered pasts that earlier restorations sought to recover. She distinguishes between methodologically neutral academic work and ideologically constrained public interventions, stressing how technical expertise often collides with heritage politics.

Engin Akyürek underscores the bureaucratic and financial disparities hindering Byzantine conservation.⁹²² While Turkish–Islamic sites receive automatic institutional and financial backing, Byzantine preservation requires navigating extensive permissions, skepticism, and resource constraints. Although practitioners recognize the disparity, he notes the absence of systematic data on it—a silence that allows the problem to persist.

Keser Kayaalp adds a structural perspective, noting that many surviving Byzantine buildings are churches, which limits reuse options.⁹²³ While secular structures are easily refunctionalized, churches pose challenges that trigger debates about restoration, conversion, or abandonment. This, she insists, is not unique to Byzantium but part of a broader Turkish heritage policy that privileges usable monuments. Still, Byzantium’s perceived obscurity amplifies the problem. “Preservation is essentially an act of cultural recognition,” she observes, suggesting that the public’s limited familiarity leads to undervaluation.

Meryem Acara Eser shares this view, situating Byzantine heritage within a broader civilizational continuum that includes Hittite, Roman, and Seljuk layers.⁹²⁴ She sees preservation as an educational task: reframing Byzantium as part of a pluralist past. For her, museumification—not religious or commercial reuse—is the key solution.

Serin reinforces the link between education, heritage policy, and public perception.⁹²⁵ She recalls that while she faced little overt resistance when adding Byzantine content to heritage curricula, she encountered consistent indirect discouragement: “It was never said outright, but the attitude was clear: should we really prioritize Byzantium in a heritage

⁹²² Akyürek, interview.

⁹²³ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁹²⁴ Acara Eser, interview.

⁹²⁵ Serin, interview.

program when we have Seljuk and Ottoman material?” This perception—that Byzantine heritage lacks reuse potential—shapes both preservation priorities and educational agendas. She further observes that architectural and heritage training often skips nearly a millennium not only through curricula but also through entrenched research habits, leaping from prehistory to the Seljuks or Ottomans and leaving Byzantium absent. This “ten-century void,” she argues, is not neutral but reflects ideological selectivity shaped by national identity narratives, leaving Byzantium fragile in both scholarly attention and institutional support. Such exclusion extends beyond academia into heritage frameworks and public education: as long as Byzantine material is selectively omitted, meaningful integration into the national narrative is impossible. Citing a student-led survey in Trabzon where locals dismissed Byzantine monuments, she underscores the urgency of inclusive pedagogy and heritage education that narrate and transmit all layers of the past. Without this, meaningful preservation cannot be achieved.

These testimonies underscore that preservation is never a neutral act: what is conserved, how it is framed, and who decides remain deeply shaped by politics and cultural symbolism. In the case of Byzantium, heritage management reflects not a lack of expertise but the broader ideological and pragmatic frameworks that govern Türkiye’s approach to the past.

Popular Culture and Semantic Avoidance

Beyond academic settings, popular culture and everyday language have powerfully shaped how Byzantium is imagined in Türkiye. From cinema to colloquial speech, these cultural narratives often depict Byzantium as alien or hostile, framing it as outside the bounds of national identity.⁹²⁶

Turhan Kaçar highlights the role of popular media, recalling the impact of 1970s films like *Kara Murat* and *Tarkan* on his generation.⁹²⁷ These portrayals reduced the empire to a decadent, villainous foil to heroic Turkish figures, discouraging serious academic engagement and entrenching Byzantium as antithetical to national identity. Olcay Uçkan elaborates on the lingering effects of this media-fueled image, focusing on the term

⁹²⁶ For a detailed discussion of the perception of Byzantium in popular culture, see Durak, “The Popular Perception of Byzantium in Contemporary Turkish Culture.”; Kitapçı Bayrı, “Imagination of Byzantium and the Byzantines in Modern Turkish Popular Literature and Cinema “.

⁹²⁷ Kaçar, interview.

“Byzantium” itself.⁹²⁸ From football chants to casual insults, phrases like “treacherous Byzantium” turned the name into shorthand for betrayal and moral decay. She notes that this stigma extends into the classroom, where students from conservative backgrounds sometimes ask, “Are we going to become Christians?”—a question that reflects failure to present Byzantium as a foundational layer of Anatolia’s history rather than a foreign religion.

Nilay Çorağan and Sema Doğan reinforce this concern from a pedagogical angle. Çorağan recalls students reacting with surprise to polytheistic narratives in mythology courses, questioning why they were studying “another religion.”⁹²⁹ Doğan observes that students often describe Byzantium as “too different from our own culture,” which hinders engagement.⁹³⁰ While some grow more enthusiastic through fieldwork, responses remain uneven, depending on whether encounters challenge or confirm existing cultural distance.

This disconnection has encouraged strategic avoidance in academic and heritage discourse. Akyürek critiques the growing use of Eastern Rome as a substitute for Byzantium, describing it as a rhetorical detour that sidesteps the term’s ideological baggage.⁹³¹ While Byzantines did call themselves Romans, he argues that today’s terminological shift reflects discomfort rather than scholarly precision. As shown in chapter 4, graduate theses from 2015–2020—especially in history and philology—frequently adopted “Eastern Rome” over “Byzantium.” For Akyürek, this is not a neutral choice but a strategy of domestication, rendering Byzantium more palatable within nationalist and ethno-religious frames. He links this avoidance to anti-intellectualism and a broader detachment that undermines cultural appreciation.

Olca Uçkan adds that the rise of “Eastern Rome” is tied to policy initiatives and political symbolism, citing former Minister of Culture Ertuğrul Günay’s promotion of the term.⁹³² She critiques this trend as “educated ignorance,” cloaking political motives in scholarly language. Similarly, İşler admits to using “Eastern Roman art” as a tactical euphemism in settings where “Byzantine” might provoke ridicule or suspicion. While he has not faced direct hostility, he notes that such shifts respond to ingrained public biases, often shaped more by popular culture than by academic study.

⁹²⁸ Olca Uçkan, interview.

⁹²⁹ Çorağan, interview.

⁹³⁰ Doğan, interview.

⁹³¹ Olca Uçkan, interview.

⁹³² İşler, interview.

Zeynep Mercangöz echoes these concerns, noting the paradox whereby references to Roman or Hellenistic heritage are widely accepted, while “Byzantine” triggers unease.⁹³³ Drawing on early lessons with Semavi Eyice, she argues that even if “Byzantium” is historiographically imprecise, abandoning it would mean abandoning the field itself. For Mercangöz, the discomfort stems less from semantics than from Byzantium’s perceived Christian and non-Turkic character, which unsettles nationalist narratives. Embracing the term, she concludes, is essential to affirming Anatolia’s pluralistic medieval heritage.

These dynamics reveal how deeply cultural imaginaries influence scholarly and public attitudes toward Byzantium. Addressing them requires not euphemism or avoidance but a more honest engagement that embraces Byzantium as part of Türkiye’s layered past.

Academic Gatekeeping and Surveillance

Byzantine studies in Türkiye continue to carry the imprint of historical prejudice and political suspicion. Although overt hostilities have softened, their legacies persist in forms of ideological scrutiny, bureaucratic barriers, and cultural discomfort.

Ayla Ödekan’s recollection of the 1960s and 1970s situates the problem within a longer history of state suspicion.⁹³⁴ Even major initiatives such as the Kalenderhane excavation were approached warily, with scholars encountering political sensitivities that cast Byzantine research as suspect. The framing of Byzantium as politically fraught created a precarious climate in which projects were vulnerable to speculation and institutional withdrawal.

This precedent has left a lasting legacy, visible especially in fieldwork settings where ideological tensions surface. Pekak recounts how engagement with Christian heritage often provokes suspicion, requiring him to clarify, “I am not Christian”—both in academic contexts and when seeking access to church sites.⁹³⁵ While working on the Church of Constantine and Helena, he was mistaken for a priest and confronted by a local youth who asked, “Are you a Christian?” His response—“No, but two wrongs don’t make a right”—underscored his commitment to cultural preservation irrespective of religious identity. Such encounters reflect a broader misconception: that studying Byzantium implies religious affinity or ideological allegiance. Far from isolated incidents, they illustrate how academic inquiry is filtered through nationalist and confessional lenses,

⁹³³ Mercangöz, interview.

⁹³⁴ Ödekan, interview.

⁹³⁵ Pekak, interview.

compelling scholars to defend their legitimacy in an ideologically charged landscape. The weight of such biases is not merely symbolic. Pekak recalls a dean declaring that “Byzantine studies will no longer be taught here.” Combined with financial constraints and lack of institutional support, such hostility has produced long-term fatigue. Yet he expresses cautious optimism in the next generation, whose energy he sees as an antidote to systemic inertia.

The entanglement of scholarship and ideology becomes especially apparent in evaluation processes. Pekak recounts a moment of disillusionment when an academic reviewer criticized his “admiration for Byzantium and Rome” during an associate professorship evaluation.⁹³⁶ The comment, both ideologically slanted and linguistically incoherent, conflated academic focus with cultural allegiance—undermining scholarly integrity and showing how disciplinary legitimacy is policed through nationalist frames. Acara Eser echoes this, remarking: “After all, Byzantium was a civilization that lived on these lands, and as someone who studies Byzantium, I work with what remains from that civilization.”⁹³⁷ That doesn’t mean I admire Byzantium or seek to revive it.” Her observation highlights the defensive posture often required to justify work on a civilization deemed ideologically suspect.

These assumptions extend beyond Byzantium to Christian studies more broadly. Kaçar recalls skepticism when he chose the history of Christianity as his specialization. Questions such as “Wouldn’t Islamic history be more beneficial for the country?”—though sometimes voiced half-jokingly—nonetheless reveal unease with Muslim scholars pursuing Christian topics.

The most dramatic illustration of these pressures comes from Akyürek, who describes how far-right media outlets like *Yeni Akit* have cast Byzantine studies as politically subversive, accusing scholars of attempting to “re-establish Byzantium.”⁹³⁸ Such rhetoric has fueled paranoia and, at times, forced adjustments in event planning, including minimized publicity and coordination with officials for protection. Unlike earlier decades—when tabloid critique lacked tangible consequences—today’s climate presents a “new kind of anxiety” for Byzantine scholars. Akyürek also points to institutional impositions, citing a Higher Education Council directive requiring faculty at public

⁹³⁶ Pekak, interview.

⁹³⁷ Acara Eser, interview.

⁹³⁸ Akyürek, interview.

universities to “prove” historical claims. For him, this is not a historical debate but a direct encroachment on scholarly independence.

These pressures continue to affect access, research trajectories, and scholarly morale. Overcoming them will require not only individual perseverance but structural reform and a cultural shift toward recognizing Byzantine studies as a legitimate and integral field.

International Asymmetries and Prejudice

International engagement has expanded, yet many Turkish scholars describe a structural imbalance: collaborations remain asymmetrical, Turkish work is often excluded from bibliographies, and prejudice shapes both recognition and visibility.

Doğan, drawing on the cautionary views of Yıldız Ötüken, warns of the lack of reciprocity in partnerships: “They come to you when they need something, take what they need, and then turn their back on you.”⁹³⁹ Such dynamics cast Turkish scholars as local facilitators rather than intellectual partners.

Exclusion from bibliographies compounds this asymmetry. Mercangöz describes the omission of her 2013 bilingual publication on Kadıkalesi ceramics from a 2018 synthesis on the same material.⁹⁴⁰ “It was ignored—completely,” she says, viewing it as symptomatic of entrenched hierarchies. She also reflects, “If they don’t know my work, it’s because I didn’t make it visible enough.” Ceren Ünal recounts a starker case: graphics from her work on Byzantine coinage at the Manisa Museum were reproduced in a major international publication without citation, while her peer-reviewed article was misrepresented as forthcoming.⁹⁴¹ For her, such omissions reflect disregard for research produced outside elite Western circles. These erasures, they argue, constitute epistemic injustice: knowledge from Türkiye is selectively erased, ignored, or reframed. Mercangöz insists, “If someone disagrees, they should at least cite and critique.” Ünal echoes this, urging younger scholars to strengthen their linguistic and academic capacities to resist marginalization.

Prejudices in academic settings add further constraints. Mercangöz recalls an Athens symposium where Turkish participants were omitted from acknowledgments, a lapse she later questioned as national bias.⁹⁴² İşler describes facing skepticism or hostility from

⁹³⁹ Doğan, interview.

⁹⁴⁰ Mercangöz, interview.

⁹⁴¹ Ünal, interview.

⁹⁴² Mercangöz, interview.

some Armenian and Greek colleagues on politically sensitive issues, though he notes personal familiarity often softens such tensions: “Once we get to know each other, things change.”⁹⁴³

Symbolic politics also intrude. Suna Çağaptay recounts a conference invitation addressed to “Constantinople” being rejected by Turkish postal authorities, while Greek colleagues responded to the use of “Selanik.”⁹⁴⁴ Such episodes highlight how nationalism shapes even mundane exchanges. While acknowledging that Turkish scholars are often criticized for weak languages or methods, Çağaptay counters that Greek academics who publish only in Greek and overlook Ottoman layers face similar limitations. Yet amid these obstacles, some signs of change are visible. She notes expanded international engagement since 2007 and praises scholars like Robert Ousterhout for encouraging more cross-border approaches. For her, these efforts point toward a pluralist and dialogic Byzantinism.

Ultimately, these testimonies point to the need for institutional mechanisms that ensure visibility, reciprocity, and intellectual credit. Without them, Turkish contributions will continue to circulate precariously at the margins of global Byzantinism.

Shifting Landscapes and Countercurrents

Although inequities and ideological pressures persist, many scholars highlight emerging countercurrents: institutional openings, international receptivity, and shifting discursive norms that signal a more dynamic and contested field.

Serin highlights the transformative potential of international cooperation, recalling her role in the EU-funded Byzantine–Early Islamic Cultural Heritage project in the mid-2000s, which convened researchers from Türkiye, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel-Palestine.⁹⁴⁵ Coordinated by the Hellenic Ministry and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, it provided a rare forum for cross-border exchange grounded in shared heritage concerns. As the sole Turkish representative at its outset, Serin describes it as pivotal: “It was the project that made me think most deeply about the challenges of preserving Byzantine heritage.”

⁹⁴³ İşler, interview.

⁹⁴⁴ Çağaptay, interview.

⁹⁴⁵ Serin, interview.

Her graduate study abroad also complicates assumptions that Muslim identity is a liability in the international Byzantine arena.⁹⁴⁶ As the first Muslim fellow at the Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana (PIAC) in Rome, she encountered curiosity rather than suspicion and was offered extended support. This, she notes, shows how national and religious difference can function as opportunities for engagement, not exclusion.

Other scholars report signs of softening hostilities compared to earlier decades. Ceylan Duggan observes that, while nationalist backlash still occurs—such as a colleague criticized for researching nineteenth-century Christian churches in Kayseri—such cases are increasingly isolated.⁹⁴⁷ She argues that Byzantine studies may even be better positioned than Turkish-Islamic art history to attract international funding, though she cautions that institutional culture continues to reproduce more subtle forms of marginalization.

Amid these changes, several emphasize resilience and excellence. Gülgün Köroğlu expresses guarded optimism, stressing that the future of Byzantine studies depends on the scholarly community's ability to maintain high standards and redefine the field's value from within, rather than relying solely on policy shifts.⁹⁴⁸

Çağaptay offers a more critical intervention, challenging the presumed neutrality of Western Byzantinists.⁹⁴⁹ She argues that European and Balkan scholars often approach Byzantium through a romanticized frame shaped by genealogical continuity, an affective attachment that imbues their scholarship with nostalgia. This extends to the U.S., where scholars of Orthodox or Balkan descent—such as Dimiter Angelov and Anthony Kaldellis—sometimes articulate idealized portrayals rooted in cultural memory. Çağaptay does not impugn their scholarship but highlights the implicit attachments shaping it. By contrast, she suggests, Turkish Byzantinists—precisely as outsiders—may approach Byzantium with greater critical distance, free from the burdens of cultural inheritance. Her vision is corrective rather than oppositional: as more Turkish Byzantinists enter the field, their scholarship could expand the interpretive range of global

⁹⁴⁶ Serin, interview.

⁹⁴⁷ Ceylan Duggan, interview.

⁹⁴⁸ Köroğlu, interview.

⁹⁴⁹ Çağaptay, interview.

Byzantinism, shifting it away from genealogical privilege and toward a pluralist, critically attuned practice that values estrangement as insight.

These countercurrents suggest that the field is no longer defined only by exclusion but increasingly by negotiation and redefinition. As Turkish Byzantinists assert intellectual agency and cultivate collaborative platforms, they are helping reshape the global study of Byzantium toward greater plurality and critical reflexivity.

The testimonies in this section point to a field that is not static but in transition. While inherited constraints continue to weigh heavily, scholars are reimagining Byzantine studies through pedagogical innovation, critical historiography, international collaboration, and affective inquiry. The challenge ahead is less about inclusion within existing frameworks than about reshaping those frameworks altogether, so that pluralism, intellectual integrity, and historical accountability define how the Byzantine past is studied, preserved, and made meaningful in contemporary Türkiye.

6.4.4 Disciplinary Entanglements

The intellectual architecture of Byzantine studies in Türkiye remains shaped by disciplinary conventions and methodological path dependencies that both enable and limit inquiry. While grounded in empirical research—especially material culture and architectural documentation—interviews reveal a tension between descriptive abundance and interpretive ambition. Scholars point to institutional rigidity, entrenched periodizations, limited textual training, and weak interdisciplinarity. These are not merely academic issues but reflect deeper epistemological logics that have long privileged catalogic output, marginalized adjacent traditions, and inhibited methodological innovation. The challenge now is to move beyond enumeration toward integrated analysis, recalibrating the field to reflect the cultural, temporal, and disciplinary entanglements of Byzantium in Anatolia.

Material Culture Dominance

A recurring concern across interviews is the dominance of descriptive, catalogue-oriented work in Byzantine studies in Türkiye, particularly in art history and archaeology. Rooted in the legacy of early German-trained scholars and reinforced by the abundance of material in Anatolia, this descriptive tradition has laid essential groundwork but now appears as a double-edged sword.

Buket Coşkuner observes: “We have so much material... so many excavations... that the field naturally developed around monumental architecture and material culture.”⁹⁵⁰ This focus, she notes, often comes at the expense of analytical engagement with primary sources or interpretive frameworks. Graduate theses and publications frequently present inventories of artifacts, architectural typologies, or iconographic features, yet fall short of theorizing their broader cultural or political significance.

Structural factors reinforce this tendency. Günder Varinlioğlu stresses that documentation remains indispensable in the face of rapid urban transformation and site destruction: “What we need—and perhaps we can’t afford to move past it yet.”⁹⁵¹ At the same time, she highlights the pedagogical inertia sustaining the pattern: “We’re still teaching Byzantium like it’s 1960.” Lacking exposure to theory and historiography, students often lack the tools and confidence to move beyond documentation, producing MA and PhD theses that resemble “enhanced undergraduate work” rather than original interventions.

Despite these shortcomings, many interviewees caution against dismissing descriptive work outright. Engin Akyürek and Bülent İşler insist that catalogues provide the empirical foundation for future synthesis.⁹⁵² “First we need to publish the material,” İşler emphasizes. “Interpretation will follow.” Zeynep Mercangöz and Suna Çağaptay echo this defense, especially given the constant threat of site loss and the challenges of working with unstable structures.⁹⁵³ From this perspective, preservation and cataloguing are indispensable acts of stewardship, even if they fall short of interpretive ambition.

Others, however, view the persistence of catalogic approaches as a disciplinary hesitation. Ceren Ünal frames the issue as one of mentorship: “Are we encouraging students to interpret, or just to inventory?”⁹⁵⁴ Tolga Uyar adds that “descriptive work is still the default,” lamenting the field’s distance from methodological innovations shaping Anglophone scholarship.⁹⁵⁵ Without deeper engagement with historical theory, he warns, Byzantine studies in Türkiye risks becoming methodologically stagnant even as its volume of research grows.

⁹⁵⁰ Coşkuner, interview.

⁹⁵¹ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁹⁵² Akyürek, interview; İşler, interview.

⁹⁵³ Mercangöz, interview; Çağaptay, interview.

⁹⁵⁴ Ünal, interview.

⁹⁵⁵ Uyar, interview.

Collectively, these reflections point to a field at an inflection point. Documentation has been foundational, but it must now be paired with a generation of scholars prepared to ask why, not just what. Meeting this challenge requires institutional change—curricular reform, interdisciplinary openness, and mentoring structures that reward critical inquiry rather than safe enumeration.

Structural and Educational Barriers to Interdisciplinarity

Despite frequent rhetoric celebrating interdisciplinarity, many scholars describe a persistent gap between principle and practice. Program brochures and project abstracts often gesture toward collaboration, yet curricular, bureaucratic, and ideological structures obstruct meaningful integration. The result is a fragmented intellectual landscape where disciplinary boundaries are reinforced rather than bridged, and even well-positioned scholars find their expertise sidelined.

Ufuk Serin's experience exemplifies this disconnect. Although highly trained in early Christian and Byzantine architecture and backed by extensive fieldwork, she was placed in the cultural heritage division and barred from teaching architectural history electives.⁹⁵⁶ Most of her assignments bore little relation to her expertise, leaving her more a "gap-filler than a specialist." She eventually introduced an elective on late antique and Byzantine material, but only after proving its popularity with students. Innovation, in other words, had to justify itself retroactively rather than being institutionally supported.

This rigidity in teaching reflects a broader pattern in research, where collaboration often remains multidisciplinary rather than truly integrative. Addressing these barriers, Çağaptay and Coşkuner stress the need for durable institutional mechanisms: co-teaching models, shared platforms, and curricular flexibility that allow scholars to move across boundaries without penalty.⁹⁵⁷ Without such structures, interdisciplinarity remains more aspirational than actionable.

These challenges point to a deeper condition: the fragmentation of Byzantine studies in Türkiye along temporal, disciplinary, and institutional lines. Entrenched periodizations sever the Byzantine from the Seljuk and Ottoman, non-Greek Christian traditions such as Syriac remain marginalized, and regional actors like Armenian and Georgian

⁹⁵⁶ Serin, interview.

⁹⁵⁷ Coşkuner, interview; Çağaptay, interview.

communities are underrepresented. This is not only a legacy of the past but also a product of current institutional structures that inhibit comparative, transregional, and multilingual research.

In this context, the failure to achieve interdisciplinarity is not simply a missed opportunity but a structural limitation that narrows the interpretive horizons of the field. As many interviewees argue, unlocking the complexity of Byzantium's layered presence in Anatolia will require institutional imagination, epistemic humility, and sustained curricular reform. Until then, the field risks reproducing the very exclusions it seeks to overcome.

Periodization and Civilizational Binaries

Periodic compartmentalization continues to shape institutional structures, course design, and academic specialization as previously noted. As several scholars stress, such divides are not only historically reductive but also methodologically counterproductive—a limitation increasingly challenged by those working across fieldwork, architecture, and historiography.

This disjunction becomes particularly apparent in field contexts, as Ayşe Çaylak Türker notes. She highlights how material culture often resists the rigid chronological and civilizational divisions that dominate academic frameworks.⁹⁵⁸ During excavation and documentation—especially of ceramics and rural architecture—it is frequently unclear whether an object belongs to the Byzantine, Seljuk, or early Ottoman period. Such distinctions, she argues, require interdisciplinary collaboration across architectural history, ceramic typology, and historical context—collaboration that Turkish institutions are often structurally unprepared to support. These challenges are not merely technical but stem from epistemological models that isolate periods rather than trace their continuities. As noted earlier in this chapter, Hacettepe University's now-defunct Archaeology and Art History program offered an integrated structure—combining Roman, Byzantine, and Eastern and Western art—that enabled students to perceive continuities otherwise obscured.

⁹⁵⁸ Çaylak Türker, interview.

Extending this critique to architectural history, Çağaptay challenges the view of 1453 as a definitive rupture.⁹⁵⁹ Her research on early Ottoman architecture in Bithynia introduces the concept of cultural overlap to describe the persistence of shared labor, artisan mobility, and stylistic borrowing in transition zones. Many early Ottoman mosques, she observes, bear features closer to late Byzantine or Balkan church architecture than to canonical Ottoman forms. This evidence, she argues, calls for a methodological shift—from rigid typologies to tracing the movement and adaptation of practices across periods, geographies, and political regimes. Yet such approaches often meet resistance, rooted in anxieties about disciplinary purity and discomfort with ambiguity.

Uyar similarly critiques the segmentation of Byzantine and Seljuk studies as separate domains.⁹⁶⁰ This divide, he argues, obscures the realities of cultural entanglement across Anatolia and impedes integrated approaches to medieval history. While international scholarship increasingly embraces environmental, spatial, and networked methodologies to illuminate cross-cultural dynamics, these remain underutilized in Türkiye. Such resistance is not only methodological but also ideological, sustained by national narratives that favor rupture over continuity and celebrate civilizational distinctiveness over zones of exchange.

Together, these critiques show how periodization itself functions as a barrier to interdisciplinarity. By reifying temporal divides, institutional and historiographical frameworks constrain Byzantine studies and inhibit its integration into broader accounts of Anatolian history. Reimagining the field through the lens of entanglement—rather than opposition—will require both conceptual revision and curricular reform. Without such shifts, the study of Byzantium in Türkiye risks remaining confined within an outdated civilizational model, one increasingly at odds with the material record and with international scholarship.

Peripheral Knowledge Systems

The future development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye depends on transcending inherited disciplinary, spatial, and political hierarchies. Scholars point to the persistent

⁹⁵⁹ Çağaptay, interview.

⁹⁶⁰ Uyar, interview.

marginalization of adjacent cultural traditions—Armenian, Georgian, and Syriac—as well as the underdevelopment of textual and professional subfields, all of which constrain the field’s epistemic breadth and historiographic inclusivity.

Mercangöz and İşler highlight the neglect of Armenian and Georgian art within Turkish and Byzantine historiography.⁹⁶¹ Rather than treating these traditions as autonomous or auxiliary, they stress the extent to which medieval Anatolia was shaped by fluid artistic exchanges and shared visual vocabularies. Mercangöz underscores the artificiality of strict cultural boundaries, noting how symbols like the double-headed eagle circulated across Byzantine, Seljuk, Armenian, and Georgian domains. İşler adds that while Georgian studies have benefited from relative diplomatic ease, Armenian heritage remains politically sensitive, often discouraging engagement. Turkish participation in cooperative workshops is minimal, further reinforcing the marginal status of these traditions. Although recent dissertations and fieldwork—by scholars such as Fahriye Bayram, Osman Aytekin, and Haldun Özkan—have begun to redress this imbalance, İşler stresses that research remains limited given the richness of surviving material.

Elif Keser Kayaalp draws attention to Syriac traditions, which remain underrepresented despite their relevance to late antique and early medieval historiography.⁹⁶² Syriac texts, liturgical practices, and architecture provide critical insights into the so-called “dark centuries” of the seventh and eighth centuries, yet are rarely integrated into mainstream Byzantine studies. Keser Kayaalp attributes this partly to their southeastern Anatolian provenance—long marginalized as remote or unstable—and partly to the absence of Syriac instruction in Turkish universities. While institutions like Oxford, Pisa, and the Sorbonne have long supported Syriac training, only Mardin Artuklu University currently offers it in Türkiye, and even this program faces staffing and institutional challenges.

Exclusions also extend to textual subfields such as philology, epigraphy, prosopography, and the history of education. Kutlu Akalın, Uyar, Meryem Acara Eser, and Varinlioğlu all describe these areas as underdeveloped, not due to disinterest but to structural barriers.⁹⁶³ The absence of Latin and Greek instruction at the secondary level, combined with graduate programs dominated by archaeology and architecture, has

⁹⁶¹ Mercangöz, interview; İşler, interview.

⁹⁶² Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁹⁶³ Akalın, interview; Uyar, interview; Acara Eser, interview; Varinlioğlu, interview.

skewed the field toward material culture while leaving large bodies of textual evidence untranslated and understudied. As Akalın remarks, many Byzantine texts in Türkiye remain untouched—not for lack of relevance but for lack of trained scholars.

Varinlioğlu also highlights the contributions of restoration architects, especially those trained at ITU, who have played vital roles in documenting and conserving Byzantine monuments.⁹⁶⁴ Despite their expertise, these practitioners are rarely recognized within the academic core of the field. For her, integrating their work more fully—through the publication of dissertations and field reports as scholarly outputs—would enrich both empirical foundations and interpretive horizons while bridging the gap between practice and theory.

Taken together, these testimonies show that the margins of Byzantine studies in Türkiye are not peripheral in content but in recognition. Integrating Syriac, Armenian, and Georgian traditions, strengthening textual subfields, and acknowledging restoration expertise are not optional supplements but necessary correctives to a historiography shaped by centralism and categorical exclusion. Addressing these gaps demands more than surface-level diversification; it requires a fundamental recalibration of what—and who—constitutes legitimate Byzantine knowledge.

The testimonies in this section reveal a field at a methodological crossroads. The dominance of catalogic and descriptive traditions, while foundational, risks limiting interpretive scope unless paired with conceptual and historiographical rigor. Structural impediments—from rigid departmental boundaries and ideological sensitivities to the marginalization of peripheral traditions and subfields—continue to shape what counts as legitimate knowledge and who qualifies as a disciplinary insider. Yet scholars articulate an urgent desire for transformation: for integrative pedagogy, cross-disciplinary literacy, the recovery of sidelined voices and practices, and institutional frameworks that support rather than fragment scholarly ambition. Realizing this vision will require curricular reform, epistemic inclusivity, and a willingness to revisit the assumptions that have long governed Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Only then can the field claim both its empirical richness and its conceptual depth.

Rather than a static map of deficits, the bottlenecks explored in chapter 6 so far reveal a dynamic landscape in which marginalization and opportunity often coexist. These

⁹⁶⁴ Varinlioğlu, interview.

constraints interlock and reinforce one another, yet they also generate spaces for negotiation. Institutional fragility can coincide with creative navigation; disciplinary gaps can produce unexpected collaborations. It is within these tensions that bridges emerge—mechanisms of support, connection, and innovation that counterbalance structural limitations. The following section explores these bridges in detail.

6.5 Bridges

6.5.1 Research Centers

The institutional landscape of Byzantine studies in Türkiye has shifted markedly in recent decades. Once sustained largely by individual efforts and marginalized within universities, the field now benefits from structured support through dedicated research centers. This development did not occur in isolation. It was preceded by an ecosystem of foreign-affiliated institutes and Turkish foundations that kept research activity alive at a time when academic departments offered little support. The establishment of discipline-specific centers in the mid-2010s marks a new phase in this longer continuum of improvisation, external scaffolding, and evolving scholarly ambition. What follows traces that earlier ecosystem, the turning point represented by the new centers, and the dynamics of impact, constraint, and global positioning that now shape the field.

Precursor Institutes and Foundations (pre-2010s)

Before the establishment of Byzantine-specific research centers in Türkiye, engagement with the field was sustained through a constellation of foreign and domestic institutions. Although not exclusively focused on Byzantium, they provided vital lifelines at a time when the field lacked a departmental base or institutional recognition within Turkish academia.

Foreign institutes were particularly prominent in this earlier ecosystem.⁹⁶⁵ Foreign institutes were especially prominent. The American Research Institute in Türkiye (ARIT),

⁹⁶⁵ For discussions of the contributions of foreign research centers to Byzantine studies during the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, see Üre, “Russian Archaeological Institute.”; Pınar Üre, “Russian Archaeologists in Istanbul and International Scientific Collaboration in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022); Lora Gerd, “Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople and the Politics of Research,” in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, ed. Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2022); Klein, “From Robert College to the Byzantine Institute: American Contributions to the Rediscovery, Study, and Preservation of Byzantine Monuments in Istanbul, ca. 1830-1950.”; Filduth, “The Study of Byzantium in

the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA), the IFEA, Nederlands Instituut in Turkije (NIT), offered access to libraries, fellowships, and international scholarly networks. For many Turkish Byzantinists, particularly in art history and archaeology, these resources filled the gap left by underfunded universities. Engagements with foreign funding bodies such as the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) also opened new methodological paths—for example, Bülent İşler’s work on liturgy and architecture during his time in Germany.⁹⁶⁶

Domestic institutions also played a pivotal role. ANAMED, AKMED, Istanbul Research Institute (IAE), and VEKAM emerged in the 1990s and 2000s as critical platforms. While not discipline-specific, they provided fellowships, organized conferences and workshops, and raised the visibility of Byzantine studies. ANAMED, in particular, became an important hub for postdoctoral researchers and thematic symposia bridging archaeology, art history, and history.

Senior scholars recall that, in earlier decades, even basic scholarly activities—such as inviting a speaker or accessing recent publications—were nearly impossible within the university system. As Nilay Çorağan observed, “in our time, there were no research centers... now our students can benefit from places like ANAMED and Boğaziçi. They are lucky.”⁹⁶⁷ Others emphasized how these centers linked Turkish scholars to international peers, while younger Byzantinists such as Tolga Uyar and Günder Varinlioğlu credited their early exposure to fellowships and workshops with shaping their methodological outlooks and legitimizing their work globally.⁹⁶⁸

Yet these institutions also had limits. Their thematic openness meant Byzantine studies was not always a priority, and support often shifted with institutional agendas. Access was uneven: scholars in Istanbul or working in regions of interest to these institutes benefitted disproportionately, while others remained excluded.

Istanbul: Theodor Wiegand, Alfons Maria Schneider, and the Istanbul Department of the German Archaeological Institute.”; Philipp Niewöhner, “The Importance of Being Earnest About the German Archaeological Institute at Istanbul and the History of Byzantine Archaeology in Germany,” in *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers From the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, 22-24 June 2023*, ed. Engin Akyürek and Merve Özkılıç (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2024).

⁹⁶⁶ İşler, interview.

⁹⁶⁷ Çorağan, interview.

⁹⁶⁸ Uyar, interview; Varinlioğlu, interview.

Even so, their foundational role cannot be overstated. These institutes laid the intellectual and infrastructural groundwork that later enabled the emergence of discipline-specific centers. Their legacy endures not only in the careers of today's Byzantinists but also in the templates adopted by the new centers that followed.

Emergence of Byzantine Research Centers in Istanbul and Their Contributions

The establishment of Byzantine research centers in Istanbul marked a decisive shift in the field's institutional life. For decades, scholars lamented the absence of dedicated infrastructure in a city that had once been the heart of the Byzantine world. Earlier foreign and domestic institutes had provided essential scaffolding, but none offered the disciplinary focus or sustained agendas Byzantinists required. That changed in the mid-2010s, when Koç University and Boğaziçi University founded the first centers devoted specifically to Byzantine studies.⁹⁶⁹

Their emergence reflected the convergence of long-nurtured scholarly agendas and targeted funding opportunities. As Engin Akyürek observed, "a center can't do anything without two things: human capital and budget."⁹⁷⁰ In 2014, both aligned: Koç University launched GABAM with seed funding from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, while at Boğaziçi, a vision championed by Nevra Necipoğlu gained traction through Mellon Foundation support and a strategic partnership with Harvard.⁹⁷¹

Conceived as research platforms rather than teaching units, the centers built their missions around three interlinked pillars: postdoctoral fellowships, graduate training, and global and public engagement. At GABAM, this translated into ambitious documentation projects, such as the Byzantine Monuments Photo Archive and the Istanbul Land Walls survey.⁹⁷² At Boğaziçi, emphasis was placed on curricular enrichment and scholarly networking through initiatives like the Byzantine Greek Summer School and a busy program of seminars and workshops.

Their creation was possible because the ecosystem had matured by the 2010s. A critical mass of doctoral students, thesis projects, and internationally active scholars provided both demand and personnel. In this sense, institutional readiness was as important as funding: existing postgraduate cohorts and departmental expertise at Koç

⁹⁶⁹ Necipoğlu, "Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies," 159-64.

⁹⁷⁰ Akyürek, interview.

⁹⁷¹ Necipoğlu, interview; Durak, interview.

⁹⁷² For the activities of GABAM, see Koç University, *Ten Years*.

and Boğaziçi ensured the centers had intellectual ground to stand on. The centers also helped recalibrate long-standing skepticism toward private universities. Akyürek, once doubtful, acknowledged a shift after joining Koç and witnessing its academic seriousness.⁹⁷³ Their public-facing orientation further amplified their impact, positioning them as aspirational nodes within and beyond Türkiye.

The ripple effects were widely noted. Scholars such as Sacit Pekak and Turhan Kaçar observed that GABAM and the Boğaziçi Byzantine Studies Research Center set a national model for what a Byzantine center could be—combining fellowships, archival infrastructure, and global networks in a way that once seemed unimaginable.⁹⁷⁴

Yet their visibility has also exposed vulnerabilities. Reliance on external funding, much of which has since expired, remains a structural risk. While GABAM continues to benefit from Koç University and Vehbi Koç Foundation support, Boğaziçi's center operates with almost no dedicated budget and, in 2022, was relocated from the main campus to a smaller, more remote office—symbolic of its precarious status. Without long-term financial planning and formal commitment, the gains of the past decade risk stalling.

Still, respondents agreed that these centers marked a turning point. They embody the institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Türkiye and illustrate what the field can look like when locally anchored, globally engaged, and structurally supported.

Impact and Constraints

Dedicated Byzantine research centers have reshaped the academic ecosystem in Türkiye, but their growth has also exposed uneven access. Their reach and visibility—especially at GABAM and Boğaziçi—are widely recognized, yet not all scholars benefit equally.

Early-career researchers have gained the most. Fellowships at GABAM and ANAMED offer time for postdoctoral work, professional validation, and intellectual community. Still, their short-term nature means they rarely translate into lasting academic positions. As Koray Durak observed, “fellows come and go,” underscoring the absence of long-term pathways.⁹⁷⁵ Necipoğlu emphasized that while such fellowships affirm one's place in the field, they fall short of securing careers.⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷³ Akyürek, interview.

⁹⁷⁴ Pekak, interview; Kaçar, interview.

⁹⁷⁵ Durak, interview.

⁹⁷⁶ Necipoğlu, interview.

The centers also compensate for gaps in university curricula. Programs in Byzantine Greek, epigraphy, and numismatics, as well as grants for architectural documentation, were praised for cultivating skills otherwise unavailable. As Varinlioğlu noted, these initiatives also “melt the ice” between students and senior scholars, creating valuable mentorship opportunities.⁹⁷⁷

Yet barriers persist. Scholars at regional universities often view the centers as distant or intimidating. Çorağan admitted she had to push students to apply, as many assumed such opportunities were “out of reach.”⁹⁷⁸ Uyar highlighted the psychological distance created by institutional prestige, which made the centers feel “as far as being in another country.”⁹⁷⁹ Language compounds these divides: English remains the default for applications and events, reinforcing asymmetries for those without international training.

At a structural level, the centers’ high visibility risks overshadowing persistent fragilities in the wider field. Their success, while meaningful, may reinforce their status as exceptional rather than paradigmatic. As Akyürek noted, the foundational convergence of funding and personnel that enabled their creation has yet to be replicated elsewhere.⁹⁸⁰ Unless broader reforms in graduate training, academic staffing, and national research policy follow, the field risks becoming overly reliant on a few well-resourced nodes.

Even so, ongoing efforts to expand access—through translation, outreach, and inclusive programming—remain significant. The challenge ahead is to transform symbolic presence into systemic support, ensuring that Byzantine studies in Türkiye is not only visible but institutionally viable.

Dumbarton Oaks and the Global Asymmetry

While new research centers in Istanbul have expanded the horizons of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, full international integration remains uneven. At the heart of this terrain stands Dumbarton Oaks (DO)—a research institute affiliated with Harvard University and often described by interviewees as “the Mecca of Byzantine studies,” a metaphor that can itself provoke ideological unease. For many Turkish Byzantinists, DO embodies both aspiration and distance: a preeminent hub of the field, but one accessible only under particular structural conditions.

⁹⁷⁷ Varinlioğlu, interview.

⁹⁷⁸ Çorağan, interview.

⁹⁷⁹ Uyar, interview.

⁹⁸⁰ Akyürek, interview.

Necipoğlu's formative fellowship at DO, noted earlier, illustrates how early immersion in its scholarly community could decisively shape a career. Recalling that year, she described it as "a paradise for a young Byzantinist," underscoring the depth of intellectual engagement the institute uniquely provided.⁹⁸¹ Uyar and Suna Çağaptay similarly emphasized the intellectual immersion DO offered, while also noting the difficulty of access.⁹⁸² As Çağaptay put it, "Who your advisor is matters." Applicants with U.S.- or U.K.-based mentors were far more likely to succeed, while students educated in Türkiye often lacked the proposal-writing skills and institutional backing needed to compete.

The record confirms this asymmetry. Since the 1980s, almost all Turkish junior fellows at DO have been PhD candidates at Western universities. The sole exception is Görkem Günay, who received a fellowship while at Koç University under the supervision of Nikolaos Kontogiannis—then GABAM's vice director and later Director of Byzantine Studies at DO. His unique case underscores how institutional integration and transnational mentorship remain decisive gateways.

The symbolic power of DO is not lost on Turkish Byzantinists. An environment where "everyone is a Byzantinist"—is a rare immersion in a country where such identity often remains marginal. Alongside admiration, DO also carries a legacy of mistrust. Some earlier generations recalled perceptions of bias, reinforced by controversies such as the acquisition of the Kumluca Sion Treasure and skepticism about Turkish scholars' language skills. While the directorship of Alice-Mary Talbot in the 1990s marked a turn toward greater openness, the sense of structural exclusion has not disappeared.⁹⁸³ As Varinlioğlu noted, "once you're inside, people are open—but many never try."⁹⁸⁴

The asymmetry at stake is not only about DO itself but about the wider hierarchies of prestige and access in global Byzantine studies. DO still functions as a benchmark of legitimacy, yet it favors particular academic lineages and institutional ties. In response, Turkish centers such as GABAM, Boğaziçi, and ANAMED have begun to counterbalance these gaps. Through training programs, lectures, and fellowships, they help scholars in Türkiye imagine themselves as active participants in the international field. In this sense,

⁹⁸¹ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁹⁸² Uyar, interview; Çağaptay, interview.

⁹⁸³ Çağaptay, interview.

⁹⁸⁴ Varinlioğlu, interview.

Dumbarton Oaks is both mirror and measure: it reflects the enduring hierarchies of the discipline while exposing the barriers Turkish scholars must navigate. At the same time, it reminds us that excellence can be cultivated both within and beyond such elite centers—provided the structural supports are built to sustain it.

6.5.2 *Symposia and Conferences*

Symposia and conferences have shaped Byzantine studies in Türkiye in ways that reach far beyond the exchange of research. They are sites where disciplinary identity is articulated, scholarly authority negotiated, and intellectual communities cultivated. Such gatherings function as performative arenas in which legitimacy is enacted as much as knowledge is shared, reinforcing hierarchies both within the field and across the academic landscape.

They also shape temporal and spatial narratives. By defining themes, highlighting certain regions or periods, and setting terms of inclusion, conferences help determine what counts as canonical knowledge. The structuring logic of events—through keynote selection, sponsorship, and panel design—often reveals tensions between continuity and rupture, cosmopolitan engagement and local anchoring.

Equally important, these gatherings serve as infrastructures for networking, mentorship, and visibility, especially for emerging scholars. In Türkiye, where access, language, and international recognition remain uneven, conferences offer a rare affirmation of scholarly presence. They thus function as microcosms of broader dynamics: who belongs, how boundaries are drawn, and where power in knowledge production resides. The subsections below trace how symposia and conferences intersect with Byzantine studies in Türkiye across three arenas: generalist platforms, dedicated initiatives, and international forums.

Byzantine Studies in Generalist and Cross-Period Scholarly Platforms in Türkiye

Byzantine scholarship often appears in interdisciplinary or cross-period gatherings—particularly in art history, medieval studies, or archaeology. These venues offer visibility and exchange but also expose frictions around disciplinary boundaries and hierarchies.

The most frequently cited forums are the *Ortaçağ ve Türk Dönemi Kazıları ve Sanat Tarihi Araştırmaları Sempozyumu* (Symposium on Medieval and Turkish Period Excavations and Art Historical Research) and the *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı* (Excavation

Results Meeting). Both are longstanding annual events that regularly feature Byzantine material, yet they differ markedly in structure and emphasis. The latter—formally the *Uluslararası Kazı, Araştırma ve Arkeometri Sempozyumu* (International Symposium of Excavations, Research and Archaeometry)—was launched in 1978 by the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums and hosted each year in collaboration with a Turkish university under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It functions primarily as a reporting platform for archaeological fieldwork and archaeometric data.

By contrast, the Symposium on Medieval and Turkish Period Excavations and Art Historical Research, initiated by Ege University in 1997, brings together both archaeologists and art historians. While still largely material-culture driven, it accommodates more varied interpretive approaches. Yet its framing often privileges the category of Turkish Art, which—as several interviewees noted—can marginalize Byzantine topics. As Zeynep Mercangöz remarked: “We’re told, ‘Don’t you already have your own Byzantine conferences?’⁹⁸⁵ But there aren’t any. This is the only one we have that regularly features Byzantine topics.”

Organizers have sometimes worked against this imbalance. Ceren Ünal, who convened the 19th symposium in Manisa, recalled: “We placed Byzantine scholars on the academic committee, which hadn’t been done before. And it really paid off—there was genuine interaction.”⁹⁸⁶ Still, discomfort remains. As Zeliha Demirel Gökalp observed: “There was some kind of comment—it’s unclear if it was criticism or just an observation—but yes, there was a lot of Byzantine.”⁹⁸⁷ For others, like Elif Keser Kayaalp, the deeper issue lies in fragmentation: “Byzantine art, Islamic art, and Western medieval art are handled in separate compartments. So the methodological and theoretical connections are missing.”⁹⁸⁸ Such separation, she argued, impedes integrative and comparative work that could enrich all subfields. Despite these frictions, participation carries clear symbolic weight. At the 22th symposium in 2018 hosted by Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Gülgün Köroğlu reflected: “There were so many Byzantine papers, and that made me proud. It was a real moment of affirmation.”⁹⁸⁹

⁹⁸⁵985 Mercangöz, interview.

⁹⁸⁶986 Ünal, interview.

⁹⁸⁷987 Demirel Gökalp, interview.

⁹⁸⁸988 Keser Kayaalp, interview.

⁹⁸⁹989 Köroğlu, interview. For the papers presented, see “22. Uluslararası Orta Çağ ve Türk dönemi kazıları ve sanat tarihi araştırmaları sempozyumu: Özet kitabı”, (İstanbul, 24-26 Ekim 2018).

Another major forum, though one where Byzantine content is sparse, is the *Türk Tarih Kongresi* (Turkish History Congress), organized every four years by the Turkish Historical Society since 1932. As one of Türkiye's oldest and most prestigious scholarly gatherings, the congress historically centers Turkish, Ottoman, and Republican history under nationalist rubrics such as "Turkish-Islamic States," "Ottoman History," and "Ancient Anatolian Civilizations." Space for Byzantium has been minimal. In the 19th congress in 2022, only four of 233 papers focused directly on Byzantine topics, three of which were clustered in a single session on Byzantium and the Crusades.⁹⁹⁰ These included Murat Keçiş on George Pachymeres' image of the "Turk," Sezgin Güçlüay on the Crusades, and Öner Tolan on the Armeniaka *Themata* on the Byzantine-Arab frontier. The only other reference to Byzantium came in a Seljuk-focused paper about a diplomatic letter to a Byzantine emperor.

Here, representation often depends on individual initiative. Keçiş, one of the few Byzantinists who regularly participates in such generalist venues, explained his motivation: "If we are talking about the history of Anatolia, then Byzantium must be part of that conversation. You cannot understand Turkish history without it. When I show up, I want it to signal: there is something about Byzantium here."⁹⁹¹ His testimony also highlights the burden of this role: in October 2022 alone he attended three conferences—on Turkish history, the Seljuks, and one in Eskişehir—using each to foreground Byzantine perspectives. He acknowledged that not all colleagues make the same choice: "They say, 'There's only one conference a year I can go to—so I'll save it for something that's more relevant.'"

Such examples underscore both the costs and the necessity of Byzantine participation in broader forums. As Keser Kayaalp noted, the real challenge is creating more substantive encounters: "We need spaces where people from different methodological backgrounds and periods actually encounter one another. Not just in passing, but substantively."⁹⁹²

In sum, generalist and cross-period platforms remain vital but fraught. They provide essential visibility for Byzantine scholarship, yet their structures often reproduce disciplinary hierarchies that limit integration. The testimonies here show both the

⁹⁹⁰ "XIX. Türk Tarih Kongresi," <https://19tarihkongresi.ttk.gov.tr/>.

⁹⁹¹ Keçiş, interview.

⁹⁹² Keser Kayaalp, interview.

precarity of this presence and the ongoing effort to transform these forums into more inclusive and dialogic spaces. Against this backdrop, the International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium occupies a unique role as the only major scholarly platform in Türkiye dedicated entirely to Byzantium—a subject to which the next section turns.

Dedicated Platforms for Byzantine Studies in Türkiye

The emergence of symposia devoted specifically to Byzantium marked a milestone in the institutional life of the field in Türkiye. Unlike broader academic congresses, these events provided focused spaces for exchange, visibility, and recognition—allowing a once-marginalized field to coalesce into a scholarly community. Yet this development was neither inevitable nor uncontested.

A formative episode often recalled in oral histories is the cancellation of a planned Byzantine conference in 1994. For many, it epitomized the ideological resistance the field faced. Although details remain scarce, the cancellation—amid heightened national sensitivities—underscored Byzantium’s precarious status. Nevra Necipoğlu, who served on the scientific and advisory boards of the event (organized by the Sadberk Hanım Museum and the Vehbi Koç Foundation under the theme *From Constantine to Mehmed the Conqueror*), remembered: “We were shocked.”⁹⁹³ The reputational damage was lasting. A promotional calendar mixing Byzantine icons, Ottoman mosques, and Islamic calligraphy had provoked backlash, including a threat-laden letter that asked, “Are you selling snails in a Muslim neighborhood?” As Necipoğlu stressed, “It badly damaged credibility.” İlber Ortaylı echoed this view.⁹⁹⁴

For Necipoğlu, this episode became a turning point, galvanizing her resolve to demonstrate that Byzantium could be publicly discussed and academically celebrated in Istanbul.⁹⁹⁵ In 1999, she organized the international conference *Byzantium in Istanbul* at Boğaziçi University. Though modestly labeled a “workshop,” it was a full-scale, two-and-a-half-day academic event featuring scholars such as Paul Magdalino, Ihor Ševčenko, Cyril Mango, Doğan Kuban, Zeynep and Metin Ahunbay, Zeynep Mercangöz, Engin Akyürek, Melek Delilbaşı, and Sema Doğan. The rectorate conference hall was filled to

⁹⁹³ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁹⁹⁴ Ortaylı, interview.

⁹⁹⁵ Necipoğlu, interview.

capacity, with overflow into its galleries. “The idea that Byzantium was something dangerous, something that couldn’t be done, began to dissolve,” she reflected.

The event also reached beyond academia. Partnering with Yapı Kredi Kültür Yayınları, three major journals—*Sanat Dünyamız*, *Cogito*, and *Kitaplık*—devoted special issues to Byzantine themes. An exhibition (The Purple of Byzantium, the Purple of the Mediterranean) showcased coins, and a concert by Lebanese singer Fayrouz featured Byzantine-inspired chants. For Necipoğlu, this was a corrective gesture—a direct response to the 1994 cancellation, proving that Istanbul could host and celebrate Byzantine studies at the highest level.⁹⁹⁶

This trajectory was institutionalized with the launch of the International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium (ISGBS) in 2007 by the Vehbi Koç Foundation and Koç University’s ANAMED. Held every three years, ISGBS has since become the most prominent Byzantine forum in Türkiye. The first four editions were organized by ANAMED; responsibility later shifted to GABAM, Koç University’s dedicated Byzantine research center. Buket Coşkuner described the symposium as “more than a symposium—it’s a platform that integrates exhibitions, publications, and collaborations.”⁹⁹⁷

Interviewees emphasized the inclusivity of the first edition’s open call for papers, which welcomed early-career scholars, graduate students, and international researchers. As Akyürek put it: “It showed that Turks are capable of organizing things well.”⁹⁹⁸ Coşkuner added: “The Sevgi Gönül is not just a symposium—it comes with exhibitions and publications. Many of our significant exhibitions and publications came through this occasion.”⁹⁹⁹

Exhibitions became a hallmark of the symposium. Coşkuner explained: “There’s something beautiful about exhibition-making: it allows you to share knowledge with everyone.”¹⁰⁰⁰ The 2013 Artamonoff Exhibition, linked to Günder Varinlioğlu’s fellowship project, stood out as a landmark collaboration. Another example was the 2016 exhibition *The Other in Byzantium*, focused on the Empire of Trebizond. Coşkuner recalled: “It was a very sensitive time politically, and we weren’t taking sides. But we

⁹⁹⁶ Necipoğlu, interview.

⁹⁹⁷ Coşkuner, interview.

⁹⁹⁸ Akyürek, interview.

⁹⁹⁹ Coşkuner, interview.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Coşkuner, interview.

presented the building throughout its history and received really positive responses from Trabzon locals—including the governor and mayor.”

The 2023 edition, the Sixth ISGBS, carried the theme *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye*. Alongside the academic program, it featured a historiographical exhibition tracing the institutional and political development of the field from the early Republic to the present—marking a reflexive turn toward disciplinary self-examination.

Other institutions also built on this momentum. In 2016, the newly established Byzantine Studies Research Center at Boğaziçi University convened the national conference *Byzantine Studies in Türkiye: New Research, Different Trends*, gathering 54 speakers from 32 institutions. Varinlioğlu recalled: “We had probably never come together like that before... There was a connection among us.”¹⁰⁰¹ Keser Kayaalp added: “I felt like part of a scholarly community for the first time.”¹⁰⁰² Meryem Acara Eser emphasized the value of attendance even without a paper: “I didn’t have anything original to present that year, but I attended to listen—and it was deeply rewarding.”¹⁰⁰³

The conference proceedings, published in 2022, extended its reach.¹⁰⁰⁴ A second workshop followed in 2024, reaffirming the Center’s commitment to sustained platforms. That year, the Center also organized a workshop at the Pera Museum titled *Rethinking Byzantine Studies in Türkiye: Concepts, Terms, and Methods I*, addressing historiographical blind spots and methodological tensions. The “I” in the title signaled its planned continuity, with future iterations envisioned across multiple institutions.¹⁰⁰⁵

Other initiatives—the Byzantium at Ankara series, university colloquia, and events by GABAM, Boğaziçi’s Center, ANAMED, and Istanbul Research Institute (IAE)—further enrich the field’s ecology. Some were planned in conjunction with the Twenty-fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies (ICBS) scheduled for Istanbul in 2021 (discussed in chapter 2). As Yelda Olcay Uçkan summarized: “Of course it’s not enough... But the more we come together, the better. Conferences are important—very important.”¹⁰⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰¹ Varinlioğlu, interview.

¹⁰⁰² Keser Kayaalp, interview.

¹⁰⁰³ Acara Eser, interview.

¹⁰⁰⁴ For conference proceedings, see Durak, Necipoğlu, and Uyar, *Türkiye’de Bizans çalışmaları: Yeni araştırmalar, farklı eğilimler*.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Necipoğlu, “Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies,” 166.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

In sum, dedicated symposia—especially those institutionalized in the past two decades—have reframed Byzantine studies in Türkiye as a collaborative and recognized field. They have enabled not only scholarly development but also a new professional self-understanding: structurally supported, publicly visible, and globally engaged.

Turkish Scholars in International Byzantine Conferences

Participation in international platforms has long marked a key measure of maturity for Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Engagement with the ICBS, the Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, and events at Dumbarton Oaks has provided visibility, legitimacy, and intellectual exchange. Yet access has remained uneven, shaped by exclusions, structural fragilities, and missed opportunities.

Several interviewees described their first experiences abroad as formative. Keser Kayaalp recalled attending the ICBS in London as a doctoral student: “I wasn’t a speaker, just a listener, but it was such a massive organization. I was in awe, running from one talk to the next.”¹⁰⁰⁷ Simply observing how questions were posed and discussions unfolded became part of her training. Nilay Çorağan remembered the 2011 Sofia congress, where Turkish participation was “barely enough to count on one hand,” a fact she found “deeply upsetting.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Still, her own highlight was a personal exchange with Nicole Thierry after her paper.

For many, barriers were less about interest than about means: travel funding, institutional backing, visas, and mentorship in grant-writing were consistently cited as obstacles. Yet, they provide opportunities beyond presenting research. Suna Çağaptay, for instance, notes that conferences can provide career-defining opportunities: her involvement in a European consortium project (The Impact of the Ancient City) began through an encounter at a meeting.¹⁰⁰⁹

Against this background, Istanbul’s selection as the venue for the 2021 ICBS was widely celebrated as a landmark. Akyürek recalled the narrow loss in Belgrade, then the eventual win for Istanbul: “People saw the progress in Türkiye, the quality of research, and events like the Sevgi Gönül Symposium. They saw Turks could organize things well.”¹⁰¹⁰ For scholars like Sema Doğan and Bülent İşler, hosting the congress promised

¹⁰⁰⁷ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Çorağan, interview.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Çağaptay, interview.

¹⁰¹⁰ Akyürek, interview.

not only integration but psychological empowerment: the chance for young Turkish scholars to showcase their work and see that they do belong to the global stage with the confidence of presenting “on their own turf.”¹⁰¹¹

The cancellation of the 2021 Istanbul congress—following the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque and ensuing international controversy together with the lack of formal approval from the state—was thus experienced as a profound setback. While many interviewees pointed to political sensitivities and international protest as decisive factors, Ortaylı, who had personally advocated for state support for the congress, offered a deeper structural critique: “It’s not that there’s an anti-Byzantine bias in Türkiye,” he stated. “It’s that we simply don’t have the institutional strength.”¹⁰¹² He lamented that the decision to withdraw reinforced Türkiye’s image as an unreliable host: “If you’re afraid of controversy, then don’t attempt this at all... Every failure deepens our loss of credibility.” He observed, “The international association is always ready to cancel things like this.” He argued that Türkiye lacked strong graduate programs, publication outlets, and comprehensive departments to sustain such visibility—and urged a shift toward smaller, focused high-quality symposia with serious publication of proceedings as pathways to international recognition.

The sense of loss was palpable. Burcu Ceylan Duggan called the cancellation “heartbreaking.”¹⁰¹³ Ünal withdrew her own paper in protest: “I decided not to go. If they took it from Istanbul, then I shouldn’t go.”¹⁰¹⁴ Others, like Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek and Ufuk Serin, lamented a “missed opportunity” that had nearly been realized.¹⁰¹⁵ In the aftermath, interviewees agreed that the congress had symbolized both ambition and vulnerability. Its promise and the organizational energy it generated remain important, but as Ortaylı warned, “Hosting a congress should be the outcome—not the engine—of disciplinary strength.”¹⁰¹⁶

Ultimately, the ICBS experience illustrates both the ambitions and vulnerabilities of the field. The promise of 2021, the organizational momentum it generated, and the intellectual energy it galvanized remain valuable. But as Ortaylı insisted, such efforts

¹⁰¹¹ Doğan, interview; İşler, interview.

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¹⁰¹³ Ceylan Duggan, interview.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ünal, interview.

¹⁰¹⁵ Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview; Serin, interview.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ortaylı, interview.

must be underpinned by long-term institutional investment: “Hosting a congress should be the outcome—not the engine—of disciplinary strength.”

Beyond the ICBS, participation in other international forums remains limited. Keser Kayaalp observed that while platforms like the Spring Symposium in the UK or CNRS workshops in Paris offer valuable exposure, they are often out of reach for scholars trained solely in Türkiye.¹⁰¹⁷ Several others echoed the need for early encouragement and institutional support to help young scholars imagine themselves as part of this international field. Varinlioğlu reinforced this point: “These events help break that feeling of impossibility—Dumbarton Oaks, the ICBS, they don’t seem so far away once you’ve had that exposure. It’s all about that first step.”¹⁰¹⁸

In short, international conferences serve as both mirrors and thresholds: they reveal Türkiye’s uneven standing in global Byzantine studies, yet also open pathways for those able to cross. The rewards can be transformative, but the path remains narrow.

Structural Challenges and Unrealized Potentials

Despite the proliferation of scholarly meetings, interviewees emphasized that structural constraints continue to limit the development and inclusiveness of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. These challenges range from the absence of robust graduate training programs and institutional frameworks to the sustainability and accessibility of events.

One particularly striking limitation is the absence of a dedicated national conference or symposium series for graduate students working specifically on Byzantine topics. While events like the Koç University ARHA Symposium, the Istanbul Archaeology and Art History Student Symposium, and the Bilkent History Graduate Symposium do offer occasional venues for student participation, they are not consistent, field-specific, or structurally embedded within Byzantine studies. Turkish graduate students occasionally participate in events abroad—such as those organized by Oxford, Birmingham, or in France. In Türkiye, interdisciplinary gatherings like the BİLGİ-BONN History Graduate Conference, are not tailored to the needs of Byzantine studies. As discussed in detail in chapter 8, initiatives such as the Bizantolog.org webinar series and the I. Graduate Students Forum (organized in collaboration with Bilkent University, Hacettepe

¹⁰¹⁷ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

¹⁰¹⁸ Varinlioğlu, interview.

University, Koç University, and Boğaziçi University) represent promising attempts to provide a platform for early-career scholars. Yet they often lack institutional backing.

This lack of dedicated space for graduate exchange has several consequences. First, it inhibits the professional development of early-career scholars. Regular conferences can create a sense of academic identity, foster competitiveness, and expose students to rigorous feedback. As Keser Kayaalp put it, “Those of us trained abroad are pushed into it earlier... In Türkiye, we start later, if at all.”¹⁰¹⁹ Çömezoğlu Uzbek emphasized, “Conference participation is part of our education—it’s not just for students, but for all of us. You present, and someone gives you feedback. That’s invaluable.”¹⁰²⁰ Çağaptay similarly stressed that early exposure to international scholarly exchange is crucial: “Conferences are not just places to present. They’re where ideas get tested and where networks begin. Without that, you’re just writing in a vacuum.”¹⁰²¹

Several respondents argued for more consistent gatherings. Demirel Gökalp and Ünal both called for a series of Byzantine-focused congresses across the country¹⁰²². Ünal suggested, “Why not have three or four Byzantine congresses in different parts of the country? They shouldn’t clash with each other, and there should be a shared platform where people can follow them.” Others proposed a centralized online infrastructure to list conferences, CFPs, and theses, so that students could more easily imagine themselves as part of an active scholarly community. At present, such information circulates informally, through personal contacts or social media.

Sustainability is another concern. Events like the Graduate Students Forum were widely welcomed, but often remain one-offs due to lack of funding and institutional follow-up. As many noted, long-term growth depends not only on visionary individuals but also on durable mechanisms that can reproduce scholarly activity across generations. Embedding graduate-focused initiatives into the field’s core structure would consolidate a new generation of scholars and affirm Byzantine studies as a living, evolving discipline.

Structural challenges also intersect with issues of representation. Doğan, for example, stopped attending the Medieval and Turkish Period Excavations and Art History Research Symposium because of the lack of genuine engagement: “No one listens to each other.

¹⁰¹⁹ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

¹⁰²⁰ Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

¹⁰²¹ Çağaptay, interview.

¹⁰²² Demirel Gökalp, interview.

The archaeologists don't listen to us, and we don't listen to them."¹⁰²³ Others echoed this call for more thematically focused and inclusive platforms.

Still, interviewees expressed cautious optimism. As Keser Kayaalp put it, "We may be few, but that's also a strength—if we can come together."¹⁰²⁴ This sentiment reflects a recurring theme: the future of Byzantine studies in Türkiye depends not only on external recognition or institutional expansion, but on internal cohesion, collaboration, and shared commitment to sustainable scholarly ecosystems.

In sum, the unrealized potential of the field lies not in a lack of talent or interest, but in the absence of mechanisms to support and amplify both. Graduate training, mentoring, and consistent scholarly platforms are not luxuries but necessities. Without them, the field risks remaining fragmented and perpetually emergent. These domestic constraints also compound the difficulties of international engagement, as the next section explores.

International Integration

Even as Byzantine studies in Türkiye has expanded and connected more closely with international scholarship in recent decades, participation remains shaped by persistent asymmetries. Interviewees repeatedly emphasized the unequal terms of access, recognition, and authority that govern entry into global scholarly networks. These disparities are not only geographic or economic but also epistemic, linguistic, and institutional.

A recurrent theme was the symbolic dominance of major Western institutions, widely regarded as arbiters of scholarly legitimacy. They set standards of methodology, citation, and thematic focus. For many Türkiye-based scholars, this dynamic creates a sense of peripheralization: their contributions are often welcomed only when aligned with existing agendas, and there is pressure to publish in certain venues or adopt specific terminologies to be seen as relevant.

Language and stylistic norms also reinforce exclusion. Several interviewees noted the challenges of writing in English—not only grammar but the rhetorical and argumentative styles expected in leading journals. For those trained in Turkish academic traditions, this meant an ongoing process of intellectual translation. As Keser Kayaalp recalled,

¹⁰²³ Doğan, interview.

¹⁰²⁴ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

observing debates at international conferences became an informal education in scholarly style, though the burden of adaptation remained unevenly distributed.¹⁰²⁵

Still, many emphasized the strategies they developed to navigate this terrain. Some cultivated long-term collaborations, joined editorial boards, or co-organized international workshops. Others balanced multiple publication tracks—publishing in Turkish to remain accessible while writing in English for global recognition. Institutions such as GABAM and the Boğaziçi Byzantine Studies Research Center have supported these efforts by offering fellowships, editing assistance, and English-language platforms.

Yet asymmetries in knowledge circulation persist. As several interviewees remarked, scholarship produced in Türkiye is often cited abroad only for its empirical data, not its interpretations. Reciprocal engagement remains limited: Turkish scholars routinely read and cite Western research, while the reverse is far less common. Some attributed this to language barriers, others to entrenched hierarchies in global academia.

Despite these frustrations, there was also a strong sense of realism. Scholars acknowledged the necessity of working within global frameworks even while questioning their exclusions. As Varinlioğlu put it: “The way to overcome these gaps is not just to complain about them, but to build institutions, publish widely, and stay engaged. Otherwise, we remain invisible.”¹⁰²⁶ For many, the aim is not mere inclusion but the gradual reshaping of Byzantine studies into a more diverse and polyphonic field.

6.5.3 Journals and Bibliographic Initiatives

Infrastructures of scholarly publication—journals, bibliographies, and indexing tools—are central to consolidating communities and shaping academic authority. In Byzantine studies in Türkiye, however, such infrastructures remain limited and disjointed. As several interviewees stressed, the absence of a dedicated, peer-reviewed journal focused exclusively on late antique and Byzantine topics continues to hinder both scholarly cohesion and international visibility.

Nilay Çorağan put it bluntly: “There is no journal that belongs to us, the Byzantinists. There are special issues now and then, but no dedicated periodical where we can collectively publish every year. This is a major deficiency.”¹⁰²⁷ Earlier attempts confirm

¹⁰²⁵ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

¹⁰²⁶ Varinlioğlu, interview.

¹⁰²⁷ Çorağan, interview.

the difficulty. Sacit Pekak recalled launching *Anatolia and its Vicinity in the Middle Ages* (2007–2011), a bilingual, peer-reviewed journal on the medieval cultures of Anatolia and neighboring regions with Mine Kadiroğlu.¹⁰²⁸ Despite high standards and contributions from leading scholars, it folded after five issues for lack of funding and institutional support. As Pekak lamented, “There’s goodwill, but no infrastructure. We just couldn’t keep it alive.”

Murat Keçiş, an editorial board member of *Ortaçağ Araştırmaları Dergisi* (Journal of Medieval Studies), offered a similar perspective.¹⁰²⁹ The journal sought to bridge scholarship on the medieval period broadly defined, yet Byzantine content remained marginal. Keçiş pointed to difficulties in securing qualified reviewers and a tendency to cluster Byzantine papers together without sustained editorial attention—symptomatic of the field’s peripheral status in non-specialist venues. Under his leadership, however, other Byzantinists joined the editorial team, boosting both the volume and range of Byzantine material. The journal’s output illustrates this shift: one Byzantine article in its first issue of 2024, three in its second, and five in the first issue of 2025—bringing Byzantine and Crusader studies to nearly a quarter of its content.

This journal vacuum has pushed Turkish Byzantinists toward a patchwork of generalist and period-oriented outlets—*Belleten*; *Sanat Tarihi Dergisi* (Journal of Art History); *Tarih Dergisi* (Journal of History, Istanbul University); *Adalya* (AKMED’s Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology and History); *Olba* (Mersin University Journal of Archaeology and History); and *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies*. These venues provide visibility, but their broad mandates often relegate Byzantine studies to a minor subfield. Byzantine topics also surface in popular history magazines such as *Toplumsal Tarih* (Social History) and *Derin Tarih* (Deep History), though typically shaped by public interest or ideological agendas rather than academic rigor.

Publishing challenges are compounded by the weakness of peer review in Turkish academia. Several interviewees critiqued the prevalence of cursory or unconstructive evaluations. As Bülent İşler remarked: “Some reviewers simply reject a paper without a single explanatory comment. That’s deeply discouraging. Instead of support and

¹⁰²⁸ Pekak, interview.

¹⁰²⁹ Keçiş, interview.

guidance, young scholars are met with silence or outright dismissal.”¹⁰³⁰ By contrast, journals such as *Adalya*, *Olba*, and *Belleten* were praised by Zeliha Demirel Gökalp and Elif Keser Kayaalp for higher standards and developmental feedback—though all agreed such practices remain the exception.¹⁰³¹

Several scholars also pointed to structural incentives that reward quantity over quality. Burcu Ceylan Duggan was especially blunt: “We’ve gone from quality to quantity. Junior scholars need publications for promotion, so they slice the same material into multiple papers. You get five articles with slightly different object lists, but no analytical depth.”¹⁰³² She linked this trend to point-based academic evaluations and promotion systems, which encourage low-impact output at the expense of ambitious, substantive work.

Language adds another layer of complexity. While Turkish remains vital for domestic accessibility, many interviewees stressed the need to publish in English for international recognition. Yelda Olcay Uçkan described the dilemma: “Sometimes I feel like I’m writing for an imagined audience abroad. But I want my students here to read this, too.”¹⁰³³ She credited her mentor Yıldız Ötügen for encouraging Turkish-language publications for pedagogical reasons but acknowledged that “we’ve neglected foreign-language publication—and that’s a gap we need to close.”

At the same time, successful cases show the power of strategic publishing. Keser Kayaalp recalled how turning her MA thesis into a book opened doors to speaking invitations and ultimately admission to a prestigious doctoral program abroad: “That one book made it all possible.”¹⁰³⁴ Her story illustrates how visible and accessible publications can catalyze academic mobility and recognition.

Recent bibliographic efforts mark an important step toward addressing the gaps noted in the oral histories. The 2021 publication of *Byzantine Studies in Turkey: A Bibliography (19th Century–2020)*, edited by Şahin Kılıç and Berna Kitapçı Bayrı, provides a comprehensive listing of scholarship from the nineteenth century to 2020, organized both

¹⁰³⁰ İşler, interview.

¹⁰³¹ Demirel Gökalp, interview; Keser Kayaalp, interview.

¹⁰³² Ceylan Duggan, interview.

¹⁰³³ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

¹⁰³⁴ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

chronologically and thematically.¹⁰³⁵ Interviewees widely praised its scope and utility, though several stressed that sustainability and periodic updating remain open questions.

Ayla Ödekan's earlier bibliographic initiatives were also cited as pioneering, albeit shaped by the institutional and technological limits of their time. As she recalled, the idea stemmed from her undergraduate thesis, which made her acutely aware of the scarcity of accessible resources.¹⁰³⁶ Without a centralized infrastructure, she personally visited all the major libraries in Istanbul—including the German Archaeological Institute, Beyazıt Library, the Dutch Institute, and Robert College—painstakingly recording titles and sources. She drew upon private collections, such as those of Doğan Kuban and Metin Sözen, as well as bibliographies embedded in published works. Inspired by cataloging systems at the Library of Congress during her time in the U.S., she meticulously wrote each bibliographic entry by hand on index cards. Sorting them by subject—Art History, Architectural History, Painting, Book Arts—she laid them across the floor of her home: “It was a completely different world back then.” Her account offers both a glimpse into the material labor of early infrastructure and a reflection on the evolution of academic life: “Now,” she laughed, “you sit at your desk, press a button, and Google gives you everything—even the contents.”

Two other bibliographic projects deserve mention. First, a quantitative study by Cem Almurat and colleagues analyzed over 2,000 academic articles and hundreds of popular essays on Byzantium in Türkiye, tracing thematic and ideological shifts.¹⁰³⁷ Their findings confirmed many interviewee concerns: publications are concentrated in a handful of venues, certain topics dominate, and interpretive or theory-driven work is often sidelined in favor of descriptive cataloguing. Second, a study of 210 Turkish-language translations of Byzantine-related works published between 1923 and 2023 offered both quantitative and qualitative analysis.¹⁰³⁸ It examines chronological, thematic, and linguistic trends, revealing a sharp increase in translations after 2000 and a dominant focus on military-political history. While cultural and social themes remain marginal, recent contributions by young scholars of Byzantine studies show promise for more

¹⁰³⁵ Kılıç, “Bibliography Project.”

¹⁰³⁶ Ödekan, interview.

¹⁰³⁷ For a detailed analysis of publications of Byzantine studies in journals, see Almurat et al., “Articles on Byzantium.”

¹⁰³⁸ Çetinkaya, Yanık, and Tümkaya, “Translated Books.”

diverse and academically rigorous translations, offering a valuable window into the evolving priorities of the field.

Finally, several scholars—including İşler and Suna Çağaptay—highlighted the importance of communal tools like the *Byzantine Circular*, an informal biannual bulletin launched by Nevra Necipoğlu and edited by Ivana Jevtić, which shared news about publications, conferences, and graduate theses, but is now discontinued.¹⁰³⁹ While many praised the initiative, others such as Tolga Uyar and Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek emphasized that it remains limited in scope and impact.¹⁰⁴⁰ “We need a formal infrastructure,” Çömezoğlu Uzbek observed, “not just social media networks or ad-hoc announcements.”

Taken together, the publishing ecosystem reflects both dynamism and fragmentation. Output has expanded, bibliographic tools have emerged, and editorial initiatives have widened participation. Yet the absence of a flagship journal and a sustainable peer-review culture continues to limit cohesion and visibility. As many interviewees stressed, addressing these issues is not merely technical but structural. Building durable venues, feedback systems, and bibliographic platforms is essential not only for consolidating the field within Türkiye but also for asserting a more autonomous and visible presence in global Byzantine studies.

6.5.4 Professional Academic Associations

Professional academic associations are essential infrastructures for any scholarly field, fostering communication, visibility, and coordination across institutions and borders. In Byzantine studies in Türkiye, however, such associations developed slowly, with limited institutional support and only partial engagement from the scholarly community.

Nevra Necipoğlu recalls that the absence of a national committee for Byzantine studies was first pointed out to her by Ihor Ševčenko when she was preparing to return from the U.S. to Türkiye.¹⁰⁴¹ Ševčenko, long familiar with Istanbul and invested in advancing Byzantine studies there, told her: “You’re going to Türkiye. There is no national committee yet. This is a big shortcoming.” At the time, Necipoğlu had little knowledge of what a national committee was or of the Association Internationale des Études Byzantines (AIEB). Although she had finished her dissertation, she was unaware

¹⁰³⁹ İşler, interview; Çağaptay, interview.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Uyar, interview; Çömezoğlu Uzbek, interview.

¹⁰⁴¹ Necipoğlu, interview.

of the global institutional structures surrounding Byzantine studies. Ševčenko's suggestion stayed with her, and several years after her return, she began to consider establishing a national committee. The opportunity came in the lead-up to the 20th International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Paris in 2001.

By then, she was in contact with key figures in the AIEB, including Secretary-General Nikolaos Oikonomides and Gilbert Dagron in Paris.¹⁰⁴² It became clear that an official “national committee” required authorization from the Turkish Council of Ministers; otherwise, the body could only be named a “society.” At that point, she lacked direct ties with Ankara but contacted fellow Byzantinists in Türkiye to discuss forming a group that could eventually be formalized. She reached out to colleagues such as Melek Delilbaşı, Yıldız Ötüken, Ebru Parman, and Semavi Eyice. Although Eyice was skeptical—telling her such a committee could not be formed in Türkiye—she persisted. She also contacted scholars including Zeynep and Metin Ahunbay, Doğan Kuban, and Nergis Günsenin. During this time, Dagron visited the Turkish ambassador in Paris and stressed the importance of Türkiye's participation in the upcoming congress with an official national committee. The ambassador responded positively and passed the matter on to Ankara.

The Turkish Foreign Minister at the time, İsmail Cem, also supported the proposal. İlber Ortaylı recalls that he was contacted by Füsün Köroğlu, then Deputy Undersecretary of the Prime Ministry, regarding the setup of the committee, and extended the invitation to Demirkent, Melek, and Necipoğlu.¹⁰⁴³

In 2000, a group of scholars including Necipoğlu received letters from the Turkish Historical Society (TTK) stating that a national committee would be formed to represent Türkiye at the 2001 Paris Congress.¹⁰⁴⁴ The invitation, signed by then-TTK president Yusuf Halaçoğlu, summoned members to a meeting in Ankara. Among those invited were Eyice (as honorary chair), Delilbaşı, Ötüken, Parman, Demirkent, Ortaylı, and Alpay Pasinli, then director of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum and head of the Great Palace excavations. The meeting, chaired by Ortaylı and Halaçoğlu, was held at the Turkish Historical Society. At it, Demirkent was elected chair, and Necipoğlu was appointed general secretary. The committee then formally applied to join the AIEB. As per protocol, membership was subject to a vote by other national committees during the official AIEB

¹⁰⁴² Necipoğlu, interview.

¹⁰⁴³ Ortaylı, interview.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Necipoğlu, interview.

meeting at the congress. Necipoğlu and Demirkent traveled to Paris in 2001, presented the newly formed committee, and received unanimous approval—greeted with enthusiastic applause from figures like Cyril Mango and other prominent members. Thus, the Turkish National Committee for Byzantine Studies was officially accepted into the AIEB and has remained active since. Delilbaşı was elected chair after Demirkent's passing in 2006, and Mustafa Hamdi Sayar became president following Delilbaşı's death.¹⁰⁴⁵

Necipoğlu reflects critically on the structural limitations of the Turkish National Committee, stressing that its current configuration cannot meet the needs of the broader Byzantine scholarly community in Türkiye. The most pressing gap, she argues, is the absence of an inclusive, autonomous association representing not only professors but also independent researchers, students, and professionals across the country. Such a body would complement the National Committee by organizing events, supporting graduate education, and countering the concentration of activity in Istanbul—functioning similarly to associations like Byzantine Studies Association of North America (BSANA) in the U.S. or Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies (SPBS) in the U.K. Necipoğlu also underscores internal weaknesses: the committee lacks a website, bylaws, and transparency in its operations. A draft directive prepared in 2010 to address these issues was never implemented, and membership has not been revised since 2006. She calls for urgent reform of the committee's structure and governance to enhance its representational and institutional effectiveness.¹⁰⁴⁶

Other interviewees echoed this concern. Engin Akyürek described the committee as “not yet fully inclusive,” noting that although there were efforts to expand its membership during the 2021 ICBS preparations, these had little follow-through. He recalled internal discussions where the goal was to include “everyone with a doctorate in Byzantine studies,” but the initiative stalled.¹⁰⁴⁷ “We said, let's wait until the congress is over. But

¹⁰⁴⁵ In a public announcement made via X (formerly Twitter) on March 28, 2024, it was reported that at the meeting of the Principal Members of the Turkish National Committee for Byzantine/East Roman Studies, held under the coordination of the Turkish Historical Society, Mustafa Hamdi Sayar was elected as Chair and Turhan Kaçar as Vice Chair. This announcement implies that both Sayar and Kaçar were appointed as members, suggesting that the committee's membership has been revised. However, there is no publicly accessible documentation confirming such changes, and the official website of the AIEB still lists Melek Delilbaşı as the committee's president, with neither Sayar nor Kaçar included among its members as of July 2025. For the announcement, see *Türk Tarih Kurumu*, 28 March 2024, 2024.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Necipoğlu, “Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies,” 165-66.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Akyürek, interview.

then it got postponed, and the expansion never happened.” This perception of exclusivity was widespread. Ceren Ünal said candidly: “I don’t even know how the members of the national committee are selected. No one has ever consulted me or invited me to join.”¹⁰⁴⁸ Yelda Olcay Uçkan voiced similar frustration: “My name isn’t on the list. That’s why I didn’t even hear about some of the recent developments.”¹⁰⁴⁹

Informal reflection and critique of the field’s organizational structure were common, but few opportunities existed for such dialogue to take institutional form. As Akyürek noted: “There has been no structured platform for producing collective reflection or generating future visions.”¹⁰⁵⁰ Zeliha Demirel Gökalp echoed this: “These kinds of conversations happen in small groups, but never in a larger, organized forum.”¹⁰⁵¹ In this context, the national committee remains incomplete yet symbolically potent. For Ortaylı and others who advocated its creation, it marked overdue recognition of Byzantinology within Türkiye’s academic and diplomatic landscape. But for later generations, its perceived opacity and limited outreach underscore the failure to build a truly inclusive national network.

Like Necipoğlu, several scholars expressed the need for a broader scholarly association to bridge universities, foster collaboration, and prevent redundancy. “We need to come together and share what we’re doing,” said Olcay Uçkan.¹⁰⁵² “Otherwise, we’ll keep repeating each other.” Ünal echoed this: “Such a group should have been formed years ago. It must include both state and private universities across the country.”¹⁰⁵³ Digital platforms and community-based projects have begun to fill some of these gaps. Several interviewees emphasized the need for updated mailing lists, searchable directories, and digital platforms to improve coordination. “I think we should urgently come together to avoid repeating ourselves,” said Olcay Uçkan.¹⁰⁵⁴ Murat Keçiş and Kutlu Akalın pointed to Bizantolog, the participatory action research outcome of this study (further discussed in chapter 8), as a partial response—particularly in its horizontal structure and peer-led ethos.¹⁰⁵⁵ Still, they acknowledged that a professional association

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ünal, interview.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Akyürek, interview.

¹⁰⁵¹ Demirel Gökalp, interview.

¹⁰⁵² Olcay Uçkan, interview.

¹⁰⁵³ Ünal, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Keçiş, interview; Akalın, interview.

with formal standing and institutional support would serve different, and still unmet, needs.

Digital infrastructure itself remains underdeveloped in Byzantine studies. Günder Varinlioğlu noted that while archaeologists and architects have adopted digital methods, scholars in other subfields remain largely disengaged from digital humanities.¹⁰⁵⁶ She stressed the need for critical reflection on these tools, not just their application: “It’s not just about doing it—it’s about thinking through what it means.”

Beyond national representation, scholars also discussed the role of public engagement. Buket Coşkuner lamented the absence of intermediate outlets between academic journals and tabloid media. “We need spaces like *Toplumsal Tarih*—venues that speak to the interested public without diluting the scholarship.”¹⁰⁵⁷ She praised platforms like Medyascope, where scholars such as Necipoğlu and Akyürek have participated in accessible yet substantive conversations. Sema Doğan argued that public engagement should be seen as a scholarly duty: “It’s not enough to speak to each other—we have to speak to broader audiences too.”¹⁰⁵⁸ There are also promising examples of spontaneous solidarity and collective voice—such as the 2012 public statement on the Byzantine heritage of Istanbul, initiated by Koray Durak and signed by a group of academics including Elif Keser Kayaalp.¹⁰⁵⁹ Yet such actions remain episodic rather than institutionalized. As Keser Kayaalp recalls: “We felt it was important to take a stand, no matter where we were.”

In short, professional associations—whether national committees, public forums, or digital networks—are not mere add-ons but core elements of scholarly infrastructure. The experience of Turkish Byzantinists reveals both the costs of institutional absence and the aspirations for more durable, inclusive, and reflective frameworks. Building such associations remains one of the most crucial bridges for transforming scholarly presence into sustainable community.

6.6. Conclusion: Tracing the Boundaries of Possibility

This chapter has traced the layered institutional terrain through which Byzantine studies in Türkiye is pursued, reproduced, and contested. Using the paired analytics of

¹⁰⁵⁶ Varinlioğlu, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Coşkuner, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Doğan, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Keser Kayaalp, interview.

bottlenecks and bridges, it has made visible not only the enduring structural constraints that limit the field's institutional integration, but also the provisional formations that sustain it despite those limits. These patterns are not discrete; they overlap, reinforce, and at times contradict one another. Their interplay defines the field's present condition as one of partial consolidation—neither marginal nor fully secured.

What emerges is not a singular diagnosis but a complex cartography: a field marked by disciplinary entanglements, institutional fragmentation, asymmetrical access, and persistent struggles over recognition and legitimacy. Yet the very fact that so many interviewees engaged these questions with urgency, generosity, and reflexive insight signals the presence of a scholarly community willing to think beyond current impasses.

By foregrounding these institutional dynamics, this chapter has not sought to resolve them but to name the conditions that shape the field's present configuration. It has resisted programmatic conclusions in favor of an empirically grounded, abductive analysis—one attentive to nuance, dissonance, and the often-overlooked textures of academic life. This is not only a descriptive stance but also a methodological and political one: it affirms the value of situated knowledge, of theory generated in close dialogue with lived experience.

The question that now animates the dissertation is not simply what *is* but what *could be*. How might the existing landscape be reimagined? What forms of institutional design, pedagogical practice, and scholarly collaboration might enable Byzantine studies in Türkiye to inhabit its full potential? If this chapter has delineated the boundaries of possibility, the next asks how those boundaries might be reconfigured.

The task ahead is strategic: to draw on the insights, frustrations, and propositions voiced by scholars across generations and institutions in order to articulate a future-facing vision for the field. Chapter 7 thus offers a synthetic and aspirational response—developing concrete proposals, identifying promising models, and mapping potential pathways for durable disciplinary infrastructure. In doing so, it seeks to transform diagnosis into design, critique into possibility, and empirical insight into collectively envisioned strategy.

PART III: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 7 – Contemporary Challenges and Future Pathways

The proposals presented in this chapter are not merely a response to infrastructural deficiencies or institutional gaps. They are grounded in a broader normative commitment to how academic fields should be built, reproduced, and sustained with integrity, fairness, and vision. Rather than offering technocratic solutions or prescriptive models, this chapter proceeds from a set of guiding principles that reflect the values expressed—both implicitly and explicitly—by interviewees throughout chapter 6.

These proposals are rooted in a strategic vision for how Byzantine studies in Türkiye can develop into a more inclusive, resilient, and institutionally coherent academic field. Rather than presenting uniform solutions, the chapter draws on three conceptual anchors that shape its methodology and aims.

First is the Four-Stage Model of disciplinary development, originally articulated by Nicholas Mullins. This model traces the evolution of research communities through four stages: normal, network, cluster, and discipline. As shown in the institutional and social network analysis earlier in this thesis, Byzantine studies in Türkiye exhibits a high degree of heterogeneity in developmental stage. Some academic groups function as stable clusters with inter-institutional reproduction and shared training mechanisms, while others remain in more fragmented or emergent phases. The proposals that follow are therefore intentionally differentiated: designed to offer scaffolding for weaker nodes and consolidation strategies for more advanced clusters. This stage-sensitive approach rejects one-size-fits-all prescriptions in favor of a flexible, context-aware framework for field-building.

Second, the principle of collective wisdom serves as both a methodological ethic and a strategic necessity. In line with the abductive and reflexive design of this dissertation, collective wisdom affirms that the future of Byzantine studies should be shaped not by elite consensus but through shared deliberation across all levels of the field. To this end, this study proposes the organization of a national Search Conference: a participatory forum inviting students, independent researchers, early-career scholars, senior faculty,

and retired academics to reflect together on the discipline's challenges, priorities, and long-term vision.¹⁰⁶⁰ The analyses carried out in this study and the proposals offered in this chapter may serve as provocations or starting points for that discussion, but their purpose is to be challenged, refined, and expanded through collective reflection.

Third, the proposals align with insights from institutional theory, particularly the concept of institutional entrepreneurship. Institutions—and disciplines—do not evolve passively; they are actively reshaped by embedded actors who mobilize resources, challenge conventions, and construct new frameworks of legitimacy. Many of the proposals in this chapter—including the formation of professional associations, the design of new curricular models, and the call for interdisciplinary teaching structures—are best understood as strategic acts of institutional entrepreneurship. They are not endpoints, but interventions aimed at realigning the field's infrastructure with its scholarly aspirations.

Taken together, these three conceptual foundations—stage-aware development, participatory deliberation, and strategic institutional action—inform the proposals that follow. They offer both a rationale for why change is necessary and a methodological blueprint for how it might unfold.

In this way, the proposals that follow—from institutional restructuring to pedagogical innovation—should not be read as definitive answers. They are designed as strategic responses to the bottlenecks and bridge structures identified in chapter 6—an effort to transform the field's constraints into conditions for renewal, and its provisional solidarities into durable infrastructure.

7.1 Structuring the Field: Institutional Anchoring and Disciplinary Recognition

7.1.1 Institutional Visibility and Structural Reform

While Byzantine studies has a long-standing presence in Turkish academia, its institutional visibility remains fragmented and uneven. The field is taught and researched across a range of departments—including art history, history, archaeology, and architecture—but it lacks a coherent and codified disciplinary presence within most

¹⁰⁶⁰ A detailed framework for organizing such a conference—covering its goals, success conditions, and thematic axes—is included as Appendix 14. This framework draws directly on the empirical data and conceptual foundations developed throughout the thesis and is intended as a flexible, participatory model for field-level strategic planning.

university structures. In particular, Byzantine history and archaeology are often subsumed under broader chronological or thematic categories, while field-specific divisions or formal classifications are inconsistently applied. This institutional ambiguity weakens the field's capacity to justify new hires, develop tailored curricula, and secure its place in long-term academic planning. chapter 6 revealed that despite strong scholarly contributions and student interest, the formal infrastructures that sustain disciplinary life—such as divisions, keywords, and specialization tracks—remain partial, inconsistent, or absent in key areas.

To address these challenges, this section outlines two complementary strategies: the establishment of field-specific divisions and the inclusion of Byzantine-related keywords in official academic classifications. These two mechanisms are designed to increase visibility, clarify specialization, and strengthen institutional support without requiring a wholesale restructuring of academic units.

Establishing Byzantine History Divisions

The first and most urgent proposal is the establishment of Byzantine History Divisions (*Bizans Tarihi Anabilim Dalı*) within university history departments. At present, no such division exists, despite the field's growing intellectual maturity and institutional spread. The idea is not new. Professor Nevra Necipoğlu has long advocated for the formalization of Byzantine history as a distinct academic division and reiterated this call most recently during the Sixth Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium.¹⁰⁶¹ In the course of this research, the majority of interviewees expressed support for such a development, citing its potential to increase visibility, normalize course offerings, and enable field-specific hiring. A minority, however, voiced hesitation, noting that the field may not yet have reached the necessary scale to sustain such a unit. But it must be emphasized that visibility and legitimacy are often preconditions for scale, not its byproducts. Formal recognition is not merely symbolic; it is a mechanism that enables student recruitment, institutional investment, and long-term disciplinary reproduction.

The creation of such divisions would enable field-specific hiring, provide the institutional legitimacy required to support Byzantine-focused theses and coursework, and make possible the development of structured MA and PhD programs in Byzantine

¹⁰⁶¹ Necipoğlu, "Türkiye'de Bizans tarihi çalışmalarına dair gözlemler."; Necipoğlu, "Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies," 166.

history. Advancing this proposal would require sustained dialogue with the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), backed by a coalition of university representatives, research centers, professional associations, and the national committee for Byzantine studies. Such a collective initiative could effectively articulate the maturity and scope of the field and present a coordinated case for its formal recognition. The precedent of over thirty Byzantine Art Divisions in Turkish universities demonstrates that such structural moves are administratively viable and, when properly advocated, institutionally accepted. The case of the Caucasian History Division at Marmara University further illustrates that new divisions can be established when field cohesion and faculty commitment are demonstrable.¹⁰⁶²

Moreover, as discussed in 4.2.2., the increasing number and proportion of doctoral theses in historical and textual studies signals not only growing scholarly interest, but also a rising cohort of qualified individuals who will soon seek academic employment in this area. In addition to those already trained in Türkiye, a number of doctoral students currently enrolled in prestigious international programs are expected to return in the coming years, further expanding the pool of potential faculty. Creating dedicated institutional homes for Byzantine history would thus help absorb this emerging scholarly capacity, while ensuring that their expertise is not lost to institutional mismatch or disciplinary drift.

Expanding Byzantine Art Divisions

In parallel, there is a need to assess institutions where Byzantinists are already present but where formal divisions have not been established. For example, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University has long been a home to Byzantinist scholars yet lacks a formal Byzantine Art Division. Understanding whether these gaps are the result of rejected applications, internal administrative decisions, or the absence of initiative is essential. Where appropriate, targeted advocacy efforts—ranging from support in preparing applications to discussions with policy-makers—could facilitate the formalization of divisions in such settings. In this way, the existing footprint of the field could be expanded incrementally but strategically.

¹⁰⁶² Currently, Associate Professor Serdar Oğuzhan Çaycıoğlu and Professor Okan Yeşilot are listed under Caucasian History Division at Marmara University's website. At YÖK Academic, Çaycıoğlu's division is indicated as Caucasian History whereas Yeşilot's division is marked as General Turkish History.

Introducing a Keyword for Byzantine Archaeology

A second institutional lever concerns the role of keywords in YÖK's academic classification system. These keywords shape how expertise is rendered legible within hiring processes, thesis supervision, and research evaluation. Despite the presence of numerous chronologically and geographically defined keywords under archaeology departments, "Byzantine Archaeology" is currently absent. This absence erases a field that is both intellectually robust and empirically visible. Chapter 6 documented a growing number of archaeological surveys and excavations in which Byzantine layers are central, as well as projects directly led by Byzantinists.

Interview data further confirmed both the latent potential and the institutional precarity of Byzantine archaeology in Türkiye. Several researchers noted that while interest and activity in the subfield are increasing, its identity remains blurred—often buried within broader "Late Antique" or "Art History" designations. This lack of recognition makes it difficult to justify site work, attract graduate students, or request field-appropriate funding. Moreover, Byzantine archaeology requires a distinct set of methodological tools, interpretive frameworks, and technical training, which are not fully accounted for in the existing disciplinary infrastructure.

Introducing a dedicated keyword for Byzantine Archaeology would therefore be more than symbolic. It would allow scholars to be evaluated within a field-appropriate context, facilitate the training of new researchers through tailored coursework and thesis supervision, and affirm the legitimacy of Byzantine material culture within archaeological discourse. Given the empirical justification provided by institutional data, graduate theses, and excavation records, the inclusion of this keyword represents a modest but strategic reform—one that recognizes a subfield in formation and actively supports its consolidation.

Recognizing Specializations in Adjacent Fields

Beyond history, art history, and archaeology, the work of Byzantinists frequently intersects with fields such as architectural history, preservation, heritage studies, and museum studies. In these areas, specialization in Byzantine material culture is often substantial, but remains unacknowledged within formal academic classifications. While the inclusion of Byzantine-specific keywords in these domains may not be immediately achievable, their long-term recognition is essential. Ensuring that these scholars are

actively included in field-level conversations, institutional planning, and disciplinary advocacy is a necessary step toward reflecting the full ecology of Byzantine studies as it is practiced today.

From Dispersion to Recognition

Divisions and keywords may appear bureaucratic, but they form the institutional grammar through which academic legitimacy is negotiated. By formalizing existing labor through visible structures and accurate classifications, these proposals aim to convert disciplinary dispersion into infrastructural recognition. What is at stake is not only the field's administrative footprint, but its long-term sustainability, epistemic autonomy, and ability to reproduce itself across generations.

7.1.2 From Research Centers to Strategic Projects: New Infrastructures

While not always discipline-specific, centers such as Koç University Anatolian Civilizations Research Center (ANAMED), Koç University Suna and İnan Kırac Research Centre for Mediterranean Civilizations (AKMED), and Koç University Vehbi Koç Ankara Studies Research Center (VEKAM) have played an outsized role in supporting Byzantinists—especially those working in Mediterranean, archaeological, or heritage-related contexts. These centers have facilitated workshops, provided funding, and offered venues for publication and international exchange. However, their thematic breadth has sometimes translated into episodic or uneven support for Byzantine studies, and their geographical concentration in Istanbul and select urban nodes leaves much of the country institutionally disconnected.

Interviewees consistently emphasized the need for a more geographically inclusive research infrastructure. The establishment of regional centers of Byzantine studies was also among the calls voiced by Nevra Necipoğlu.¹⁰⁶³ Several scholars echoed this view, proposing the creation of research hubs in Cappadocia, Western Anatolia, and even Eastern Anatolia, where connections to Armenian, Georgian, and Syriac traditions are particularly strong. These centers would not only help decentralize the field but also promote interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research trajectories that better reflect the historical geography of Byzantium.

¹⁰⁶³ Necipoğlu, "Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies," 166.

In Western Anatolia, a center was proposed by Zeynep Mercangöz, who emphasized the scholarly density and regional infrastructure already present in that zone. Though not yet tied to a specific institution, this region presents a compelling case for a hub that could serve both national collaboration and international outreach.

The rationale for regional centers is further supported by the findings of the social network analysis presented in chapters 5 and 6. The emergence of Western Belt and Eastern Belt clusters—characterized by patterns of academic reproduction and institutional affiliation—demonstrates the viability of regionally grounded scholarly ecosystems. These clusters point to latent networks that could be activated and formalized through dedicated centers. In addition, the example of Akdeniz University, which does not fall within either belt but belongs to a Bridge Cluster alongside Bilkent and ODTU, may in part be explained by the presence of AKMED. As a regional center based in Antalya, AKMED has not only supported archaeological research but has also actively promoted Byzantine studies. Its existence may have facilitated institutional connectivity and positioned Akdeniz University as a bridge between otherwise distinct academic zones.

In the case of Cappadocia, multiple scholars—including Nilay Çorağan, Sacit Pekak, and Tolga Uyar—have strongly advocated for the creation of a dedicated research hub, noting the region’s unparalleled density of Byzantine sites, art, and architecture. The late Professor Robert Ousterhout, whose scholarly and personal contributions to the understanding of Cappadocian heritage are immense and enduring, also consistently supported this vision. His work, and the model of scholarship and mentorship he exemplified, stand as powerful testimony to the potential such a center could embody. Based on this collective endorsement, Cappadocia emerges as the most viable candidate for piloting a regional Byzantine studies center—offering not only symbolic resonance but also logistical feasibility, a built scholarly community, and international visibility.

As a concrete step toward this vision, the re-establishment of the Cappadocia in Context Summer School—in collaboration with the research centers to be established in Cappadocia and institutions such as ANAMED or Koç University Sevgi Gönül Research Center for Byzantine Studies (GABAM)—would represent both a powerful academic intervention and a symbolic milestone. It would provide the continuity of a platform for immersive, interdisciplinary education while reinvigorating the region’s role in shaping a

new generation of Byzantinists. The revival of this program is not only feasible, but deeply desirable.

At the same time, the current conditions present formidable challenges. The funding difficulties now faced by the very centers that once represented institutional success—such as GABAM and Boğaziçi’s Byzantine Studies Center—highlight the structural fragility of initiatives that depend heavily on seed funding and philanthropic support. In regions without access to resourceful private universities or metropolitan-level institutional ecosystems, the creation of new research centers is unlikely to be sustainable unless anchored in major, multi-year projects. These would need to be genuinely interdisciplinary in scope—combining historical research with heritage policy, conservation, education, and community engagement—and capable of attracting support from multiple national and international sources. Designing and securing such projects requires more than individual initiative: it calls for the collective wisdom and coordinated efforts of existing research centers and those yet to be founded. Through shared planning, resource pooling, and strategic agenda-setting, these centers can create the conditions for ambitious and impactful scholarly infrastructures to emerge.

7.1.3 Association for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies

One of the most consistent themes across interviews and institutional histories is the lack of a cohesive, inclusive, and transparent scholarly body capable of coordinating, representing, and advocating for Byzantine studies across Türkiye. Despite decades of vibrant individual and institutional contributions, there remains no autonomous professional association that speaks for the field in its entirety or facilitates structured scholarly exchange at a national level. Instead, institutional isolation and disciplinary fragmentation continue to hinder both cooperation and visibility.

In response to this long-standing institutional void, many interviewees articulated a clear aspiration: for a permanent, participatory, and interdisciplinary association—open to scholars at all stages and across all relevant subfields—to serve as a scholarly backbone for Byzantine studies in Türkiye. This chapter proposes the establishment of the *Geç Antik ve Bizans Araştırmaları Birliği* (GABAB), or Association for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, a national scholarly association that reflects both the structural needs and

conceptual expansions of the field.¹⁰⁶⁴ The inclusion of late antique studies within this scope is not merely symbolic. As demonstrated in chapter 6, recent years have seen a growing number of graduate theses addressing late antique themes, while scholars such as Turhan Kaçar have emphasized the intellectual and pedagogical value of approaching early Byzantine history within a late antique continuum. By formally acknowledging this overlap, GABAB aims to foster a more inclusive, interdisciplinary ecosystem—one that not only reflects existing academic practices but also opens the field to broader forms of engagement.

Bizantolog (Bizantolog.org), founded five years ago as part of this research, emerged from this very vision: a digital intervention aimed at addressing the field's disconnection and particularly at supporting the most vulnerable and under-resourced segments of the community, especially graduate students. Nevra Necipoğlu has also recently reiterated the need for a structure that could complement the Turkish National Committee for Byzantine/Eastern Roman Studies, while functioning in a more inclusive, visible, and active capacity.¹⁰⁶⁵ Although the National Committee fulfills a diplomatic function through its affiliation with the Association Internationale des Études Byzantines (AIEB), its operations remain opaque and underdeveloped. As several interviewees noted, its procedures are neither widely consultative nor widely known.

GABAB would serve as a platform for strategic coordination, scholarly community-building, and field-level advocacy. Modeled in part on international counterparts such as the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies (SPBS) in the UK and the Byzantine Studies Association of North America (BSANA), its structure should be legally recognized as an independent academic association (*birlik* or *dernek*), with an elected executive board, open membership policies, a rotating conference model, and regular communication channels such as newsletters, mailing lists, and digital platforms. The epilogue chapter on Bizantolog includes a detailed analysis of such models in 8.5. Comparative Models and Institutional Benchmarks. Among its potential activities will be the organization of national graduate conferences and thematic workshops; the coordination of open-access repositories and digital resources; the maintenance of a searchable directory of scholars working in Byzantine and late antique studies; the

¹⁰⁶⁴ GABAB is a proposed but unrealized center; therefore, it is not included in the list of abbreviations.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Necipoğlu, "Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies," 165.

facilitation of collaborative funding applications and early-career mentorship programs; and the representation of the field in public forums and policy discussions related to heritage, education, and disciplinary classification.

As GABAB begins to take shape, Bizantolog—a platform born from this dissertation’s participatory action research design—offers both a ready-made infrastructure and an ethical orientation for its youth and digital engagement strategies. As outlined in chapter 8, Bizantolog is not merely a tool for information sharing but a deliberately structured community of practice that operates on the principles of networked collaboration, digital equity, and reflexive horizontality. Its participatory culture—shaped through new media, open-access practices, and collective authorship—has been instrumental in reaching the most institutionally vulnerable scholars, especially graduate students and early-career researchers.

Importantly, the experience of Bizantolog has diverged significantly from more formal and often opaque models of graduate representation in large international structures. To ensure that its distinctive ethos is preserved, Bizantolog should not be absorbed into GABAB as a subordinate youth branch but rather operate as its digital commons: a platform that sustains open communication, experimental programming, and participatory decision-making. This layered model—GABAB as a coordinating infrastructure and Bizantolog as a reflexive and distributed community—offers a hybrid structure uniquely suited to the generational, institutional, and epistemological needs of Byzantine and late antique studies in Türkiye today.

7.2 Teaching Byzantium: Curricular Models and Pedagogical Innovation

7.2.1 Building a Tiered Curriculum: Foundational, Specialized, Reflexive

Curricular development in Byzantine studies in Türkiye reveals both inspiring innovation and persistent structural gaps. While certain institutions have cultivated diversified offerings aligned with faculty expertise and student interest, others operate with minimal or ad hoc instruction in the field. This unevenness reflects broader asymmetries in institutional capacity, faculty distribution, and pedagogical infrastructure. To address these challenges, this study proposes a tiered curricular model consisting of three interrelated layers: foundational courses, specialized electives, and reflexive or methodological modules. These tiers correspond to different levels of student engagement

and institutional capacity, and together they form a scalable and transferable framework adaptable to local contexts.

Foundational courses serve as the bedrock of field literacy. Their absence—or inconsistent presence—was a recurring concern across interviews. In many institutions, introductory courses in Byzantine history are available only sporadically, often depending on temporary staffing or individual initiative due to the lack of faculty specialized in Byzantine history. Students frequently encounter the field through fragmented exposure—or not at all. This not only limits undergraduate engagement but also weakens graduate-level recruitment.

The situation is more stable in art history: 30 out of 47 universities offering art history programs have Byzantine Art Divisions, and the majority of faculty assigned to these units are trained Byzantine art historians. However, this also means that several institutions still rely on non-specialists to teach Byzantine art. As for Byzantine archaeology, coverage is far more sporadic. It may appear under broader Medieval Archaeology divisions where they exist but is often underrepresented or embedded within general survey courses.

In history departments, the picture is more constrained. Of the 56 faculty members (including research assistants) who hold a Byzantine history keyword in the national academic registry, only 46 universities host at least one such scholar—despite the fact that there are over 100 universities with history programs. Moreover, if one limits the analysis to those whose primary specialization is Byzantine history and excludes research assistants who are not permitted to teach independently, the number drops to 25 faculty members across just 21 institutions. This disparity underscores the fragile presence of Byzantine history in the curriculum and helps explain why foundational courses remain inconsistent and vulnerable to discontinuation.

It is also important to note a degree of circularity in these figures: in some cases, scholars list Byzantine history as their second or third area of specialization not due to formal training or research focus, but because they are tasked with teaching these courses in the absence of a specialist. This form of institutional adaptation—while necessary—further complicates efforts to assess the field's true instructional capacity. A similar dynamic may also apply, to a lesser extent, in Byzantine art history, where non-specialists may fill teaching gaps despite the existence of formal divisions.

Several interviewees noted the acute need for accessible and pedagogically sound introductory materials in Turkish. The continued reliance on outdated translations—such as George Ostrogorsky’s *History of the Byzantine State* and Cyril Mango’s *Byzantine Architecture*—reflects both a scarcity of updated resources and the difficulty of collective authorship across a fragmented field.

To mitigate these constraints, this study recommends the development of a standardized foundational curriculum. Ideally, this would be supported by a collaboratively authored introductory textbook tailored for Turkish higher education. Such a resource could provide thematic, chronological, and conceptual coherence while also making space for interdisciplinary approaches. Its adoption across institutions—either as part of existing programs or through elective modules—would ensure a more consistent baseline of knowledge for students entering the field.

Specialized electives are typically shaped by faculty expertise and institutional history. At institutions with multiple Byzantinists, such as Hacettepe University and Anadolu University, elective offerings have evolved into robust and differentiated course portfolios. These include seminars on religious and secular architecture, painting, decorative arts, numismatics, and other areas of specialization. Electives in history departments at the undergraduate level tend to be less diversified, as Byzantine history itself is often offered only as an elective. At the graduate level, however, faculty frequently offer courses more closely aligned with their research areas, which sometimes take more inclusive or interdisciplinary forms, as discussed in chapter 6.

To strengthen elective offerings at institutions without built-in capacity, this study proposes the formation of curriculum-sharing consortia. These could include inter-university agreements for guest teaching, pooled syllabi, and joint certificate programs. Online platforms such as Bizantolog could also serve as repositories for syllabi, teaching materials, and recorded lectures—expanding access to specialized content for students at under-resourced universities.

Reflexive and methodological modules constitute the third curricular tier. These courses aim to build critical awareness of the field’s intellectual history, epistemologies, and positionality. Despite their importance, such modules are often absent from curricula. As one interviewee noted, students often receive “*techné* but not method”—technical knowledge without theoretical grounding. This absence is especially concerning given

the field's entanglement with national ideologies, disciplinary hierarchies, and global asymmetries.

There are, however, promising exceptions. Courses such as Koray Durak's graduate seminar on historiography, research tools, and current scholarly trends exemplify a model of integrated, reflexive training. Likewise, workshops and summer schools—such as the *Textual Sources in Byzantine Studies* Summer School organized by Bizantolog and detailed in chapter 8—have created valuable spaces for methodological exchange and peer learning.

Drawing on these successful models, this study recommends the development of standalone seminars or modular units focused on historiography, theory, and interdisciplinary methods. These could be delivered in flexible formats—such as online intensives, blended learning courses, or short-term visiting seminars—and would be particularly effective when embedded within regional or institutional partnerships. Their aim would be to cultivate a more reflexive and methodologically versatile generation of scholars, equipped to navigate the complexities of Byzantine studies in Türkiye and beyond.

7.2.2 Embedding Language and Source-Based Instruction

The ability to engage with primary sources in their original languages is not a supplementary skill in Byzantine studies—it is a scholarly cornerstone. Yet in the Turkish context, instruction in Ancient Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Armenian remains structurally fragile, unevenly distributed, and heavily reliant on individual initiative rather than systemic design. While certain institutions have integrated Ancient Greek, Latin, and Syriac into their curricula through targeted efforts and international collaborations, these remain isolated innovations rather than institutionalized norms.

Across both historical-textual and material-cultural subfields, interviewees emphasized the centrality of source-language competence while also acknowledging the institutional and curricular deficits that hinder its acquisition. Students are often encouraged to enroll in Greek or Latin electives offered in other departments, but these courses are limited in number, their uptake remains low, and outcomes are uncertain.

This deficit has long-term consequences. Most students enter graduate programs without meaningful exposure to the languages that define the field's primary materials.

However, the need for philological competence is not uniform across all subfields. As highlighted in several interviews, the level and kind of language proficiency required varies significantly between textual/historical studies and visual/material approaches. For archaeologists or art historians not working with inscriptions or textual corpora, a functional understanding of the alphabet, terminology, and etymology may suffice. For historians engaging with documentary or literary sources, more advanced training is indispensable. What is needed, then, is not only more language instruction, but more diversified, purpose-specific training pathways.

To address these intersecting challenges, this study proposes a three-pronged strategy:

1. Establish Regional Centers of Language Training

Dedicated capacity for Ancient Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Armenian instruction should be developed within regional hubs anchored in institutions with proven interdisciplinary strength and pedagogical continuity. One such promising initiative has already emerged at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, where a summer school has been offering regular instruction in Ancient Greek, Latin, and Syriac since 2022. Its institutionalization and expansion represent a vital opportunity for field-wide capacity-building. As one of the instructors of these courses, Kutlu Akalın has further proposed a field-wide consortium or workshop network that would bring together instructors of Greek, Latin, Syriac, Hebrew, and Arabic. Such a model would not only allow for shared resources and pedagogical innovation but also bring local instruction in line with international standards.

2. Embed Language into Curricular Pathways

Another viable strategy—already piloted at Boğaziçi University—is to enable students to substitute courses in Greek or Latin for Ottoman Turkish within undergraduate curricula. This approach is particularly effective at institutions where instructors are already available and could significantly improve students' readiness for graduate-level work. It would also ensure that students begin their advanced training with at least a mid-level foundation in key source languages, reversing the current trend where even the most promising graduates lack basic philological literacy.

3. Support Entry Through Summer Schools and Targeted Fellowships

Given the curricular difficulties and the infrequency of course offerings across institutions, participation in intensive language programs has become an essential

gateway into Byzantine studies. Programs such as the Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Summer School, the Online Byzantine Greek Summer School at Boğaziçi University (despite a hiatus in 2025), the LinguaArc Archival Languages Summer School organized by Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, the International Byzantine Greek Summer School led by Anthony Hirst (offered online since COVID-19), as well as the Byzantine Greek Summer Schools in Vienna and at Dumbarton Oaks, offer invaluable opportunities for students to acquire language skills that are otherwise inaccessible through regular university curricula.

These programs do more than fill curricular gaps; they serve as critical entry points into the field, particularly for students from under-resourced universities, and provide vital networking opportunities with both instructors and peers. However, access remains uneven, and participation often hinges on students' personal financial capacity or connectivity.

To ensure more equitable access, participation of students based in Türkiye in these programs should be actively supported through national scholarship schemes and targeted grants. While the organization of such programs may not be locally feasible in every case, strategic funding mechanisms can significantly increase the presence of Turkish students in international and regional training environments.

The primary drivers of such support should be institutional structures—notably national science bodies such as TÜBİTAK, university-based research centers, and future coordinating bodies like GABAB. However, symbolic or voluntary contributions from scholarly networks and individuals also play a meaningful role in demonstrating communal responsibility and opening doors for early-career scholars. A case in point is Bizantolog, which facilitated the participation of two students—one an undergraduate in history and one a master's student in art history—in the Greek course at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University through modest yet impactful voluntary contributions.

As the field's disciplinary infrastructure expands and matures, it may become possible to formalize these forms of support under the umbrella of long-term strategic funding frameworks—ensuring not only more inclusive access but also sustained pipelines of training and mentorship. Without such systemic interventions, the reproduction of the field will continue to rely on personal initiative, informal mentorship, and external training—pathways that are often inspiring but ultimately unsustainable. A coordinated

infrastructure for language acquisition is critical not only for academic rigor but also for equity, interdisciplinarity, and the long-term vitality of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

Finally, while the issue of modern foreign language proficiency—particularly in English, French, and German—was also flagged by many interviewees, this challenge presents a different kind of intervention horizon. At the undergraduate and early graduate level, responsibility for language acquisition rests largely with students. However, support mechanisms may be considered for advanced graduate students with demonstrably strong research trajectories and rare specializations who nonetheless lack access to structured language training. Such students could be integrated into long-term strategic projects—such as those proposed in section 7.1.2—where tailored language support is embedded in broader academic development frameworks.

7.3 Training Byzantinists: Graduate Models, Career Pipelines, and Peer Networks

7.3.1 Bridging Expertise: A Model for Graduate Training in Byzantine Studies

Graduate-level training in Byzantine studies in Türkiye remains marked by significant asymmetry. While a handful of institutions offer robust supervision and interdisciplinary curricula, many students pursue advanced study in environments where mentorship is uneven, coursework is limited, and peer networks remain fragile. As chapter 6 documented, this unevenness has consequences not only for scholarly development, but also for the long-term reproduction and cohesion of the field. It weakens pipelines of expertise, fragments intellectual lineages, and isolates promising students from one another.

To address these challenges, this chapter proposes the establishment of a joint Late Antique and Byzantine Studies Graduate Program, coordinated across multiple institutions in Türkiye—an exemplary and state-of-the-art model designed to consolidate capacity, build networks, and set academic standards for the field. Rather than centralizing resources in a single university, the program would operate as a distributed collaboration, drawing on the strengths of existing faculty, research centers, and regional clusters. It could be anchored in a dual-track structure that reflects the methodological diversity of the field while fostering meaningful cross-pollination between its textual and material traditions.

The program could include a textual–historical track, emphasizing training in historiography, philology, source criticism, and comparative historical method, alongside a material–visual culture track, focused on archaeology, architectural history, art history, conservation, and heritage studies. These two tracks would be linked by a shared curricular core consisting of seminars in historical theory, disciplinary reflexivity, and digital humanities. Students would be encouraged to move across tracks through modular electives, enabling them to engage with multiple bodies of evidence, approaches, and scholarly conversations.

A range of infrastructural mechanisms would support this collaborative model. Training in digital methods—such as GIS, 3D modeling, textual encoding, and digital curation—could be embedded across both tracks through collaboration with international partners who already possess deep expertise in these domains. Rotating summer institutes and thesis workshops, hosted by research centers in Istanbul or in emerging regional hubs, would provide students with immersive training environments and foster inter-institutional peer networks. Importantly, the regulatory framework already exists for such a program: Turkish universities are authorized to establish joint MA or PhD programs under the YÖK regulation on domestic inter-university cooperation. This offers a clear institutional pathway for students to benefit from multiple academic settings while earning a unified credential.

The success of such a program, however, will depend not only on structure but on the diversity and range of its contributors. A number of scholars working outside flagship institutions—or entirely outside institutional affiliation—hold rare and specialized expertise that would significantly enrich the program. Their inclusion as visiting faculty, modular instructors, or thesis co-advisors would signal a strong commitment to equity, intellectual inclusivity, and field-wide collaboration. While the administrative and financial logistics of involving such scholars may be complex, they are far from insurmountable. With determination and strategic coordination—especially through research centers and targeted grant schemes—such participation can be institutionalized.

In the realm of intellectual history, for example, scholars such as Siren Çelik (Marmara University), a leading specialist in late Byzantine political thought and literature, widely known for her monograph on Manuel II Palaiologos and her Turkish translations of Byzantine texts; Aslıhan Akışık Karakullukçu, an independent scholar

whose work traces the transformation of imperial political concepts across the Byzantine-Ottoman transition; and Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, trained jointly at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and Boğaziçi University, and an expert in late Byzantine social and cultural history, exemplify the kind of critical expertise that lies beyond the conventional confines of military and political history.

In other domains that require equally deep specialization—such as sigillography and numismatics—there exists a similarly rich cohort of scholars. Alongside faculty such as Zeliha Demirel Gökalp (Anadolu University) and Ceren Ünal (Manisa Celal Bayar University), whose contributions anchor these subfields within Turkish academia, other scholars offer internationally recognized expertise. Nilgün Elam (Anadolu University), a graduate of the University of Thessaloniki, has made foundational contributions to the study of Anatolian seal collections and is currently involved in a prosopography project coordinated by the University of Cologne. Vera Bulgurlu, an independent researcher, is known for her pioneering work on the Aydın Aci seal corpus and her long-standing contributions to sigillography scholarship. Kasım Oyarçın (Ondokuz Mayıs University) offers a field-based perspective rooted in numismatics, particularly through excavations at Parion and the analysis of regional coinage. As noted previously, Esra Güzel Erdoğan (Marmara University), who holds two master's degrees and a co-supervised PhD under Ayla Ödekan and Nevra Necipoğlu, brings a distinctive interdisciplinary profile shaped by her research on funerary art and iconography, honed through fellowships at Dumbarton Oaks and CNRS.

Including scholars such as these among other specialists—through rotating modules, thesis co-supervision, or participation in summer schools—would not only elevate the academic caliber of the program but also signal a structural shift in how the field defines and distributes scholarly authority. It would affirm the importance of regional and institutional diversity, and expose students to an unparalleled range of methodologies, source materials, and intellectual genealogies. While such an undertaking may appear administratively and financially daunting, the long-term payoff—in scholarly innovation, inter-institutional cooperation, and disciplinary sustainability—is substantial. With institutional will, external funding, and coordinated leadership, this vision can be realized. In doing so, the program would help cultivate a more connected, reflexive, and resilient community of Byzantine scholars across Türkiye.

7.3.2 Strategic Mentorship and Career Pathways

Mentorship is one of the most critical yet inconsistently structured elements of graduate training in Byzantine studies in Türkiye. While some students benefit from strong supervisory relationships and peer communities, many face intellectual isolation and lack clear guidance on academic or professional development. This study proposes the formalization of mentorship structures through coordinated, field-level mechanisms.

Research centers—both existing and newly proposed—and the envisioned association GABAB can play a central role in this effort. They can coordinate peer networks, organize thesis and writing workshops, offer training in research design, and facilitate connections across generations. Mentorship should be understood not only as individual supervision but as a distributed ecosystem of support: including early-career guidance, publication mentorship, and access to national and international academic networks.

In addition to long-term mentoring relationships, early-career scholars would benefit from targeted training in fellowship and grant applications—a recurring theme across the interviews. Practical support in identifying opportunities, crafting proposals, and navigating selection processes is often missing from institutional curricula. Structured programs or even short recorded sessions—delivered by scholars who have successfully received such awards—could become regular features coordinated by research centers or GABAB.

By embedding mentorship into the broader infrastructure of field-building, this approach aims to ensure that promising scholars receive sustained, equitable support throughout their academic trajectory—from MA student to early-career researcher.

7.3.3 Integrating Fieldwork

Recognizing field-based learning as essential rather than optional marks a shift in disciplinary imagination. It reframes physical engagement with the Byzantine past as part of a holistic and ethically grounded scholarly formation—bridging textual and material epistemologies, metropolitan and regional knowledge networks, and academic and civic responsibility. Excavations, in particular, have played a foundational role in this transformation. As detailed in section 4.3.1, theses anchored in excavation sites have contributed not only to localized understandings of the Byzantine world but also to the empirical and pedagogical infrastructure of the discipline itself. Long-term excavations—such as those at Demre, Kadıkalesi, Olympos, and Amorium—have enabled the

transmission of fieldwork expertise across academic generations, forming scholarly lineages that reinforce disciplinary continuity and institutional anchoring. The intellectual trajectories of many researchers begin at these sites, where material engagement and site-specific analysis cultivate methodological rigor, interpretive depth, and disciplinary identity. In this way, excavation-based research is not peripheral but central to the production and reproduction of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

At the core of this vision lies the goal of expanding student participation. Structured mechanisms are needed to ensure that students—especially those from institutions without active excavation affiliations—can take part in fieldwork through coordinated placements, preparatory training, and recognition within their academic programs. These placements should not be left to informal networks or individual initiative but organized through institutional partnerships and national coordination. GABAB, in collaboration with research centers and excavation teams, could play a central role in facilitating such placements and offering logistical and financial support where needed.

In parallel, there is a compelling need for large-scale documentation and data-sharing infrastructures to support and amplify this engagement. One concrete proposal is the creation of a centralized, open-access database of Byzantine-period finds—ranging from architectural elements and ceramics to inscriptions and small objects—generated through collaborative input from excavation teams, survey directors, and affiliated research centers. Beyond serving academic purposes, such a platform would also enhance public-facing outreach, offer materials for education and exhibitions, and assist excavation projects in gaining broader visibility. In turn, this visibility could support the identification of potential sponsors or funding bodies, a recurrent challenge for many Byzantine-focused excavations that operate with limited and unstable resources.

Together, these proposals position excavation and survey not as isolated undertakings, but as integral pillars of field-building—offering students meaningful training, generating shared knowledge, and reinforcing the public and institutional relevance of Byzantine heritage in Türkiye.

7.4 Enabling Participation

7.4.1 Bridging the Center–Periphery Divide

The gap between metropolitan academic centers and peripheral institutions is one of the most deeply entrenched inequities in Byzantine studies in Türkiye. As documented

throughout this study, it manifests not only in disparities of infrastructure and faculty distribution, but also in uneven access to training, mentorship, and scholarly networks.

Rather than treat it as a separate domain, this challenge runs as a transversal concern across nearly all the proposals in this chapter. From rotating summer schools and joint degree programs to digital platforms and regional research centers, each intervention aims—directly or indirectly—to mitigate this asymmetry and enable broader participation.

While the tools vary—mobility grants, guest lectureships, or shared curricular modules—the principle remains consistent: to make regionality a shared responsibility, not an individual burden. Seen in this light, bridging the center–periphery divide is not simply one objective among many, but a foundational axis along which the discipline’s future equity and resilience will be determined.

7.4.2 Digital Tools for Visibility and Collaboration

Digital platforms are no longer peripheral to scholarly life; they are increasingly central to how academic communities form, grow, and sustain themselves. For Byzantine studies in Türkiye—marked by geographic dispersion, uneven institutional capacity, and limited access to specialized training—digital tools offer critical mechanisms for visibility, resource-sharing, and collaboration.

At the core of this emerging infrastructure can be Bizantolog, originally founded within the scope of this dissertation as a peer-led platform focused on supporting graduate students and early-career scholars. Built on principles of inclusivity, reflexivity, and open access, the platform demonstrates the potential of a participatory digital environment to address some of the field’s most persistent structural gaps.

This study proposes that Bizantolog evolve into a more robust scholarly hub through features such as a syllabus archive, a thesis repository, peer-review and writing mentorship channels, and a co-teaching module database. Social media, already used by Bizantolog to circulate announcements, event updates, and community news, can be further leveraged for public engagement, student outreach, and real-time scholarly exchange.

These examples are illustrative rather than prescriptive. The specific shape, tools, and priorities of digital infrastructure should be determined through collective deliberation—including the input of GABAB, university-based research centers, and the wider scholarly

community. Such tools not only support a shared pedagogical culture but also strengthen academic belonging across regions and institutions. While digital infrastructure cannot solve all structural inequalities, it can serve as connective tissue—linking institutions, individuals, and ideas—and enabling a more inclusive and resilient field.

7.4.3 Conferences, Journals, and Scholarly Communication

The development of Byzantine studies as a field depends not only on training and institutional support, but also on the creation of inclusive, rigorous, and visible platforms for scholarly exchange. Conferences, journals, and publishing mechanisms are not simply outputs of academic labor—they are its scaffolding: shaping what kinds of knowledge are valued, who participates in the conversation, and how the field defines itself.

This study proposes the establishment of a bilingual, open-access flagship journal dedicated to late antique and Byzantine Studies in Türkiye, echoing many scholars interviewed and recent calls.¹⁰⁶⁶ Such a journal—coordinated through GABAB and hosted by one or more research centers—would serve as a peer-reviewed space for high-quality scholarship at all levels. In addition to original research, the journal could feature translations, critical editions, pedagogical dossiers, and interviews with scholars, expanding the field’s textual ecosystem in both Turkish and English.

Equally vital are graduate conferences and thematic workshops, which should be developed as recurring, structured, and well-supported events. These should operate on the basis of public and competitive Calls for Papers, rather than invitation-only formats, in order to ensure transparency, inclusivity, and academic merit. By rotating host institutions and aligning events with summer schools or thesis seminars, such gatherings can become integral to graduate training while also strengthening inter-institutional networks.

Particular attention should also be given to supporting early-stage researchers in participating in high-level, specialized academic conferences. Attendance at such events often yields profound academic and professional benefits—but without financial support and active inclusion mechanisms, access remains limited to a privileged few. Selective bursaries, early-career-dedicated panels, and clearly advertised CFPs (as opposed to invitation-only models) would foster greater inclusion.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Necipoğlu, “Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies,” 166.

In this context, the 2024 workshop “Rethinking Byzantine Studies in Türkiye: Concepts, Terms, and Methods I,” organized by Boğaziçi University and hosted at the Pera Museum, marked a significant step toward this vision. Focused on historiographical blind spots, conceptual ambiguity, and disciplinary tensions, the workshop fostered sustained dialogue on the methodological foundations of the field. The inclusion of “I” in the title explicitly signaled its intended continuity as a recurring series—to be hosted by various institutions across the country—as part of a long-term strategy for collective knowledge production and academic sustainability. Supporting the institutionalization and expansion of this initiative under the umbrella of GABAB or through rotating partnerships would provide critical intellectual infrastructure for the next generation of scholars.

To deepen intellectual exchange and promote field-level reflexivity, a national calendar of thematic workshops and interdisciplinary calls—coordinated by GABAB and hosted on a rotating basis—could be established. These events would provide targeted forums for developing underexplored areas of research, fostering methodological innovation, and enhancing cross-generational dialogue. They could also serve as incubators for collaborative grant applications or publication projects, linking institutional strengths with emerging research priorities.

Writing support structures—including editorial workshops, peer review forums, translation guidance, and publication mentorship—should be woven into these events. These tools not only increase the visibility of emerging scholarship but also model scholarly generosity and field-level solidarity.

Taken together, these initiatives seek to embed scholarly communication within a more collaborative and accessible research culture—one in which intellectual rigor and inclusive participation are not in tension but mutually reinforcing.

7.5 Public Engagement as Disciplinary Practice

Although public engagement is not treated as a direct bottleneck in chapter 6, it emerges across the research as a vital domain of strategic action—particularly in relation to ideological barriers and the broader marginalization of Byzantine studies. As several interviewees emphasized, the field’s persistent invisibility in public discourse has reinforced its academic precarity.

This section proposes that public engagement be reframed not as an auxiliary or optional endeavor, but as an intrinsic dimension of disciplinary sustainability. Increasing public visibility—through cultural programming, media outreach, and accessible scholarship—can strengthen both the civic and institutional legitimacy of Byzantine studies. In this sense, public engagement is not separate from academic work but a strategic extension of it.

Nevra Necipoğlu's recent call for a dedicated Byzantine museum in Türkiye exemplifies the kind of structural intervention needed to anchor the field within broader cultural narratives. Such an institution would not only serve as a repository of material culture but also act as a public interface for historical education and interdisciplinary dialogue—a powerful gesture toward normalizing Byzantine heritage within the national cultural imaginary.

Building on these insights, this study proposes that GABAB coordinate a multi-pronged public engagement strategy involving both established scholars and early-career participants. Proposed directions include:

- Thematic exhibitions, community heritage events, and guided site-based programming in collaboration with local museums or municipalities.
- **Strategic media collaborations**, including podcast series, short documentaries, and accessible digital storytelling projects.
- **Public lecture circuits**, hosted in partnership with libraries, cultural centers, and municipal programs, especially in regions with rich Byzantine heritage.
- **Collaborations with university and high school student clubs**, organizing talks, seminars, and outreach activities on Byzantine civilization to prompt early curiosity and attract new talent into the field.
- **Outreach fellowships**, supporting early-career scholars in producing public-facing content—blog posts, short videos, educational modules, or youth programming.

Such initiatives will not only diversify the audience for Byzantine studies but also provide platforms for scholars to translate their work into socially meaningful terms. Public engagement, in this framework, becomes a scholarly practice in its own right—one that carries strategic, ethical, and institutional value for the field's long-term viability.

7.6 Rethinking the Field: Toward an Anatolian-Centered Future

As the preceding sections of this chapter have shown, efforts to strengthen the institutional, pedagogical, and collaborative foundations of Byzantine studies in Türkiye must be accompanied by a parallel transformation in how the field conceptualizes its own boundaries. The empirical diagnosis presented in chapter 6 made clear that the field's fragmentation, marginalization, and institutional precarity are not merely infrastructural—they are also epistemological. In order to flourish, Byzantine studies in Türkiye must engage not only with the mechanics of disciplinary life, but also with its intellectual architecture: how the field is defined, what it includes or excludes, and what kinds of knowledge it legitimizes.

Current definitions of Byzantine studies are largely inherited from Western academic traditions. These frameworks often center on Constantinople, high imperial politics, elite textual production, and narrowly delineated chronologies. In the Turkish context, this has led to a particular form of reductionism: Byzantium appears as an imperial remnant, disconnected from local geographies, communities, and post-Byzantine continuities. As several interviewees and scholars—such as Suna Çağaptay, Turhan Kaçar, and others—have emphasized, this narrow framing reinforces both disciplinary fragmentation and ideological resistance, prompting a need for a more inclusive, regionally grounded, and reflexive approach.

This expanded vision calls for a redefinition of the field along temporal, geographic, and civilizational lines:

- Temporally, it invites sustained attention to transitions: from late antiquity to early Byzantium, from Byzantine to Islamic, Seljuk, and Ottoman worlds, and to continuities and transformations in post-Byzantine material and cultural life.
- Geographically, it urges engagement with underrepresented regions not as peripheral to Constantinople, but as centers of rich local production, interaction, and memory.
- Civilizationally, it necessitates deeper integration of Armenian, Georgian, Syriac, and Islamic traditions—not as comparative footnotes, but as integral elements of the cultural ecosystems in which Byzantine history unfolded.

Such a reframing does not dilute the field; it enriches it—opening new questions, forming new alliances, and making visible previously overlooked actors, languages, and archives. This reconceptualization calls for a situated epistemology—an *Anatolian epistemic ethos* rooted in the layered cultural geography of the region. Rather than positioning Byzantine studies as an externally imported discipline, this approach anchors it in the historical and contemporary realities of the Anatolian landscape: multilingual, multi-religious, and intellectually plural. It encourages interdisciplinary methodologies, linguistic diversification, and research questions that emerge from local contexts rather than external canons.

Crucially, such an ethos reframes Byzantium not as an “other” to be explained, but as part of the shared heritage of Türkiye’s cultural and intellectual history. This shift has the potential to reposition the discipline’s legitimacy—not only within academia but also in public, cultural, and policy domains.

The aspiration to reframe Byzantine studies in broader and more grounded terms is not emerging in a vacuum. It builds upon a number of already existing intellectual initiatives, institutional footholds, and regional networks that can serve as scaffolding for this expanded vision. Scholars such as Suna Çağaptay have articulated the need for a “Turkish school” of Byzantine studies—defined not by isolationism, but by a commitment to rooted, interdisciplinary, and dialogical scholarship that reflects the specific positionality of conducting Byzantine research in Türkiye. This idea invites a reframing of the field’s priorities around regional complexity, entangled histories, and methodological plurality. Rather than emulating models developed elsewhere, the “school” Çağaptay imagines is anchored in place, responsive to its context, and capable of shaping global conversations on its own terms.

At the institutional level, several developments already signal the viability of this vision. AKMED in Antalya has long supported fieldwork, fellowships, and conferences that highlight regional variation and cross-cultural contact zones—serving as a model for how localized institutions can support globally relevant scholarship. It offers a replicable framework for other regions in Türkiye, where universities and researchers are well positioned to lead regionally anchored, interdisciplinary projects.

Moreover, many of the proposals outlined in this chapter—including the formation of GABAB, the development of interdisciplinary graduate programs, and the promotion of

public humanities—already reflect a shift in epistemic orientation. They point to a desire not only for structural enhancement, but for a more inclusive and reflexive scholarly identity—one that can grapple with contested pasts, pluralistic presents, and transregional futures.

Taken together, these initiatives do not yet form a unified movement—but they constitute its foundations. By identifying, connecting, and amplifying these efforts, the field can begin to inhabit the full range of its intellectual, geographic, and institutional potential. To advance this agenda, this study proposes:

- **Thematic conferences and workshops** centered on transitions, entanglements, and regionally specific dynamics;
- **Research projects** that foreground cross-cultural continuities, shared heritage sites, or interconnected artistic traditions;
- **Curricular and institutional frameworks** that support this vision as an expansion—not a rupture—of Byzantine studies: a reflexive extension that recognizes its entanglements with other disciplines, temporalities, and identities.

This closing proposal does not aim to replace existing models but to supplement and reorient them—inviting a richer, more dialogical, and more regionally grounded form of disciplinary imagination. In doing so, it affirms that the future of Byzantine studies in Türkiye lies not only in structural reform, but in redefining the intellectual horizons through which the field comes to know itself.

7.7 Conclusion to the Thesis: Toward a Participatory Disciplinary Future

This dissertation set out to examine how Byzantine studies has developed as an academic discipline in Türkiye and to assess the possibilities for its future institutional, intellectual, and social advancement. Rooted in the author's direct engagement with the field—especially during the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Belgrade in 2016—the study has traced the disciplinary contours of Byzantine studies through historical reconstruction, oral testimony, social network analysis, and participatory action research.

Chapter 1 framed the study as a response to both structural absences and symbolic moments: the underrepresentation of Turkish Byzantinists on global platforms, the fragile institutional status of the field, and the contested nature of Byzantine heritage within

national narratives. The relocation of the Twenty-fourth ICBS from Istanbul to Venice and Padua—following the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque—epitomized these tensions. At stake in this episode was not merely an academic event, but the field's precarious positioning between scholarly aspiration and political marginalization.

The research demonstrated that Byzantine studies in Türkiye remains deeply shaped by socio-political currents, fluctuating heritage policies, and entrenched disciplinary hierarchies. Despite these challenges, the field has evolved through multiple generations of scholars, often working in institutional isolation but connected through fragile networks of mentorship, collaboration, and intellectual lineage. Drawing on 35 oral history interviews with scholars across 23 universities, the study mapped the career trajectories, institutional affiliations, and formative influences of those who have shaped the field from the mid-20th century to the present.

Through grounded theory and abductive analysis, the dissertation identified recurring themes—such as mentorship, institutional disparity, socio-political influence, and scholarly perseverance—which were anchored in robust theoretical models. Notably, Nicholas Mullins' Four-Stage Model of field formation and the concept of institutional entrepreneurship proved particularly apt for explaining the transformation of Byzantine studies from a fragmented intellectual pursuit into a slowly consolidating academic community.

Social network analysis (SNA) added a quantitative layer to these findings, revealing the structural configurations of academic lineages and institutional collaborations. It confirmed that the development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye follows a trajectory that mirrors broader patterns of disciplinary emergence—characterized by central actors, uneven institutional support, and epistemic fragmentation.

Moreover, the dissertation employed participatory action research to connect scholarly inquiry with practical engagement. The creation of Bizantolog, a virtual community for Byzantinists in Türkiye, exemplified how digital tools and collaborative platforms can foster inclusivity, network-building, and resource sharing in under-institutionalized disciplines. This initiative also demonstrated that digital and participatory models can function as both research outputs and vehicles for disciplinary renewal.

Ultimately, this study argues that the institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Türkiye—though historically delayed and politically constrained—remains a dynamic and evolving process. Its future lies not only in securing structural legitimacy through university departments, research centers, and public funding, but also in cultivating reflexive, interdisciplinary, and community-driven approaches to knowledge production. In this sense, the field’s marginality may paradoxically become a source of resilience, experimentation, and intellectual vitality.

By weaving together historiographical reconstruction, methodological innovation, and practical intervention, this dissertation contributes not only to our understanding of how Byzantine studies has taken shape in Türkiye but also to broader conversations about the formation of academic disciplines under conditions of institutional scarcity and political contestation. It invites scholars, institutions, and policymakers to reimagine the field as a living, plural, and participatory domain of inquiry—one that both draws upon and contributes to Türkiye’s complex cultural and intellectual heritage.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation laid the theoretical, historiographical, and methodological groundwork for understanding the emergence and institutional trajectory of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. By mapping the conceptual terrain of the field and critically reviewing its scholarly and institutional development, this chapter established the analytical lenses through which the remainder of the study unfolds.

The theoretical framework synthesized insights from the sociology of scientific knowledge, institutional theory, and studies of disciplinary formation. Disciplines were conceptualized as both cognitive formations and institutional structures—shaped by power relations, legitimized through boundary-work, and continually renegotiated through scholarly interaction and institutional positioning. These ideas provided a powerful interpretive vocabulary to understand Byzantine studies not simply as a collection of research outputs, but as a dynamic, historically contingent field shaped by actors, networks, and institutional conditions.

In particular, the adoption of Nicholas Mullins’ Four-Stage Model and the concept of institutional entrepreneurship offered explanatory clarity. Mullins’ model illuminated the developmental phases of the discipline—from its early intellectual pioneers through its gradual clustering and partial institutionalization—while the notion of institutional entrepreneurs drew attention to the strategic agency of scholars who, often working

against structural constraints, have created pathways for the discipline's recognition and expansion. Together, these frameworks enabled a critical reading of the field's uneven development, offering a coherent model for analyzing both its growth and its limitations.

The literature review in this chapter further contextualized the study, identifying both the advances and omissions that have shaped Byzantine studies in Türkiye. While early foundational figures such as Semavi Eyice established crucial disciplinary lineages, more recent scholarship has engaged in reflective historiography and interdisciplinary experimentation. Yet, the review also exposed enduring gaps—particularly the limited engagement with systemic institutional critique, the absence of voices from underrepresented regions and institutions, and the tendency to valorize individual scholarly figures over collective structures. These lacunae justified the need for a multi-dimensional, methodologically robust study capable of moving beyond biographical or bibliographic accounts toward structural analysis.

To this end, the chapter introduced a multi-method research design that integrates qualitative depth with quantitative mapping and participatory intervention. The oral history project, at the core of the study, captures lived experiences and intellectual genealogies, while grounded theory and abductive analysis connect these narratives to broader theoretical models. Social network analysis complements these insights by revealing structural patterns in academic mentorship and institutional collaboration, and content analysis of graduate theses illuminates the thematic evolution of the field. Participatory Action Research, as realized through the creation of Bizantolog, further bridges scholarship with practice, providing a real-time platform for scholarly community-building and institutional engagement.

In uniting these elements, chapter 2 underscores the dissertation's contribution not only as a historical or disciplinary account, but as an active intervention in the shaping of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. It affirms the need to understand academic fields as historically produced and institutionally mediated, while also emphasizing the agency of scholars and collectives in transforming the conditions of their own disciplinarity. By situating Byzantine studies within this broader analytical framework, the chapter sets the stage for a critical and constructive engagement with the past, present, and future of the field.

Chapter 3 examined the foundational period of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, mapping its emergence through a complex interplay of individual initiative, foreign influence, and institutional fragility. Characterized by fragmentation and marginality, the early development of the field reveals a pattern of intellectual ambition constrained by political ideology and structural limitations.

The field's origins in the late Ottoman period were shaped by a multicultural scholarly milieu in which Ottoman Greeks, Muslim intellectuals, and European scholars engaged with the Byzantine past. However, with the establishment of the Republic, Byzantine heritage was selectively appropriated or sidelined, caught between competing national narratives and the demands of secular modernization. This ideological ambivalence persisted into the early Republican academic reforms, which, while modernizing the university system, failed to embed Byzantine studies institutionally. Instead, the 1933 University Reform dissolved earlier networks and displaced the few scholars who had engaged with Byzantium, such as Ahmed Refik Altınay, thus weakening the nascent field before it could take root.

The first structured efforts to introduce Byzantine studies into Turkish academia came through the invitation of foreign scholars—Sir Steven Runciman, Philippe Schweinfurth to Istanbul University, and Paolo Verzone to ITU—whose brief tenures introduced Byzantine art, history, and architecture into curricula and catalyzed local interest. Yet their contributions were not systematized into lasting programs or institutions. Their influence remained tied to personalities and short-lived institutional arrangements, revealing the vulnerabilities of a field dependent on external sponsorship and political goodwill.

Turkish scholars followed two principal trajectories: textual-historical and visual-material. In the former, figures such as Akdes Nimet Kurat and Şerif Baştav introduced Byzantine themes into Turkish historiography, often through the lens of Ottoman–Byzantine interactions. Despite state sponsorship for their training abroad, their academic paths were marred by political interference and ideological scrutiny. In the visual-material tradition, Eyice emerged as the field's foremost figure. His scholarship was pioneering, wide-ranging, and generative in terms of content—but institutionally isolated. Eyice's lack of a sustained academic lineage, despite his prominence, exemplifies the fragility of a field built around individual commitment without structural reinforcement. In contrast,

Doğan Kuban's work at ITU demonstrated how architectural history could serve as an intellectual bridge to Byzantine studies. Though Kuban was reluctant to self-identify as a Byzantinist, his leadership and institutional entrepreneurship nurtured a generation of scholars and fostered interdisciplinary engagement.

The chapter identified three enduring structural barriers that shaped the field's constrained development. First, the ideological constraints of Turkish nationalism—manifest in geopolitical sensitivities, civilizational denial, and academic gatekeeping—undermined the field's legitimacy. Second, institutional weakness meant that Byzantine studies lacked chairs, departments, and stable funding mechanisms. Third, despite notable individual achievements, the field remained fragmented, with little academic succession or coordinated scholarly effort.

Chapter 3 concludes that the early development of Byzantine studies in Türkiye corresponds to what Mullins termed the “normal stage” of disciplinary formation. It was defined by isolated researchers working in relative intellectual and institutional obscurity, with little formalization or consolidation. The contrast between Eyice's solitary intellectual legacy and Kuban's institutional contributions highlights the critical importance of academic infrastructure, organizational leadership, and mentorship in shaping a sustainable discipline. While the groundwork laid by early scholars created the intellectual conditions for Byzantine studies to emerge, the absence of coherent institutional strategies prevented the field from advancing to a more robust phase of disciplinary formation.

This formative period—rich in ambition but hampered by structural vulnerability—offers both a cautionary tale and a foundation. It reveals the necessity of moving beyond heroic individualism toward collective, institutionally supported efforts. Understanding these origins is essential for addressing the fragmentation that continues to shape the field and for envisioning viable pathways toward its integration and renewal in Turkish academia.

Chapter 4 shifted the analytical lens from pioneering individuals to the structural and intellectual ecosystem of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. It offered a meticulous, multi-layered analysis of 1,478 master's and doctoral theses produced since the 1930s, treating these outputs not merely as isolated scholarly works but as empirical indicators of disciplinary formation, mentorship structures, and institutional patterns.

This chapter deployed a two-tiered analytical framework that distinguished between core and contextual engagements with Byzantium and mapped theses onto two epistemic axes: material and visual culture studies (MVCS) and historical and textual studies (HTS). These dimensions provided a scaffold for interpreting both the internal diversity of the field and its larger structural tendencies.

The cognitive mapping revealed a strong dominance of MVCS, rooted in archaeology, architectural history, and heritage documentation. This fieldwork-driven tradition has shaped the mainstream identity of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Conversely, HTS remains a numerically smaller but intellectually coherent domain, anchored in sources, political history, and ecclesiastical studies. Though underrepresented institutionally, HTS exhibits methodological sophistication and transnational connectivity, particularly through mentorship models that encourage international doctoral study.

The thematic analysis of thesis topics indicated a persistent emphasis on cultural and religious identity, often framed through civilizational encounters and interfaith dynamics. There was a concentration on monumental and site-specific studies, particularly in Istanbul and select regions like Cappadocia, Lycia, and Cilicia. In contrast, there has been a noticeable decline in military and political history, offset by a growing interest in interpretive and interdisciplinary themes, including visual culture, memory, and periodization.

The social dimension of thesis production illuminated the central role of mentorship and academic lineage in sustaining and shaping the field. From the solitary example of Eyice to the collaborative model of Kuban, and from the Hacettepe excavation-based network to the globally oriented Boğaziçi cluster, academic supervision practices emerged as crucial vectors of disciplinary continuity and intellectual formation. Notably, mentorship styles that emphasized foreign language skills, international exposure, and interdisciplinary methodology have generated resilient scholarly lineages, even when institutional anchoring remained weak.

Institutionally, the data revealed clear asymmetries in capacity and specialization. MVCS is entrenched in faculties of art history and archaeology, while HTS struggles with systemic gaps in training—particularly in ancient languages and textual criticism. These patterns of institutional specialization also mirrored regional diffusion. The uneven

availability of doctoral programs, limitations in academic staffing, and administrative fragmentation all contributed to this institutional patchwork.

Despite these challenges, the chapter concluded that Byzantine studies in Türkiye is not a scattered field but rather a fragmented mosaic—held together by mentorship traditions, intellectual themes, and institutional niches. The existence of structured, though often disconnected, clusters of thesis production reflects both the fragility and vitality of the discipline. The field's evolution is marked by what sociologist Richard Whitley terms a “fragmented adhocracy”: a landscape characterized by weak coordination but high intellectual flexibility.

By analyzing graduate theses as artifacts of knowledge production, this chapter provided a grounded and longitudinal view of how Byzantine studies has grown, differentiated, and institutionalized within the broader terrain of Turkish academia. It set the stage for the next chapter's social network analysis by revealing the relational and thematic patterns that underpin the field's scholarly infrastructure. These insights are vital not only for understanding the field's past and present but also for designing strategic interventions to ensure its future coherence, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Chapter 5 extended the study's inquiry into the relational architecture of the field by applying SNA to expose how academic ties—particularly mentorship, co-supervision, jury participation, and institutional affiliation—have structured the formation, reproduction, and fragmentation of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Through a custom bipartite (two-mode) network linking individuals and institutions via thesis-related interactions, the chapter offered a dynamic visualization of scholarly reproduction across time and space.

The analysis revealed a field that is neither fully centralized nor completely fragmented but shaped by relational asymmetries. Dense institutional hubs coexist with peripheral or isolated nodes, revealing both vertical genealogical continuities and lateral dispersions. Seven major network clusters emerged, each shaped by distinct patterns of mentorship, institutional concentration, regional distribution, and disciplinary orientation.

The Hacettepe Axis emerged as the most consolidated and genealogically robust cluster. Rooted in Hacettepe University and extending to institutions such as Ege, Anadolu, Erciyes, and Cumhuriyet, this axis demonstrates vertical continuity in mentorship and thesis supervision, particularly in the domain of material and visual

culture studies. It represents the closest approximation to a disciplinary core as defined in Mullins' "cluster stage" formation.

The Istanbul Legacy cluster, anchored in Istanbul University, Mimar Sinan, Marmara, and Trakya, reflects the historical centrality of Istanbul's academic institutions. Once generative through foundational figures and monumental heritage, this cluster today maintains symbolic continuity more than sustained genealogical reproduction. Its cultural significance remains high, but structurally, it is increasingly dispersed.

The Republican Core includes universities such as Ankara, Uludağ, Gazi/Hacı Bayram Veli, and Onsekiz Mart. These institutions reflect the legacy of early Republican academic reforms and exhibit a mixed orientation toward textual and material studies. Though less densely connected than other clusters, this core bridges older state university traditions with mid-sized regional institutions.

The Connected Center, encompassing elite interdisciplinary universities like ITU, Boğaziçi, and Koç, lacks the genealogical density of older institutions but compensates with methodological flexibility, international reach, and high-profile research agendas. Functioning as strategic intellectual hubs, these institutions are structurally central to the wider and global academic landscape.

The Eastern Belt, consisting of Selçuk, Atatürk, Mersin, and Yüzüncü Yıl universities, signifies the geographical expansion of the field into eastern Türkiye. Prioritizing fieldwork-based, regionally grounded scholarship, these institutions remain under-integrated with central clusters, reflecting continued structural marginality.

The Bridge Cluster includes ODTU, Akdeniz, and Bilkent universities. Not characterized by internal cohesion, their significance lies in high betweenness centrality. These institutions mediate between disciplinary and institutional divides, contributing to thesis co-supervision and facilitating cross-cluster scholarly dialogue. They are particularly important for their integration of architectural history, heritage studies, and conservation science.

The Western Belt, comprised of Dokuz Eylül, Celal Bayar, and Süleyman Demirel universities, reflects a concentration of site-based research and heritage documentation in the southwest. While peripheral structurally, this cluster is growing in scholarly relevance and regional visibility.

These seven clusters, in their diversity, reveal a field that is stratified, patterned, and relationally dense in some areas but disconnected in others. The durability and sustainability of Byzantine studies in Türkiye depend not only on institutional expansion but also on the development of integrative ties and collaborative platforms that can transform fragmentation into scholarly coherence.

Temporal analysis highlighted a shift from centralized networks in the early stages of the field to more distributed and differentiated formations in recent decades. Despite some geographic and institutional diversification, central-periphery disparities persist. Some regional actors play crucial bridging roles, contributing meaningfully without always receiving formal recognition.

One of the most significant findings was the limited collaboration between institutional hubs. The field continues to be shaped largely by siloed mentorship traditions, and while jury participation offers some cross-institutional engagement, it often reinforces existing boundaries rather than dissolving them.

Another key dynamic is the role of foreign academic institutions, particularly Harvard, Birmingham, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and Illinois Urbana-Champaign, which have served as vital nodes in training Turkish Byzantinists. These institutions have enhanced methodological diversity and deepened global engagement for second- and third-generation scholars.

Viewed through Mullins' Four-Stage Model of disciplinary formation, the SNA results suggest a stratified landscape. Some clusters have achieved the characteristics of the "cluster stage" with sustained genealogies and internal cohesion. Others remain in earlier networking phases, lacking structural integration. Bridge formations operate in intermediate zones, often without long-term institutional anchoring.

Overall, chapter 5 demonstrated that the shaping of Byzantine studies in Türkiye is not solely a function of scholarly production or institutional presence but also of relational depth and connectivity. The field's current structure is the product of recursive mentorship, strategic academic placements, and the historical layering of scholarly genealogies. However, these structures are inherently fragile, vulnerable to generational discontinuities, institutional silences, and a lack of long-term strategic investment.

These insights laid the foundation for chapter 6, which shifted the focus from networks to the institutional architectures that sustain or limit scholarly continuity, such as programs, research centers, journals, and conferences.

Chapter 6 traced the institutional pathways that shape Byzantine studies in Türkiye, highlighting both the bottlenecks that constrain its reproduction and the bridges that enable its endurance. Organized around four guiding questions—concerning institutional existence, training pipelines, academic careers, and broader ideological frames—the analysis brought together oral histories, institutional mapping, and social network data to examine the field’s uneven consolidation.

The fifteen bottlenecks identified in this chapter reveal a complex, multi-scalar architecture of constraint. The absence of dedicated departments, the fragmented placement of Byzantinists across ill-fitting divisions, and the rigidities of staffing and classification systems undermine the field’s structural visibility. Career trajectories remain precarious, shaped by limited positions, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and ideological suspicion. Curricular gaps and the fragility of pipelines in language training, fieldwork, and mentorship further erode continuity, while the burdens of excessive teaching loads and administrative regulation curtail research productivity. These dynamics intersect with enduring center–periphery asymmetries: while Istanbul and Ankara maintain symbolic and material primacy, regional universities often operate in isolation, despite their significant contribution to thesis production and training. The result is a disciplinary landscape sustained less by systematic planning than by improvisation, informal networks, and individual initiative.

The four bridges examined in section 6.5 demonstrate how scholarly communities have responded to this precarious terrain. Research centers at Boğaziçi and Koç Universities provide rare institutional anchors, while symposia, workshops, and summer schools create vital platforms for exchange and training. Journals and edited volumes, though uneven in scope and continuity, extend the field’s visibility. The National Committee for Byzantine/East Roman Studies, despite its limited reach, signals an embryonic attempt at collective representation. These infrastructures, however, remain partial and fragile: they mitigate but do not eliminate bottlenecks, and their sustainability depends heavily on leadership, funding, and inclusivity.

Chapter 6 thus portrays Byzantine studies in Türkiye as caught between structural fragility and infrastructural ingenuity. The field's reproduction is constrained by entrenched institutional and ideological limits yet enabled by creative workarounds and the resilience of its practitioners. For the discipline to move beyond fragmentation toward a more coherent and sustainable form, it will require not only the persistence of individual agency but also the consolidation of collective platforms, structural recognition within universities, and systematic investment in training and research infrastructures.

Chapter 7 represented the forward-looking culmination of this dissertation. Building on the structural diagnoses and empirical mappings of the previous chapters, it articulated a vision for the future of Byzantine studies in Türkiye that emphasized not only institutional reform but also epistemic transformation. The chapter proposed a shift from critique to design, advancing actionable strategies to construct a field that is durable, inclusive, and reflexively rooted in its local and regional contexts.

At the center of this vision is the development of durable infrastructures. The chapter underscored the shortcomings of existing centers, which often depend on temporary funding and elite alignment, and advocated for a model of regionally anchored, collaborative hubs. The proposal for a national "Association for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies" further emphasized the need for a field-level entity capable of coordinating scholarly activity, advocating publicly, and ensuring inclusion across disciplines, institutions, geographies, and generations.

Curriculum reform constituted another essential pillar. The chapter recommended the creation of curriculum-sharing consortia to mitigate the uneven distribution of specialized scholars and outdated training models. It also advocated for the incorporation of reflexive and methodological modules to address gaps in historiography, theory, and interdisciplinary approaches. Language training in Ancient Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Armenian was identified as both crucial and under-supported, necessitating institutionalized, rather than person-dependent, pedagogical frameworks.

Mentorship was addressed both as a critical gap and a strategic opportunity. Suggested initiatives included peer mentoring networks, structured thesis workshops, and early-career fellowships designed to reduce the attrition of emerging scholars due to institutional opacity or professional precarity.

Beyond the university, the chapter reconceived public engagement as integral to scholarly labor. It called for Byzantine studies to have a visible presence in cultural and educational domains through exhibitions, podcasts, digital storytelling, school outreach, and thematic public events. Outreach fellowships were proposed to enable early-career scholars to create public-facing work without compromising their academic trajectories.

Perhaps the chapter's most ambitious intervention was its call for epistemic reorientation. Rather than replicating Western, Constantinople-centric, or elite models of Byzantium, it envisioned a relational, pluralistic, Anatolian-centered approach. This approach recognizes late antique, Islamic, Seljuk, and Ottoman continuities, as well as the post-Byzantine heritage and the linguistic and cultural entanglements that shaped Anatolia—including underrepresented but integral traditions such as Armenian, Georgian, and Syriac. The idea of a "Turkish school" of Byzantine studies was not presented as an insular project, but as a rooted and dialogical scholarly mode, contributing to global knowledge production while remaining reflexively grounded in its context.

In sum, chapter 7 charted a pathway from fragmentation to integration, from disciplinary precarity to strategic cohesion. Rather than offering a prescriptive model, it proposed an open-ended design framework, a search conference, that empowers scholars and institutions to co-create a Byzantine studies that is not only academically rigorous but also socially embedded, intellectually expansive, and institutionally sustainable.

Together, the findings of this dissertation affirm that a reflexive and sustainable future for Byzantine studies in Türkiye is both urgently needed and eminently achievable. Realizing this potential will require coordinated institutional mechanisms, long-term investment in mentorship and training, and a scholarly culture that embraces openness and interdisciplinarity. The strategies articulated in chapter 7 do not constitute a definitive blueprint, but rather a repertoire of tools—some immediately actionable, others aspirational or intended to provoke reflection—for strengthening the intellectual and institutional foundations of the field.

The study also acknowledged its limitations. Although it drew on a wide range of empirical data, further depth could have been achieved by analyzing thesis abstracts to better understand the conceptual and thematic frameworks of graduate research. Luckily, a recent project by Cem Almurat, Ferhat Sezer Kurtoğlu, İbrahim Erkin Göçen, and Kevser Gül has undertaken a large-scale survey of articles on Byzantium published in

academic journals and popular magazines in Türkiye between 1923 and 2023.¹⁰⁶⁷ Their findings—particularly on dominant themes, periodization patterns, and disciplinary clustering—largely correspond with the patterns observed in this study, offering valuable corroboration and a broader context for the study’s conclusions. Additionally, incorporating co-publication and citation analyses could have enriched the social network analysis by revealing other types of scholarly relationships beyond thesis supervision, jury participation, and institutional affiliation. Given the study’s intensive analytical focus, it was not possible to examine other dimensions such as the representation of scholars in national and international conferences, participation in fellowships, or other scholarly activities related to Byzantine studies. Finally, the dissertation did not explore gender as an analytical dimension, despite the likelihood that academic familism and patronage may perpetuate gender biases.

This research opens avenues for comparative studies of disciplinary formation in other national contexts or across other academic fields. Such comparative perspectives would deepen our understanding of how disciplines emerge, institutionalize, and evolve under different structural conditions.

As said, the origins of this dissertation trace back to an oral history project initiated at the Twenty-third International Congress of Byzantine Studies (ICBS) in Belgrade, aimed at capturing the testimonies of Byzantinists in Türkiye and celebrating their achievements at the upcoming Twenty-fourth ICBS in Istanbul in 2021. The project initially carried ambitions to produce a documentary. Although this was not realized, a website was created to house the interviews and a short video collage featuring pioneering scholars in the field. Excerpts from the interviews were also incorporated into *The Odyssey of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye*, an interactive exhibition curated by Koray Durak for the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium. I also delivered a paper at this symposium, contributing to the event’s broader aim of reflecting on the past, present, and future of the discipline in Türkiye.

However, as the oral histories accumulated, the emergent narratives revealed a more complex and often precarious disciplinary landscape. What began as a celebratory project evolved into a critical examination of the field’s fragilities. This shift was crystallized by the relocation of the Twenty-fourth ICBS. The symbolic resonance of this decision cannot

¹⁰⁶⁷ Almurat et al., “Articles on Byzantium.”

be overstated. The rerouting of the congress became a watershed moment that underscored the vulnerabilities of the field both within Turkish academia and in the broader political and cultural context. The relocation was precipitated by a convergence of factors: the lack of institutional support at state level, the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque, and international protest campaigns that, despite well-understood intentions, ultimately penalized scholars working in Türkiye.

This episode exposed both external pressures and internal fragilities. The muted institutional response, the absence of a coordinated academic stance, and the silence of many scholars were less a sign of indifference than a symptom of structural precarity. In a context increasingly shaped by academic repression—exemplified by the aftermath of the 2016 “Academics for Peace” petition and the police barricaded entrance of Boğaziçi University for days due to the ongoing protests against government intervention in its administration—this silence can be understood not as passive consent but as constrained speech.¹⁰⁶⁸

What the relocation of the Twenty-fourth ICBS revealed was not merely the institutional fragility of Byzantine studies in Türkiye but also its legitimacy gap. Despite its intellectual vibrancy, the field remains structurally vulnerable, capable of producing high-quality scholarship yet lacking recognition, protection, and integration. The very notion that such a prestigious international congress could be removed from Istanbul without significant domestic resistance speaks to a broader disjuncture between scholarly labor and institutional power. It underscored that symbolic inclusion is insufficient; what is needed is systemic reform to achieve durable legitimacy.

Originally conceived to highlight the vitality and achievements of Byzantine studies in Türkiye, this dissertation ultimately became a roadmap for resilience. It does not narrate a triumphant institutional arc, but rather documents a field in flux, a record of unfinished work, and a repository of urgent questions. It asks not only how the field has grown but also how it must continue to grow in order to endure, connect, and thrive.

Yet within this fragility, there were also acts of resistance. The open letters authored by the Graduate Students of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye Initiative, and the reflections

¹⁰⁶⁸ Dönbekci, Bayram, and Olgun, “Byzantium in Exile,” 68-69. The authors commented that this change in the administration could eventually put the future of Boğaziçi University’s Byzantine Studies Research Center at risk. Eventually, the Center lost its premises where scholarly activities and trainings were organized and was moved to a tiny office in a remote part of the North Campus, see Necipoğlu, “Institutionalization of Byzantine Studies,” 166.

later published as “Byzantium in Exile,” were small but deliberate assertions of public voice. They registered frustration and grief, but also a commitment to the possibility of an academic future. It was in this atmosphere that Bizantolog.org (Bizantolog) was born—initially as a support mechanism for graduate students and junior scholars, and eventually as a collective platform for reflection, skill-sharing, and network-building.

If the rerouting of the ICBS symbolized rupture, then Bizantolog embodied continuity. Fragile yet determined, it represented the field’s capacity for adaptation and solidarity. In this sense, the end of this dissertation is not an end in any final sense. If this work offers any legacy, it lies not only in the data it gathered or the proposals it articulated, but also in the infrastructures it helped to initiate and the collective energy it sought to cultivate. This dissertation does not so much conclude as it transitions—into infrastructures of possibility, carried forward by the very community it helped to map.

In methodological terms, this dissertation has sought to expand the parameters of disciplinary research by integrating analytical diagnosis with participatory infrastructural creation. By combining historiographical reconstruction, social network analysis, and participatory research action, it advances an approach in which scholarship is not only about a field but also actively involved in shaping it. This convergence of critical inquiry and collective design offers a model for scholars working within under-institutionalized or ideologically constrained academic environments. Rather than remaining bound to retrospective critique, the study foregrounds scholarly agency as a generative force—capable of co-producing the very conditions under which knowledge circulates.

It is in this spirit that the following epilogue turns to *Bizantolog*: not as an ancillary output, but as a member-driven, peer-governed scholarly infrastructure born of collective necessity. Emerging directly from the participatory ethos of this research, *Bizantolog* operates as a virtual academic community and an evolving community of practice. It exemplifies how, even under conditions of institutional fragmentation and epistemic vulnerability, new forms of collaborative knowledge distribution and disciplinary continuity can be imagined, enacted, and sustained.

PART IV: EPILOGUE

Chapter 8 – Bizantolog.org: A Virtual Community for Byzantine Studies

What began as a project of oral history and structural mapping—tracing academic lineages, institutional dynamics, and scholarly networks—gradually evolved into a strand of participatory action research (Figure 2.2). The study revealed not only the limitations of Byzantine studies in Türkiye—such as institutional fragmentation, center–periphery divides, and the absence of professional associations—but also the potential for collective scholarly intervention. These insights informed the creation of Bizantolog (Bizantolog.org), a digital platform launched in 2019 by graduate students to address gaps in visibility, connectivity, and continuity.

This chapter examines Bizantolog not only as a by-product of research but as a model of grassroots academic infrastructure. Drawing on theories of communities of practice, participatory culture, and the network society, it frames the platform as a digitally mediated experiment in scholarly agency and the redistribution of knowledge.

8.1 Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Anchors

The analysis of Bizantolog is structured around three complementary perspectives: communities of practice, the network society and participatory culture, and the digital humanities.¹⁰⁶⁹ These frameworks highlight how the platform combines grassroots initiative with the affordances of digital media to create new forms of academic infrastructure.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Howard Rheingold first introduced the concept of “virtual community” to describe digitally mediated formations that exchange information while fostering relationships and belonging, framing the internet as a transformative social force, see Rheingold, H. (1993). *Virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*. Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1993). Constance Elise Porter later refined the concept by distinguishing between member-driven and sponsor-driven communities, both characterized by shared interests, technological mediation, and internal norms, see Constance Elise Porter, “Virtual Communities and Social Networks,” in *Communication and Technology*, ed. Lorenzo Cantoni and James A. Danowski, *Handbooks of Communication Science* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton Publications, 2015). Within Porter’s typology, Bizantolog most closely aligns with a member-driven, professional virtual community. Bizantolog most closely aligns with a member-driven, professional virtual community.

Following Étienne Wenger and Jean Lave, communities of practice (CoPs) are “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”¹⁰⁷⁰ In Wenger’s model, CoPs consist of three essential elements: a domain, a community, and a practice (Figure 8.1).¹⁰⁷¹ Bizantolog reflects all three with notable clarity and persistence. Its domain is the shared commitment to Byzantine studies; its community consists of students, early-career researchers, and established scholars; and its practice is embodied in a repertoire of webinars, newsletters, and collaborative tools that circulate knowledge and reproduce a culture of collegiality.

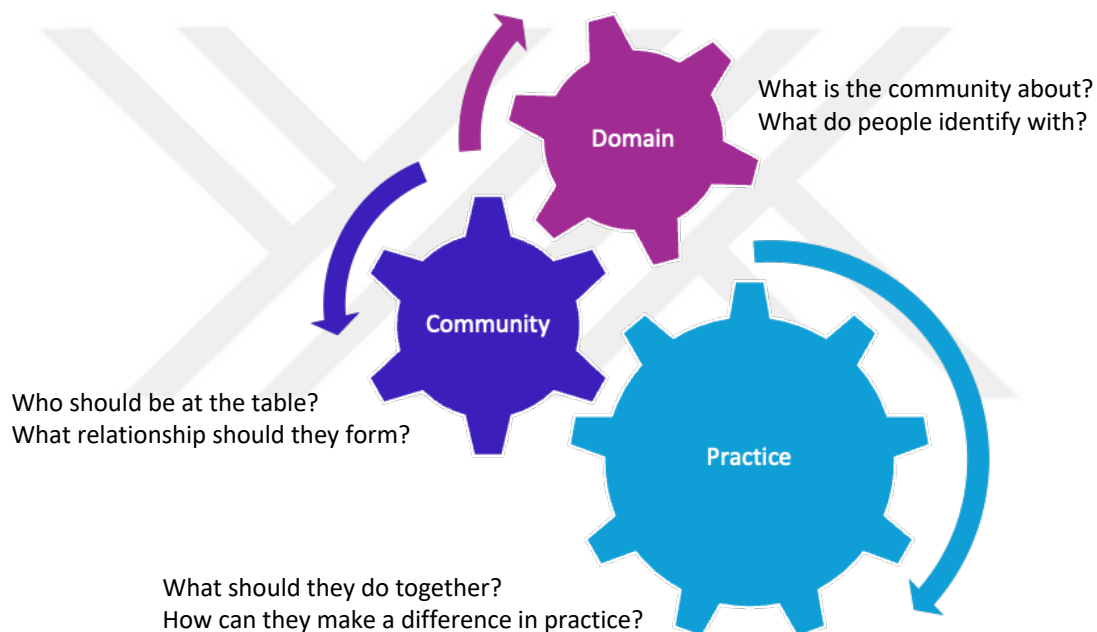


Figure 8.1. Structural elements of a community of practice.

(Adapted from Étienne Wenger-Trayner et al., 12)

This alignment with the CoP framework also highlights what distinguishes Bizantolog from traditional professional associations such as Association Internationale des Études Byzantines (AIEB), which often operate through formal memberships, membership fees, institutional hierarchies, and periodic conferences. In contrast, Bizantolog enables

¹⁰⁷⁰ Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); “An introduction to communities of practice: a brief overview of the concept and its uses,” 2015, <https://www.wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>.

¹⁰⁷¹ Étienne Wenger-Trayner et al., *Communities of Practice Within and Across Organizations: A Guidebook* (Social Learning Lab, 2023), 11-14.

continuous interaction, horizontal engagement, and low-barrier participation—qualities that make it especially responsive to the needs of early-career researchers and to structural gaps in the field. More than a digital innovation or networking tool, it functions as a prototype of how a CoP can be intentionally built under conditions of precarity and fragmentation. At the same time, the platform embodies both a social network and a community of practice: it fosters informal ties and support, but also sustains an intentional, collective practice of scholarly engagement—an especially valuable combination in a geographically dispersed field.

Manuel Castells' theory of the network society and Henry Jenkins' model of participatory culture together illuminate Bizantolog's digital dynamics. Castells describes a shift from hierarchical institutions to decentralized networks, where meaning circulates through the "space of flows"—a temporally and spatially disembedded field enabled by digital technologies.¹⁰⁷² Bizantolog operates within this logic: it distributes scholarly exchange across multiple nodes and fosters asynchronous participation through recorded webinars, archives, and reading groups, reflecting a non-linear temporality of interaction.

Jenkins highlights the cultural side of this transformation. In *Convergence Culture*, he identifies the flow of content across platforms and the blurring of boundaries between producers and consumers.¹⁰⁷³ This participatory logic is visible in Bizantolog, where members design programs, curate resources, and maintain infrastructure. Such practices exemplify "collective intelligence," in which knowledge emerges from distributed contributions rather than institutional gatekeeping. These perspectives frame Bizantolog not just as a digital project but as a microcosm of broader academic shifts—loosening temporal and spatial constraints, challenging credential-based hierarchies, and redefining authority through collective, networked practice.

The third framework is provided by the digital humanities (DH), which combine humanistic inquiry with the affordances of digital tools.¹⁰⁷⁴ Beyond technological

¹⁰⁷² Castells, *Network Society*, 407-59. In Castells' theory of the network society, the term disembedded refers to processes or interactions that no longer depend on specific physical places, institutions, or temporal structures. For instance, a disembedded scholarly exchange may occur entirely online rather than within a university, and disembedded communication can happen asynchronously across time zones without requiring face-to-face interaction. The term thus captures a broader shift from locally situated practices to digitally mediated, abstracted, and networked environments.

¹⁰⁷³ Jenkins, *New Media*, 2-4.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Sílvia Araújo, Micaela Aguiar, and Liana Ermakova, "Digital Humanities Looking at the World: Introduction," in *Digital Humanities Looking at the World: Exploring Innovative Approaches and Contributions to Society* (Springer, 2024).

experimentation, DH is defined by epistemic and ethical commitments such as open access, collaborative authorship, and the decentralization of scholarly authority. At its core, DH asks who has access to resources, who participates in meaning-making, and how intellectual labor is organized and credited.¹⁰⁷⁵ Bizantolog exemplifies these principles not simply in its choice of tools but in the way they are mobilized to redistribute authorship, access, and visibility. Its digital infrastructure supports collaboration across institutional and disciplinary boundaries; its commitment to producing Turkish-language, open-access content advances the democratization of knowledge in a field dominated by Anglophone and Eurocentric structures; and its peer-led workshops cultivate digital literacy as a core scholarly skill often absent from traditional humanities training.

More broadly, Bizantolog shows how digital humanities can operate not only as methodological innovation but as scholarly citizenship, linking teaching, equity, and sustainability. In a landscape of limited associations, scarce funding, and fragile institutions, it functions as institutional scaffolding, creating new avenues for visibility and recognition. By integrating digital tools with a commitment to inclusivity and shared labor, Bizantolog exemplifies digital humanities' (DH) critical potential as both a research practice and an academic intervention.

8.2 Origins and Principles

The genesis of Bizantolog lay in a shared recognition—sharpened during the oral history phase of this research—of the absence of accessible, inclusive, and durable platforms for Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Institutional fragmentation, geographical dispersion, and limited cooperation had long shaped the field, but their consequences were evident in the lived experiences of scholars navigating isolation, silos, and weak networks.

Participants of the oral history project described infrastructures as ad hoc, ephemeral, and unevenly inclusive. Sema Doğan observed, “When there’s a specific project or shared concern, communication works beautifully... But efforts to proactively build or sustain a platform are still insufficient in my view.”¹⁰⁷⁶ Existing mechanisms such as the *Istanbul Byzantine Circular*, shared mailing lists, or informal social media groups were often seen

¹⁰⁷⁵ For critical discussions of the epistemic and ethical dimensions of DH, see Johanna Drucker, “Humanistic Theory and Digital Scholarship,” in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Julianne Nyhan and Geoffrey Rockwell, “Introduction,” in *On Making in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Julianne Nyhan et al. (UCL Press, 2023).

¹⁰⁷⁶ Doğan, interview.

as fragile or outdated.¹⁰⁷⁷ “We had a group, like a mailing list,” recalled Tolga Uyar, “but personal disagreements derailed the project. And now, even email feels outdated. We need more active, dynamic channels.”¹⁰⁷⁸ Turhan Kaçar described gaps in awareness and access: “Even for major events like the Sevgi Gönül Symposium, I sometimes only hear about them after the program is released... There’s a problem of communication in Türkiye—ideological at times, personal at others.”¹⁰⁷⁹ The absence of cohesive infrastructure was especially keenly felt outside Istanbul. Ufuk Serin, based at Middle Eastern Technical University (ODTU), explained: “I don’t see strong communication or solidarity. Maybe that’s partly because I’m alone in this field at my institution.”¹⁰⁸⁰ Yelda Olcay Uçkan warned that without a shared platform, scholarly work risked becoming repetitive and stressed the urgency of collaboration: “We need to come together and figure out what’s being done and what still needs doing—urgently.”¹⁰⁸¹

Others emphasized interdisciplinarity and inclusion. Suna Çağaptay envisioned “a space where people from different digs, different specializations—ceramics, epigraphy, whatever—can share their findings, ask for help, and learn from one another,” with mid-career scholars acting as “connective tissue between older scholars and newcomers.”¹⁰⁸² Even when scholars gathered, intellectual community felt thin. As Zeliha Demirel Gökalp noted, “Even when we gather, the sessions are structured around presentations, not real discussions.”¹⁰⁸³ Informal relationships persisted, but without institutional reinforcement, their long-term impact remains limited. Frustration over this lack of cohesion was widespread. “The fact that such a platform still doesn’t exist truly surprises me,” said Ceren Ünal.¹⁰⁸⁴ “It should have been established years ago.” Even the National Committee for Eastern Roman/Byzantine Studies was described as inadequate. “It isn’t really institutionalized yet, nor does it fully include everyone,” said Engin Akyürek.¹⁰⁸⁵ “We’re a handful of people, and we all know each other—but those outside this small

¹⁰⁷⁷ The *Istanbul Byzantine Circular* was a privately organized e-mail newsletter, edited by Nevra Necipoğlu and Ivana Jevtić, that disseminated information on activities, institutions, and people related to Istanbul and Byzantium. Launched in 2007 and issued quarterly (January, April, July, October), independent of any institution, it was discontinued in 2023.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Uyar, interview.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Kaçar, interview.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Serin, interview.

¹⁰⁸¹ Olcay Uçkan, interview.

¹⁰⁸² Çağaptay, interview.

¹⁰⁸³ Demirel Gökalp, interview.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ünal, interview.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Akyürek, interview.

circle remain isolated.” Sacit Pekak likewise reflected on entrenched asymmetries: “For years, Istanbul has treated us in Ankara or Eskişehir as the periphery... as if scholarship only happens there.”¹⁰⁸⁶ Despite genuine collegiality, his hopes for joint projects had failed: “I always dreamed of joint projects... but it just never worked out.”

This need took concrete form during fieldwork for this dissertation. In the course of my research, I met Zeynep Olgun, then a graduate student at Koç University, who expressed similar frustrations. After a field survey she realized: “If I hadn’t joined that survey, I wouldn’t even know other students existed... It hit me that there was nothing to bring us together—not a graduate conference, not a journal, not even a mailing list.”¹⁰⁸⁷ Later she recalled: “I thought, only Şebnem would understand this. And when I opened up to her, she opened her laptop and showed me a presentation she had already prepared.” Soon after, Görkem Günay and Bahattin Bayram joined the founding team.

Bayram emphasized that the project responded to structural, not just personal, frustrations: “I prefer to define Bizantolog not as the initiative of four graduate students, but as a response to a structural gap facing the entire academic community in this field.”¹⁰⁸⁸ He identified two deficits: spaces for cross-institutional and interdisciplinary exchange, and mechanisms for reaching wider publics. “Despite all the progress Byzantine studies in Türkiye has made since the early Republic, much of the knowledge produced still doesn’t reach wider, non-expert circles,” he observed. “As an online platform, Bizantolog has the power to change that.” In contrast to elite gatekeeping, the founders imagined a participatory ethos—a space, in Burcu Ceylan Duggan’s words, “where everyone doesn’t have to compete, but can actually enjoy building something together.”¹⁰⁸⁹

From the outset, Bizantolog was guided by three principles: inclusivity, accessibility, and interdisciplinarity. Turkish-language, open-access programming sought to bridge generational, institutional, and disciplinary divides. Institutional support from Koç University’s GABAM was pivotal: though not primarily financial, its endorsement

¹⁰⁸⁶ Pekak, interview.

¹⁰⁸⁷ The platform’s story, including further reflections from its founding members, is recounted in a publicly available podcast episode released in 2023, Şebnem Dönbekci, Zeynep Olgun, and Bahattin Bayram, *Bizantolog: Buluşma noktası*, podcast audio, Suna Kıraç Libraries Podcasts: Hazine Serisi 9: Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye’sinde Bizans Çalışmaları, 2023, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/2XDTfqtWPAeJy7BiiQPiuF>.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Dönbekci, Olgun, and Bayram, *Bizantolog: Buluşma noktası*.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ceylan Duggan, interview.

provided symbolic legitimacy and crucial logistical support, anchoring the platform in the broader scholarly ecosystem. Growth was organic: Bizantolog reached about 250 members by the end of its first year and over 650 by its fifth—a trajectory of fully organic expansion that reflected both demand for such a space and the durability of its principles. Over time, additional members joined the original founders as coordinating members, contributing actively to the management, programming, and strategic development of the platform.¹⁰⁹⁰

A distinctive feature of its evolution has been its emphasis on digital engagement as both means and end. Unlike projects that outsource technical tasks, Bizantolog integrated digital literacy into its core. Members built website architecture, produced video content, moderated social media, and analyzed engagement through tools like YouTube Studio. These unfamiliar tasks were approached through peer-led training and mentorship, democratizing access to knowledge while equipping members with skills essential for sustainable participation in twenty-first-century academia.

In sum, Bizantolog is more than a digital initiative. It is a scholarly infrastructure born of necessity, sustained through collective effort, and committed to fostering continuity in a fragmented field. Emerging from widespread calls for inclusivity and solidarity, it offers a working model—however provisional—of how Byzantine studies in Türkiye might be reimagined as a connected, collaborative, and generative academic community.

8.3 Platform Architecture and Community Infrastructure

From the outset, Bizantolog was conceived as a membership-based platform with a distinct institutional identity. The founding team selected the name and designed its visual identity. Both the initial logo created in 2019 and the one updated in 2021 to reflect a more dynamic image were both designed by Zeynep Olgun (Figure 8.2). The choice of *Bizantolog*—rather than *Bizantinolog*—was shaped by debates in Turkish academic

¹⁰⁹⁰ Bizantolog was founded in November 2019 by Şebnem Dönbekci, Zeynep Olgun, and Görkem Günay, with Bahattin Bayram joining as a founding member in December 2019. Over time, coordination of the platform was carried out by successive teams. The first coordinating member beyond the founders was Umut Var, who served from May 2020 to June 2022. A second wave of coordinators joined in July 2022: Uğurcan Koşdemir (until May 2024), Hayriye Bilici (until June 2024), Fatma Yaşar (ongoing), and Elçin Yalınkılıç (until February 2025). In March 2025, Melis Yordamcı and Gökhan Şanlı joined as the third generation of coordinating members. This evolving structure reflects the platform's collaborative and time-bound model of governance.

terminology, with the simpler form preferred; the final period in the name was intended to signal closure to this ambiguity.¹⁰⁹¹

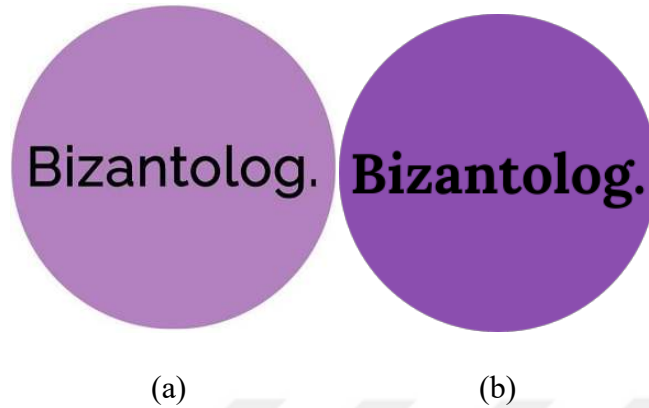


Figure 8.2: Logos of Bizantolog.org: (a) initial logo used from 2019 to 2021 (left), (b) updated logo used since 2021.

Early attention was given to establishing norms through a published vision, mission, and values statement, which emphasized collaborative scholarship, mutual respect, solidarity, and digital security. These were codified in community guidelines accessible on the website, creating a normative framework that fostered trust and collegiality across a diverse membership.¹⁰⁹²

Initially, the platform used WildApricot, a paid membership system supported by GABAM, to manage applications, announcements, and forums. Membership was divided into two tiers: general members and content-contributing members, with eligibility limited to graduate students and degree-holders in late antique and Byzantine studies. However, growth and rising interest from undergraduates and enthusiasts soon made this model restrictive. Increasing subscription costs and the team's growing technical competence prompted a transition to WordPress.¹⁰⁹³ The transition, carried out between November 2022 and January 2023, was launched in March 2023 after delays caused by

¹⁰⁹¹ Durak, *Odyssey*, 15; Koray Durak, "Lise kitapları üzerinden Türkiye'de Bizans ve Bizantologların algılanışı," *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi*, no. 229 (Ocak 2013); Atasoy, "Semavi Eyice."

¹⁰⁹² "Hikayemiz / Our Story," <https://bizantolog.org/anasayfa/hikayemiz/>.

¹⁰⁹³ Between 2019 and 2022, GABAM provided financial support for the platform's technological infrastructure, covering costs associated with services such as WildApricot, Zoom, Google Drive, and domain name subscriptions. The largest share of the budget was allocated to WildApricot. Beginning in 2022, and with the transfer of the website to WordPress, these expenses were gradually assumed by the founding members themselves—particularly as GABAM's financial support began to diminish. The annual cost, which initially averaged around 150 USD in 2022 and 2023, increased significantly—exceeding 300 USD by 2024—due largely to price hikes by service providers, most notably Zoom.

the February 2023 earthquake. This migration reduced costs, expanded access, and introduced tiered membership: doctorate and student members with author privileges, and “amateur members” with subscriber access. Coordination remained in the hands of a rotating executive team.¹⁰⁹⁴

The transition also marked a shift from a website-centered model to one emphasizing social media, especially X (formerly Twitter), for real-time communication and visibility. By late 2024, Bizantolog had more than 650 members, with growth accelerating alongside these changes: 52 members in its first month, 141 by six months, 250 by its first anniversary, 350 in its second year, 400 in the third, 550 in the fourth, and 650 in the fifth. This steady, organic expansion reflected the platform’s adaptability and its appeal to undergraduates, independent researchers, and non-institutional participants.

Social media engagement has been central since launch. The platform’s first teaser was posted on November 19, 2019, followed by its public debut on November 27, marking the public release of the website and the beginning of the membership application process, featuring the homepage and key platform aims (Figure 8.3). While X has remained the most active channel, Bizantolog also maintains accounts on Instagram and Facebook, used for announcements and content dissemination. As of June 2025, it had 5,654 followers on X, 1,548 on Instagram, and 1,085 on Facebook—growth achieved entirely organically, without promotional campaigns.

Although X (formerly Twitter) has remained the platform’s most active and visible social media channel, Bizantolog also established accounts on Instagram and Facebook, both of which have been used consistently for announcements and content dissemination. As of June 2025, the platform had 5,654 followers and 1,020 posts on X, 1,548 followers and 53 posts on Instagram (in addition to stories and highlights), and 1,085 followers and 45 posts on Facebook. Significantly, this growth has occurred entirely organically: the platform has not pursued any promotional campaigns, follower acquisition strategies, or efforts to increase views or engagement metrics. These metrics compare favorably with institutional actors: GABAM had 3,047 followers on X and 1,898 on Instagram, while

¹⁰⁹⁴ Membership categories in WordPress are defined by roles and privileges. The executive team holds the administrator role, with full access to content and user data. Pending applicants are listed as “membership applications.” Accepted members fall into three groups: Doctorate Members (PhDs in Byzantine studies) and Student Members (graduate students), both assigned the author role with rights to post and edit their own content; and Amateur Members (undergraduates, scholars from other fields, or independent enthusiasts), who hold the subscriber role, granting access to content and events but no publishing privileges.

Boğaziçi University's Byzantine Studies Research Center had 2,163 and 490, respectively. Bizantolog's reach demonstrates its ability to establish a significant presence in the digital public sphere despite its grassroots character.

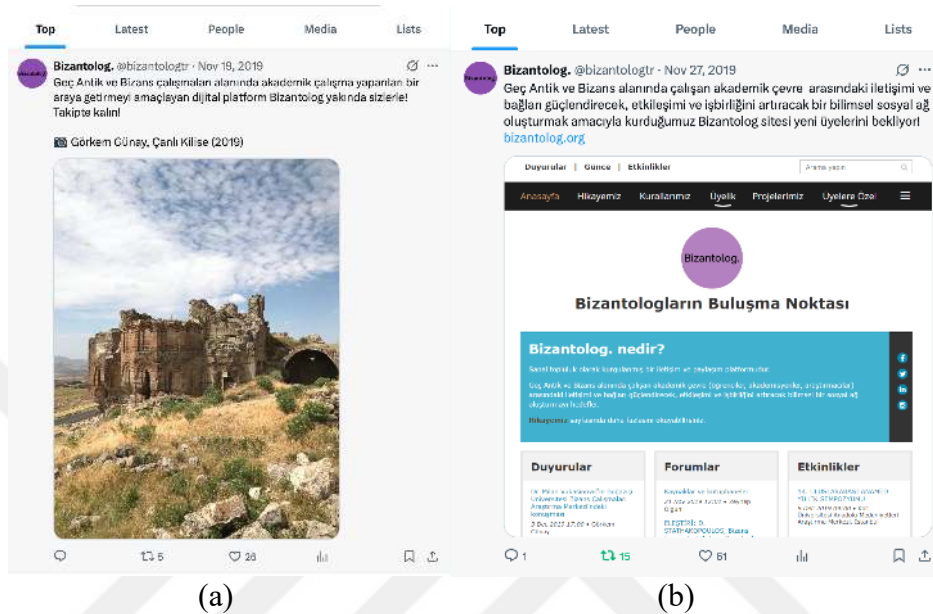


Figure 8.3: First social media posts of Bizantolog.org on X (formerly Twitter): (a) teaser shared on November 19, 2019, (b) launch post from November 27, 2019.

Beyond social media, the platform developed durable content repositories. Its YouTube channel, functioning as an open-access archive of webinars, lectures, and event highlights, had surpassed 160,000 views and 25,000 watch hours by June 2025. Email communication has also been central: after initial ad hoc announcements, a structured weekly newsletter was introduced in March 2023. By its 100th issue in June 2025, the newsletter had become connective infrastructure for a geographically dispersed and precariously positioned community—providing updates on events, publications, funding opportunities, and jobs, and reinforcing continuity and cohesion. All issues are archived online for transparency and long-term access.

8.4 Activities of the Platform

Bizantolog's activities reflect its core principles of accessibility, collaboration, and knowledge exchange. Designed to supplement uneven institutional curricula, they have provided inclusive spaces for scholarly interaction and intellectual enrichment. What follows is a thematic overview of the platform's main initiatives—each responding to critical gaps in training and exchange while fostering community across disciplinary and institutional divides.

8.4.1 Reading Groups

Launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bizantolog's reading groups became vital spaces for continuity and exchange when in-person activities halted. From April to July 2020, ten sessions were organized around member-proposed themes, with collaboratively chosen texts and frequent participation from the authors themselves.¹⁰⁹⁵ Topics reflected the community's inclusivity and intellectual range, spanning the historiographical significance of pandemics, the concept of late antiquity, Byzantine gender studies, the Fourth Crusade, spolia, maritime history, urban and rural settlements, the sociopolitical role of monasteries, Peter Brown's "holy man" thesis, and cultural perceptions of Byzantium.

Attendance quickly grew from a small circle of founders to 15–20 participants, including graduate students, early-career researchers, and senior academics. The groups fostered knowledge exchange, mentorship, and methodological reflection across history, art history, archaeology, philology, and architectural history—fields often siloed in traditional settings. For many, the experience was formative. As Murat Keçiş recalled: "Those sessions were incredibly enjoyable. Every two weeks, I'd say to myself, 'Yes! There's a Bizantolog meeting tonight.' I'd reread the articles—some I had read before, some I hadn't—very carefully, trying to contribute, ask questions, and if it was related to my field, I enjoyed it immensely. I tried never to miss a session. I would gather all my students and say, 'Tonight there's Bizantolog—we're going.'"¹⁰⁹⁶

The success of the series stemmed from timely response to pandemic isolation, active involvement of scholars, and a format that encouraged participant-led themes. It not only boosted Bizantolog's visibility and membership but also modeled how digital platforms

¹⁰⁹⁵ "Bizantolog pandemi okuma grubu," <https://bizantolog.org/etkinliklerimiz/okuma-grubu/>.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Keçiş, interview.

could host meaningful discussion, peer mentorship, and interdisciplinary learning. Although discontinued after 2020, the reading groups remain a striking example of how quickly a decentralized platform could mobilize academic energy, setting the tone for later webinars, workshops, and summer schools.

8.4.2 *Sinan Sertel Memorial Webinars*

Among *Bizantolog*'s initiatives, the Sinan Sertel Byzantine Material Culture Webinars have emerged as a flagship series that embodies the platform's mission of fostering scholarly visibility, intergenerational dialogue, and intellectual continuity. Conceived after the passing of Sinan Sertel—field supervisor of the Olympos Excavation—in May 2019, the webinars were envisioned as both a commemoration and a space of scholarly solidarity.¹⁰⁹⁷ They remain the first and only regular forum in Türkiye dedicated exclusively to graduate students in late antique and Byzantine studies.

The inaugural webinar, held on 19 May 2020 in collaboration with the Olympos Excavation team, was originally planned as a face-to-face memorial. Pandemic restrictions made this impossible, but the online format created an opportunity to expand the event into a new kind of academic initiative. The response was overwhelming: more than 100 participants attended, surpassing the Zoom account's capacity. As the organizers explained in the abstract booklet: "Thus, we decided to organize an academic event where young researchers could share their work in order to keep Sinan's memory alive... Our aim is to organize this academic event annually to strengthen communication and connections among young researchers, and to enhance interaction and collaboration."¹⁰⁹⁸

Since then, the event has been held annually, each edition structured around a theme and anchored by a keynote lecture from a senior scholar. In 2020 it opened with Byzantine material culture, introduced by Yelda Olcay Uçkan and Gökçen Öztaşkın. Subsequent years focused on architectural sculpture (2021, keynote by Sema Doğan), monumental painting (2022, keynote by Nilay Çorağan), and daily life in Byzantium (2023, keynote

¹⁰⁹⁷ Sinan Sertel was a member and the Deputy Assistant Director of the Olympos Archaeological Excavations and a PhD student in Art History at Ankara University. He was tragically killed on May 19, 2019, during a dispute in Antalya's ancient city of Olympos. The altercation reportedly centered on tree-cutting in the excavation area. According to eyewitness accounts, Sertel was stabbed to death in that confrontation, see "Olympos antik kenti kazı başkan yardımcısı öldürüldü," 2019, <https://arkeofili.com/olympus-antik-kenti-kazi-baskan-yardimcisi-olduruldu/>.

¹⁰⁹⁸ "Sinan Sertel Bizans materyal kültürü webinar etkinliği bildiri özetleri," *Bizantolog*, 2020, <https://bizantolog.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sinan-Sertel-Bizans-Materyal-Kulturu-Webinar-Kitapcigi-19-Mayis-2020.pdf>.

by Ceren Ünal). In 2024, the theme was wealth and power in Byzantium, held in hybrid format at Olympos with the support of GABAM, with a keynote by Murat Keçiş. Each year's program brought together graduate students presenting original research, and all sessions were recorded and archived on Bizantolog's YouTube channel. Calls for papers, programs, and abstract booklets remain accessible on the website, reinforcing transparency and ensuring long-term visibility of graduate scholarship.¹⁰⁹⁹

The collaboration with the Olympos Excavation team was especially significant in the platform's early months, demonstrating how meaningful academic initiatives could be launched outside formal institutional structures. Together with early support from Koç University's GABAM, this partnership helped establish trust and legitimacy for Bizantolog, broadening its recognition within the wider academic community. By its fifth year, the series had become a defining expression of the platform's ethos: inclusive, academically rigorous, and rooted in grassroots initiative. At the 2024 edition, a proposal was advanced to transform the webinar into a Graduate Student Conference on Late Antique and Byzantine Studies in Türkiye, inviting institutions, excavation teams, and research centers to collaborate in building a permanent tradition of graduate scholarship. As the organizers explained, the goal is “to deepen the collective contribution to Byzantine studies... by creating a lasting and meaningful structure” that brings early-career scholars together annually while honoring the memory of Sinan Sertel.¹¹⁰⁰ The ambition is to create a durable forum for intellectual exchange and professional growth across disciplinary and institutional boundaries. As of this writing, the proposal remains open, with no formal responses yet received.

8.4.3 *Summer Schools and Workshops*

Among Bizantolog's educational initiatives, online summer schools stand out as some of its most visible and impactful achievements. Between 2020 and 2022, the platform organized seven programs—including summer schools and workshops—designed to meet pressing training needs, particularly for scholars at institutions with limited

¹⁰⁹⁹ For calls for paper, programs, and abstracts, see “Sinan Sertel Bizans materyal kültürü etkinliği,” <https://bizantolog.org/etkinliklerimiz/webinar/>.

¹¹⁰⁰ “Sinan Sertel Bizans materyal kültürü etkinliği bildiri özetleri,” Bizantolog, 2024, <https://bizantolog.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Besinci-Sinan-Sertel-Bizans-Materyal-Kulturu-Webinar-Kitapcigi.pdf>.

resources.¹¹⁰¹ Conducted with various universities and expert scholars, all were free of charge and open to a broad academic audience.

Classical Greek Summer School series became a flagship program, reflecting Bizantolog's commitment to curricular supplementation and language training.¹¹⁰² Organized in partnership with Istanbul Medeniyet University and supported by GABAM, three successive editions (2020–22) trained beginners through advanced students. The initiative grew out of the collaborative ethos established in the pandemic-era reading groups and was designed by the instructor, Kutlu Akalın, and Umut Var, who became a member of the executive team as a result of this initiative. All 71 sessions across three years were recorded and uploaded to YouTube, together amassing nearly 136,000 views and 22,000 watch hours. Course materials remain publicly accessible, and the instructor continues to respond to questions in the comment sections, further extending access.

The impact is illustrated by doctoral graduate Mehmet Yağcı, who studied in an institution without Byzantine specialists. In his dissertation acknowledgements, he described learning Greek as the greatest barrier to his research.¹¹⁰³ While he also attended the International Byzantine Greek Summer School in Dublin, he credited Bizantolog's courses—especially the 2020 and 2021 cohorts—with providing essential training and a sense of belonging. He wrote that the platform “brings together the young scholars who will be the pride of Byzantine historiography in Türkiye,” while highlighting the contributions of instructor Akalın.

Alongside language instruction, Bizantolog organized summer schools and workshops in subfields often absent from formal curricula:

- **Byzantine Architectural History Crash Summer School (June–July 2020):** Led by Bilge Ar (ITU), this four-session, 12-hour online program introduced architectural vocabulary, typologies, and historiographical debates.¹¹⁰⁴ 27 members completed the course and received certificates.
- **Byzantine Coins and Seals Summer School (June–July 2021):** Taught by Kasım Oyarçın, Vera Bulgurlu, Zeliha Demirel Gökalp, and Ceren Ünal, this

¹¹⁰¹ “Bizantolog yaz okulları,” <https://bizantolog.org/yaz-okullari/>.

¹¹⁰² “Klasik Yunanca yaz okulu I,” <https://bizantolog.org/yaz-okullari/klasik-yunanca-i/>; “Klasik Yunanca yaz okulu II,” <https://bizantolog.org/yaz-okullari/klasik-yunanca-ii/>; “Klasik Yunanca yaz okulu III,” <https://bizantolog.org/yaz-okullari/klasik-yunanca-iii/>.

¹¹⁰³ Mehmet Yağcı, “The Period of Constantine Monomachos IX in the Byzantine Empire (1042-1055)” (PhD diss., Afyon Kocatepe University Institute of Social Sciences, 2021).

¹¹⁰⁴ “Bizans mimarlık tarihi yaz okulu,” <https://bizantolog.org/yaz-okullari/mimarlik/>.

eight-session program provided training in numismatics and sigillography.¹¹⁰⁵ It ran for 12 hours, with 41 participants completing the course.

- **Byzantine Glass and Metal Arts Summer School (September 2021):** A six-session, nine-hour workshop led by Yelda Olcay Uçkan and Meryem Acara Eser, focusing on production, usage, and archaeological significance of artifacts.¹¹⁰⁶ 33 participants completed the training. Recordings uploaded to YouTube have drawn 4,600+ views and 600 watch hours.
- **Current Research on Byzantine Seals Workshop (September 2021):** Co-organized with GABAM, this advanced five-session program featured Nilgün Elam, Olga Karagiorgou, Pantelis Charalambakis, and Christos Malatras (Academy of Athens, TAKTIKON project).¹¹⁰⁷ It provided a comprehensive overview of sigillography with Turkish translation support. Recordings have been viewed 2,200+ times with 110 watch hours.

In addition to its multi-year Classical Greek courses, Bizantolog expanded into historical and textual training to address critical gaps in Byzantine studies. These programs targeted early-career scholars and graduate students seeking to work directly with primary sources.

- **Textual Sources in Byzantine Studies Summer School (June–August 2021):** Organized with GABAM, this was the first comprehensive program in textual source analysis for Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Fourteen sessions (28 hours) featured nine scholars: Aslıhan Akışık, Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, Ferhan Kırıldökme Mollaoğlu, Kerim Kartal, Koray Durak, Kutlu Akalın, Murat Keçiş, Siren Çelik, and Turhan Kaçar.¹¹⁰⁸ The curriculum covered three modules: historiography (Early/late Byzantine, fifteenth-century narratives), literary sources (rhetoric, encomia, patria, poetry, hagiography, letters), and technical texts (military treatises, medical works, court records, lexicography). 22 participants completed the course. Eleven recorded sessions were uploaded to YouTube, where they have been viewed 9,700+ times with nearly 1,100 watch hours.

¹¹⁰⁵ “Bizans sikkeleri ve mühürleri yaz okulu,” <https://bizantolog.org/yaz-okullari/sikke-muhur/>.

¹¹⁰⁶ “Bizans cam ve maden sanatı yaz okulu,” <https://bizantolog.org/yaz-okullari/cam-maden/>.

¹¹⁰⁷ “Bizans mühürleri güncel araştırmalar çalıştay,” <https://bizantolog.org/etkinliklerimiz/bizans-muhurleri/>.

¹¹⁰⁸ “Yazılı kaynak bilimi yaz okulu,” <https://bizantolog.org/yaz-okullari/yazili-kaynak/>.

The Textual Sources Summer School set a precedent for structured, source-based training in Byzantine studies. By recording and sharing sessions online, Bizantolog transformed expert instruction into an enduring, open-access resource—one that extends mentorship, professional visibility, and networking opportunities to students and early-career scholars who might otherwise remain peripheral to the field. As Keçiş later reflected, “That summer school—on source studies—was almost like a digital reference work. You had major names in Byzantine historiography presenting back to back: I spoke on 13th-century texts, Siren covered the late period, and then there was Aslıhan, Koray, Professor Turhan... It’s something exceptional.”¹¹⁰⁹ He emphasized not only the content, but its potential to foster scholarly connection: “Maybe it’s not the same as meeting someone in person, but you hear their voice, their thinking. Later at a conference, you can go up to Koray Hoca and say, ‘I watched your summer school lecture.’ That’s a first step.”

- **Council of Nicaea Project Findings Presentation (November 2020):** Organized with Medeniyet University before Bizantolog’s first anniversary, this event brought together historians and theologians to examine the council’s political and intellectual legacy.¹¹¹⁰ Serving as the digital infrastructure, the platform demonstrated its capacity to host institutional collaborations and support member-led projects at an early stage.

Bizantolog’s educational programs have significantly expanded participants’ scholarly competencies, often bridging disciplinary divides and introducing new methodological tools. Participants frequently reported gaining broader perspectives beyond their primary fields, especially in areas requiring technical or conceptual literacy absent from their formal training. These programs fostered interdisciplinary awareness, linking historical, art historical, and archaeological approaches, while also strengthening research capacities by exposing participants to unfamiliar terminologies, frameworks, and comparative models. Their inclusive, interactive design encouraged reflection, exchange, and the integration of new insights across career stages. By combining accessible language, collaborative learning, and curated materials, Bizantolog has cultivated a community of practice that extends well beyond traditional academic settings.

¹¹⁰⁹ Keçiş, interview.

¹¹¹⁰ “Medeniyet Üniversitesi İznik Konsili’nin siyasi ve entelektüel tarihi projesi,” <https://bizantolog.org/etkinliklerimiz/iznik-konsili/>.

Participant feedback consistently highlights demand for more specialized and underrepresented areas of training: advanced archaeological and epigraphic methods, spatial analysis tools like ArcGIS, and higher-level Byzantine Greek, particularly to address regional inequities in language access.¹¹¹¹ Participants also called for thematic courses on ceramics, minor arts, iconography, and Byzantine cultural interactions with neighboring states, as well as programs that integrate historical context into art historical training and introduce key objects, sites, and museum collections. Across responses, a shared enthusiasm emerged for continued, diversified, and practically oriented education.

These initiatives have also served as training grounds for Bizantolog’s coordinating members, many of whom first joined as participants. Organizing programs gave them hands-on experience in all aspects of academic event management—identifying topics, liaising with instructors, designing curricula, preparing calls and promotional materials, creating webpages, processing applications, moderating sessions, and issuing certificates. Post-event, they edited recordings and maintained long-term accessibility through YouTube. These responsibilities built lasting technical and organizational expertise. By engaging with every stage of program design and dissemination, coordinators developed a distinctive blend of scholarly, digital, and administrative fluency, reinforcing Bizantolog’s capacity to function as a sustainable and self-directed academic infrastructure.

8.4.4 *A Conversation Series*

Launched in late 2020, *Bir Söyleşi* (“A Conversation”) became Bizantolog’s talk series, fostering interdisciplinary exchange and community-building during the pandemic.¹¹¹² Featuring speakers from history, archaeology, art history, zooarchaeology, and museum studies, each session combined presentations with moderated questions and answers. Several exceeded Zoom’s capacity, leading the platform to record and archive selected events on YouTube.

The first season (2020–21) included David Hendrix (Byzantine Legacy), Engin Akyürek (GABAM director), and scholars such as Turhan Kaçar, Meryem Acara Eser, Kerem Altuğ, Pınar Üre, and Siren Çelik. Topics ranged from liturgical metalwork and Byzantine infrastructure to the Russian Archaeological Institute and Emperor Manuel II

¹¹¹¹ Evaluation survey for the summer schools organized by Bizantolog in 2020.

¹¹¹² “Bir söyleşi serisi,” <https://bizantolog.org/etkinliklerimiz/bir-soylesi/>.

Palaiologos. A multi-speaker panel featured Zeynep Çakmakçı, Ceren Ünal, and collector Haluk Perk, while moderators like Aslıhan Akışık added further depth. The second season (2022) expanded thematically, with Cüneyt Güneş on the Byzantine thema system, Vedat Onar on Byzantine cats and dogs, and Bihter Sabanoğlu on modern Turkish perceptions of Byzantium. The third season (2023–24) featured Çelik again this time discussing her book *Anthology of Byzantine Poetry*, Suna Çağaptay commemorating Robert Ousterhout, Volkan İpek on Bizansconstantin blog, Murat Keçiş on research funding, and Nurtaç Buluç on Byzantine mosaics and Turkish ceramics.

The series embodies Bizantolog’s ethos of participatory knowledge and horizontal engagement. By featuring both established scholars and independent contributors, it broadened access to expertise, diversified topics, and reached new audiences. Underrepresented areas—zooarchaeological studies, cultural perceptions of Byzantium, artistic afterlives—were deliberately included. YouTube archiving further expanded access: by 2025, seven sessions had been uploaded, with 6,300+ views and 580 watch hours, all achieved organically. The series remains active in 2025, part seminar, part interview, part public humanities initiative. With declining engagement in online-only events post-pandemic, Bizantolog has begun exploring formats that emphasize physical presence and site-based learning, further broadening its approach to scholarly community-building.

8.4.5 *Walking Byzantium Series*

Launched in spring 2023 as *Bizans’ı Adımlamak* (Walking Byzantium) was Bizantolog’s first in-person series, coordinated by Hayriye Bilici. Each tour of key Byzantine sites in Istanbul was led by an expert guide, combining field-based learning with scholarly interpretation.

The 2023 season included five events: the Great Palace with David Hendrix; the Land Walls with Hüseyin Sami Öztürk; late Byzantine Constantinople with Siren Çelik; medieval architecture with Bilge Ar; and the monumental core with Kerim Altuğ. In 2024, the series continued with “Tracing Genoese Footprints in Galata” led by Sercan Sağlam. Participant responses—gathered optionally through post-event feedback forms—praised both substance and organization. Respondents highlighted the “academic depth and clarity” of the tours and their ability to elucidate the layered history of the sites. Many noted that the walks encouraged new ways of seeing familiar urban landscapes, fostering

spatial awareness and critical reflection. The small group sizes were often described as “ideal,” enabling focused discussion and meaningful exchange.

The series marked a pivotal expansion into embodied, place-based engagement, treating Istanbul itself as a pedagogical landscape. These events reinforced Bizantolog’s commitment to accessible, interdisciplinary outreach while resonating beyond participants. “The Bizantolog crew in Izmir will be quite envious of this event. A wonderful idea—perhaps one day these steps will reach more distant places.”¹¹¹³ This comment captured both the appeal of the initiative and its potential for geographic expansion, showing how site-specific activities can foster cohesion within a nationally dispersed scholarly community.

8.4.6 Collaboration with Student Clubs

To engage emerging scholars and expand outreach, Bizantolog launched the initiative *Öğrenci Kulüpleriyle Bizans’ı Keşfediyoruz* (Discovering Byzantium with Student Societies), offering technical and organizational support to undergraduate clubs in history, art history, archaeology, architecture, restoration, and cultural heritage. Through this program, student groups collaborate with Bizantolog and use its infrastructure to host events aligned with the platform’s mission of inclusive academic exchange.

The initiative is still in its early stages. Its first event, a webinar on Greek codicology and paleography, was organized in May 2023 with the Art History Student Club at Manisa Celal Bayar University. The speaker was Pınar Serdar Dinçer (Yozgat Bozok University). Pioneered by Ceren Ünal (Manisa Celal Bayar University), a recurring collaborator in Bizantolog’s programs, this partnership reflects the platform’s ongoing commitment to undergraduate engagement and inter-institutional networks, connecting student-led initiatives with academic expertise.

8.4.7 Collaboration with Arkhé Project

In 2025, Bizantolog partnered with the Arkhé Project to design a program titled *Bizans’ı Yönetmek: Demokrasi, Halk ve İktidarın Sınırları* (Governing Byzantium: Democracy, the People, and the Limits of Power), scheduled for 11–16 August in Şirince. Conceived as an interdisciplinary camp, it aimed to explore power, representation, participation, and dissent in Byzantine political culture while using Byzantium as a framework to reflect on

¹¹¹³ Ali Özkan (@35tireozkanali) reply to Bizantolog.org, “Bizans’ı adımlamak,” 2023.

contemporary debates about democracy and imperial rule. Despite its conceptual promise and alignment with Bizantolog's ethos of critical engagement and collaborative learning, the camp was ultimately cancelled due to low enrollment.

8.4.8 Bizantolog Academic Support Network

In 2025, Bizantolog launched the *Bizantolog Akademik Destek Ağı* (Academic Support Network), a peer-driven initiative providing financial assistance to early-career scholars. Funded through voluntary community contributions, support is pledged in advance and allocated to students with academic promise and financial need. In its first year, the network supported two summer programs: the Ancient Greek Summer Course at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University (7–27 July 2025) and the planned Arkhé summer camp. After the latter's cancellation, funds were redirected to cover the participation of two student members in the Greek course—demonstrating the program's adaptability.

The model emphasizes transparency and shared responsibility: donors specify their contributions and target programs, the executive team matches them with applicants, payments are made directly to institutions, and participants submit short reports afterward. The initiative embodies Bizantolog's ethos of inclusive, community-based academic development and offers an alternative to conventional funding structures.

8.4.9 Bizantolog.org as a Subject of Academic Discourse

Beyond organizing its own activities, Bizantolog has also become a topic of scholarly reflection and academic inquiry. The platform has increasingly attracted attention as an innovative case study in digital community-building, new media strategies, and alternative academic infrastructures within Byzantine studies. As previously noted, it is not merely an object of research but also a product of it—emerging through participatory engagement and collective action that exemplify the core ethos of PAR.

A significant milestone came on 24 August 2022, when a paper titled “Discovering Value in Virtual Scientific Communities in Byzantine Studies: Bizantolog.org. Meeting Point for Byzantinists” was presented by Şebnem Dönbekci, Görkem Günay, and Bahattin Bayram at the Twenty-Fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies (ICBS) in Venice, under the panel “New Projects, Research Tools and Digital Humanities” (Figure 8.4). The presentation, which attracted considerable interest, later

received invitations for publication in *Byzantine Readings*, the journal of Volgograd State University.



Figure 8.4: Bizantolog at the Twenty-Fourth ICBS, Venice (27 August 2016).

The roots of this academic visibility, however, can be traced to an earlier moment of crisis and mobilization. Following the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque in the summer of 2020 and the subsequent relocation of the Twenty-Fourth ICBS from Istanbul in 2021, a period of considerable uncertainty and disillusionment set in among early-career scholars in Türkiye. In response, several founding members of Bizantolog authored and circulated an open letter under the name Graduate Students of Byzantine Studies in Türkiye. Though formally independent of the platform, the letter—calling for greater transparency and the inclusion of Turkish students in ICBS—was made possible by the solidarity and organizational capacity that Bizantolog had cultivated. The same members later documented these events, offering critical insight into the political, institutional, and emotional landscape of Byzantine studies in Türkiye during that period.¹¹¹⁴

¹¹¹⁴ Dönbekci, Bayram, and Olgun, “Byzantium in Exile.”

The platform was also featured in the *Suna Kıraç Libraries Podcast* series—specifically, episode 9 of *Hazine*, titled “Byzantine Studies in Republican Türkiye,” released in 2023.¹¹¹⁵ In this public-facing academic podcast, Bizantolog was discussed as part of the broader intellectual history and evolving institutional ecology of the field. In addition, the platform was formally invited to the conference Rethinking Byzantine Studies in Türkiye: Concepts, Terms, and Methods I, organized by the Byzantine Studies Research Center at Boğaziçi University (29 November–1 December 2024). Although the founding team’s paper, “Virtual Communities and New Media: An Innovative Organizational Model in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies,” could not be ultimately presented, the invitation reflected the platform’s growing institutional recognition.

Most recently, on 23 May 2025, Bizantolog was the subject of a presentation delivered by the author at Spring in Byzantium: The ARHA Event for the 10th Anniversary of GABAM. The presentation titled “A Multi-Method Approach to Byzantine Studies: Oral Histories, Scholarly Networks, and a Virtual Community” offered a synthesis of the platform’s diverse modes of engagement and its contributions to reshaping the field. Bizantolog thus stands as both a scholarly actor and an object of study, reshaping the field while simultaneously reflecting on its own place within it.

8.5 Comparative Models and Institutional Benchmarks

To assess the structural and epistemic significance of Bizantolog, it is necessary to place it within broader models of scholarly infrastructure. Though it arose from gaps in Turkish academia, the platform is part of a wider landscape shaped by graduate-led societies, digital networks, professional associations, and thematic platforms. Comparative benchmarks—including the Oxford University Byzantine Society, the Association des étudiants du monde byzantin, ArtHist.net, the Mediterranean Seminar, Byzantine Studies Association of North America, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, the Mary Jaharis Center, and Khamseen—illustrate how academic communities organize, sustain activity, and engage wider publics. This analysis focuses on five dimensions: governance and institutional affiliation; event structures and programming; language and accessibility; media strategies; and sustainability of participation. While each reflects its own context, comparison with Bizantolog highlights what is unique, replicable, or

¹¹¹⁵ Dönbekci, Olgun, and Bayram, *Bizantolog: Buluşma noktası*.

constrained in the Turkish setting. Before turning to international benchmarks, the next section examines initiatives in Türkiye which, though often institution-bound and thematically broad, situate *Bizantolog*'s emergence within the national landscape of student-led scholarship.

8.5.1 The Turkish Landscape: Student-Led Initiatives and Structural Constraints

Graduate student initiatives in Türkiye that engage history, archaeology, and art history remain rare in Byzantine, late antique, or medieval studies. Most are institution-bound, thematically broad, and structurally fragile—dependent on short-term enthusiasm rather than sustained infrastructure. Issues of continuity, specificity, and visibility distinguish *Bizantolog*'s more resilient, field-focused model.

The Koç University ARHA Graduate Symposium (2013–2022, eight editions excluding pandemic years) provided a recurring venue for master's and PhD students in archaeology and art history. While not limited to Byzantium, it regularly included panels on Byzantine art, architecture, and material culture, reflecting the program's strong eastern Mediterranean orientation. Presentations were bilingual, though mostly in English, enabling international participation.

The Bilgi–Bonn Graduate Student History Conference, launched in 2024 and reconvened in 2025, has emerged as a promising space for interdisciplinary exchange. Organized jointly by Istanbul Bilgi University and the University of Bonn with support from the Tarih Vakfı (History Foundation), it also uses a bilingual format, again largely in English. The 2025 program featured panels on environmental history, political narratives, emotional history, and material culture, with an emphasis on the Ottoman and modern periods. While only a few papers touched on earlier history, the conference offers a collaborative model that could become complementary for Byzantine studies if its thematic range expands.

The Yavuz Selim Karakışla Memorial Graduate Student History Conference, inaugurated in May 2025 at Boğaziçi University, commemorates the historian while fostering solidarity among early-career researchers. Conducted in English and Turkish, it drew participants from across Turkish universities. Though its focus lay on Ottoman and modern history, with only marginal relevance to Byzantine or late antique studies, it represents a significant institutional effort to build a student-centered platform that may broaden in future iterations.

Other recurring initiatives in Türkiye adopt mixed formats, including undergraduates as well as graduates. The International Archaeology Student Symposium, launched in 2010 and held annually for sixteen editions as of 2025, is coordinated by rotating university archaeology clubs. Its longevity is notable, but its openness and broad scope limit its capacity to sustain deep, field-specific work, particularly in Byzantine archaeology.

A similar model is the Istanbul Archaeology and Art History Student Symposium, which has convened six editions since 2012 (2012, 2014, 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2023). Organized by the Istanbul branch of the Archaeologists Association, it centers on cultural heritage, urban memory, and the social role of archaeology and art history, often with a focus on Istanbul. Its attention to interdisciplinarity and public engagement resonates with *Bizantolog*'s ethos, but its narrow geography and irregular rhythm limit its continuity and scalability.

The 1st Art History Students' Symposium, held in June 2023 at the Istanbul Planning Agency Campus with municipal support, attracted wide participation. Its program ranged across art history, though the first day stood out for its emphasis on Byzantine art and material culture, with several dedicated presentations chaired by established Byzantinists. While a one-time experiment, its scale, openness, and public institutional backing mark it as an important peer-driven initiative with partial parallels to *Bizantolog*.

Finally, *Byzantium at Ankara*, launched in October 2019 just before the pandemic, was initiated by Sercan Yandım Aydın (Hacettepe University) and Luca Zavagno (Bilkent University). Initially a seminar forum in Ankara, it later partnered with Institut français d'études anatoliennes (IFEA), Koç University Anatolian Civilizations Research Center (ANAMED), and British Institute at Ankara (BIAA). During the pandemic it shifted online, organizing thematic series such as *Global Byzantium at Ankara* and *Byzantium and the Silk Roads*. In June 2020, shortly after *Bizantolog*'s first Sinan Sertel webinar, it staged a virtual graduate forum with panels on Byzantine archaeology, Greece, historiography, and the arts. The lack of a call for papers and invitation-only format limited inclusivity, and the event was not repeated.

Byzantium at Ankara has since remained faculty-driven and event-centered, with modest digital presence: an inactive website, about 1,400 Facebook followers, and smaller Twitter (607) and Instagram (914) audiences. Its YouTube channel hosts 16

videos with 344 subscribers. Programming has included a 2022 lecture series on Byzantine cities and the 2024 Connecting Stucco Conference. Yet its episodic rhythm, limited media continuity, and top-down structure contrast with Bizantolog's peer-led, digitally native, and sustained approach.

8.5.2 Peer-Based Scholarly Communities and Graduate Networks

Some of the most instructive international models for Bizantolog's institutional role are graduate-led or peer-based communities with a focus on Byzantine studies. These initiatives vary in sustainability, visibility, and programming but share a commitment to early-career engagement. Among the most established are the Oxford University Byzantine Society (OUBS) and the Association des étudiants du monde byzantin (AEMB); a newer example is the *Byzantio Explained Podcast*, which illustrates how media-based outreach complements more traditional structures.

Founded and run by graduate students, OUBS combines scholarly programming with community-building within the University of Oxford. Its annual international graduate conference, now in its twenty-seventh edition (March 2025), is the most established of its kind and has adopted a hybrid format since the COVID-19 pandemic. The society also maintains two mailing lists (*The Byzness* and *Oxford Listings*), publishes an annual magazine (*The Byzantinist*), and collaborates closely with the Byzantine Studies sub-faculty. This model integrates graduate agency into institutional life, enabling even one-year master's students to participate in Oxford's ongoing academic community. OUBS demonstrates how peer-led groups can sustain international visibility, continuity, and editorial output while retaining a grassroots ethos.

In a different institutional context, AEMB offers a more decentralized yet equally durable form of student organizing. Since 2008 it has facilitated exchanges across institutions and disciplines, anchored by the *Rencontres internationales des jeunes chercheurs en études byzantines*, an annual graduate conference that rotates thematically and geographically. The 2025 meeting, "Byzance intime: regards sur soi et sur l'autre," emphasizes self-perception, alterity, and emotional discourse in Byzantine contexts. Programming in French, English, and Greek, combined with a focus on accessibility, gives AEMB a flexible model of graduate collectivity that transcends any single institution and connects to a wider European network.

A more informal, media-savvy approach is exemplified by the *Byzantio Explained Podcast*, founded by graduate and doctoral students in Greece and abroad. Combining podcasting, social media, and informal discourse, it presents scholarly content in formats accessible to both specialists and general audiences. With active platforms on Spotify, YouTube, and Instagram, the podcast exemplifies a grassroots public humanities initiative aligned with Bizantolog's emphasis on media integration and multilingual reach. While it does not host conferences or formal training, its strength lies in cultural translation and outreach, bridging academic research and public engagement.

Together, these initiatives highlight distinct but overlapping dimensions of graduate-led infrastructure: institutional embeddedness (OUBS), trans-institutional federation (AEMB), and digital-first outreach (*Byzantio Explained*). Each sustains regular programming and a visible presence in the field. Their language practices vary—OUBS primarily in English, AEMB in French with some English and Greek, and *Byzantio Explained* mainly in Greek with selective English outreach. Despite these differences, all emphasize accessible communication and intellectual community. While OUBS and AEMB reflect established institutional traditions, and *Byzantio Explained* a newer media-oriented formation, Bizantolog's integration of new media, open-access pedagogy, and public programming represents a distinctive synthesis—locally constrained but aligned with broader generational trends in peer-based academic practice.

8.5.3 Cross-Disciplinary Scholarly Networks and Communication Infrastructures

Beyond field-specific graduate communities, another benchmark lies in cross-disciplinary infrastructures that span geographies and fields. These networks function not only as channels for disseminating information but also as informal institutions that structure visibility, access, and professional circulation. Two instructive examples are ArtHist.net, a moderated platform for art historians, and the Mediterranean Seminar, a transregional research network on the premodern Mediterranean. Though not dedicated to Byzantine studies, both offer durable, open-access models that resonate with Bizantolog's bulletin, collaborative ethos, and boundary-bridging mission.

ArtHist.net, founded in 2001 (originally as H-ArtHist), is a moderated, non-commercial mailing list for the global art history community. Now part of the Clio-online network, it operates through a curated email list and a publicly accessible archive of posts—ranging from job announcements and CFPs to exhibition reviews and

commentary. Contributions are multilingual (primarily English, French, German, and Italian) and filtered by an editorial board for scholarly relevance. While ArtHist.net has a dormant Twitter account, its model remains mono-channel, relying on email and its searchable archive. This contrasts with Bizantolog's multi-platform approach, but ArtHist.net exemplifies how sustainability can be built through editorial oversight, quality control, and infrastructural modesty.

The Mediterranean Seminar, founded in 2004 and now based at the University of Colorado Boulder, grew out of the California School of Mediterranean Studies. It promotes an interdisciplinary, non-Eurocentric approach to the premodern Mediterranean through quarterly workshops, themed panels at major conferences, a digital review journal, *The Mediterranean Seminar Review*, annual book prizes, and syllabus repositories. Like ArtHist.net, it communicates mainly through a moderated listserv and web archive rather than social media. Its density and global reach, however, distinguish it as a model of network-building grounded in thematic coherence and sustained collaboration. Many activities—ranging from NEH institutes to collaborative textbooks—are supported by institutional partners, philanthropic funding, and university consortia.

Operating with far fewer resources, Bizantolog's weekly bulletin nonetheless parallels these efforts by centralizing field-specific information and lowering access barriers for peripheral scholars. Compared to ArtHist.net's mono-channel format and the Mediterranean Seminar's reliance on periodic events, Bizantolog's hybrid model—curated content combined with open calls, social media dissemination, and peer-generated updates—represents a more participatory infrastructure. What emerges is not a hierarchy of models but a contrast in scale, technological flexibility, and editorial logic: while ArtHist.net and the Mediterranean Seminar emphasize stability and cohesion, Bizantolog foregrounds adaptability, openness, and horizontal circulation.

8.5.4 *Societies, Associations, and Disciplinary Bodies*

While peer-led initiatives offer flexible, bottom-up engagement, traditional professional societies continue to define the formal landscape of Byzantine and medieval studies. These organizations act as national or regional representatives within broader structures, organizing conferences, maintaining mailing lists, supporting publications, and at times

providing funding. Though distant from Bizantolog's peer-based model, they illustrate the legitimacy and durability of established infrastructures.

The Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies (SPBS), founded in 1983 in the United Kingdom, represents the UK in the AIEB. It supports symposia, publications, and an electronic newsletter. Closely linked is the *Byzantine Electronic Distribution List And Mailing*, curated by Rosemary Morris, which circulates CFPs, job listings, and announcements. While SPBS welcomes the public as well as academics, its governance remains centralized in an executive committee, reflecting a traditional top-down model shaped by institutional affiliations.

The Byzantine Studies Association of North America (BSANA) follows a similar model but has taken steps to include early-career scholars. Formed in 2006 through the merger of U.S. and Canadian committees, it organizes the annual Byzantine Studies Conference (BSC) and maintains an active listserv for news, calls, and publications. Graduate students compete for paper prizes, and simplified membership and conference participation have lowered barriers to entry. While still governed by an executive board and affiliated with AIEB, BSANA's mailing infrastructure, social media presence, and relatively horizontal culture make it more accessible than older societies.

Broader disciplinary bodies include the Medieval Academy of America and the International Center of Medieval Art (ICMA). The Medieval Academy, founded in 1925, supports the field through fellowships, annual meetings, and publications—notably *Speculum*. ICMA, based at The Met Cloisters in New York, promotes research through lectures, exhibitions, and conferences, with a focus on visual and material culture. Both exemplify sustainability and resource centralization built on professional dues, editorial governance, and museum or university partnerships.

What these societies offer in stability and reach, they often lack in agility, interactivity, and openness to experimentation. Their hierarchies, while necessary for large memberships and budgets, can perpetuate conservatism and limit opportunities for early-career scholars outside traditional pathways. In contrast, Bizantolog foregrounds horizontal collaboration, a Turkish-language content strategy, and adaptive digital practices. Though unable to match the institutional scale or funding of formal societies, it responds more effectively to the infrastructural gaps faced by emerging scholars, particularly those outside elite centers or disciplinary gatekeeping structures.

8.5.5 Thematic / Platform-Specific Digital Infrastructures

Another comparison for Bizantolog lies in thematic digital platforms that combine research, teaching, and outreach. Unlike professional societies, these initiatives are content-driven rather than membership-based, and unlike peer communities, they are not tied to a single graduate cohort. Their primary function is to curate and distribute intellectual resources in accessible, often pedagogical formats. Two instructive models are the Mary Jaharis Center for Byzantine Art and Culture and Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online. Both show how digital infrastructures can amplify access, curate expertise, and shape disciplinary visibility.

The Mary Jaharis Center, based at Hellenic College Holy Cross in the United States, defines itself as a digital-first institution supporting Byzantine art and culture. While it partners with academic institutions and participates in conferences, its main emphasis is on online accessibility. It organizes lecture series, workshops, and co-sponsored events across Europe and North America, making most programming freely available via recordings and live streams. Its website is designed for usability, offering event archives, bibliographies, and CFPs. Though not student-led, the Center models thematic specialization and digital openness, reinforcing infrastructure as central to disciplinary identity.

Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online, launched in 2020 by University of Michigan scholars, began as a COVID-era teaching aid and has since grown into a modular platform with video glossaries, conceptual modules, thematic presentations, and multilingual teaching tools. Focused on Islamic art rather than Byzantium, it exemplifies how media literacy and skill-building resources can be integrated into an open repository. Emphasizing collective authorship, multilingual access, and public-facing pedagogy, Khamseen attracts both academic and non-specialist audiences. Its collaborative, task-based editorial model contrasts with more hierarchical structures.

While Bizantolog does not function as a content repository, it shares affinities with both projects: public accessibility, media versatility, and integration of scholarly and educational aims. Unlike the Mary Jaharis Center, it is peer-led and decentralized; unlike Khamseen, it is not anchored in a single university or grant. Instead, Bizantolog positions itself between curated infrastructure and collaborative experimentation, using digital tools

not only for distribution but also for community-building and conceptual intervention within the fragmented landscape of Byzantine studies in Türkiye.

8.5.6 Comparative Synthesis: Lessons, Gaps, and Transferable Models

The cases above outline a varied ecology of infrastructures that support academic participation, knowledge circulation, and disciplinary visibility. Though differing in position, audience, and structure, they provide a framework for assessing both the specificity and broader relevance of Bizantolog's intervention.

Across graduate networks, digital platforms, professional societies, and thematic initiatives, common patterns emerge: emphasis on open access, peer visibility, and institutional collaboration, often through mailing lists, conference cycles, or online resources. Many reflect a generational orientation, answering demand for participatory and non-hierarchical modes of engagement. English predominates internationally, though multilingualism and regional specificity persist in localized or hybrid models.

Significant gaps remain. Long-standing societies rely on hierarchies and offer limited space for student-led programming. Platforms like ArtHist.net and the Mediterranean Seminar are mono-channel and slow to adapt social media. Even projects prioritizing accessibility, such as Khamseen or the Mary Jaharis Center, depend on fixed editorial structures or institutional backing. In Türkiye, Byzantine-focused programming is rare, and most graduate conferences, though valuable, struggle with sustainability, breadth, or digital presence.

Against this backdrop, Bizantolog is a hybrid, adaptive, generational model. Its use of new media, open-access pedagogy, and public programming addresses precarity while building inclusive spaces outside traditional institutions. What distinguishes it is not only its focus on Byzantium but also its horizontal governance, peer collaboration, and flexible digital strategy. While it cannot replicate the scale of formal bodies, it fills a crucial infrastructural gap within Türkiye and resonates with emergent ecosystems globally.

No single model is universally transferable, but Bizantolog has already adopted or reconfigured practices such as annual graduate conferences (OUBS, AEMB), curated mailing systems (ArtHist.net, BSANA), and modular educational content (Khamseen). Its evolution will depend on balancing responsiveness to local needs with international visibility. The broader lesson is that infrastructure is not merely technical but

generational, conceptual, and political—shaping access, visibility, and participation. Peer-driven models like Bizantolog are not supplementary but central to the field’s future.

8.6 Challenges, Risks, and Sustainability

Bizantolog has significantly shaped Byzantine studies in Türkiye, but its growth has been shaped by structural, technological, and epistemic pressures. These challenges reflect deeper contradictions in peer-led, non-institutional digital infrastructures. Assessing its sustainability requires examining the tensions it navigates—between openness and capacity, visibility and vulnerability, innovation and precarity. What follows is not a list of shortcomings but an effort to theorize Bizantolog’s position within the fragile ecology of digital scholarship.

8.6.1 Internal Challenges and Risks

A central challenge for Bizantolog is sustaining its volunteer-based structure. The absence of bureaucracy has fostered agility and experimentation but places heavy demands on a small, rotating group of contributors. As programming and visibility have grown, so too has the need for digital labor: content planning, social media management, troubleshooting, transcription, editing, and event coordination.

This often-invisible work is vital to the platform’s coherence but exposes contributors to cycles of exhaustion, especially when combined with precarious academic employment. The tension between Bizantolog’s ethos of horizontal collaboration and its limited resources makes burnout a constant risk without formal support or recognition.

To manage workload, the team applies a “four-eyes principle,” requiring a second member to review any non-routine communication or outreach. Coordination relies on WhatsApp for daily communication, Zoom for meetings, and a shared Google Drive for documents, while polls and surveys support collective decision-making.

Alongside labor pressures, Bizantolog faces persistent financial precarity. Early support from Koç University’s GABAM offered symbolic affiliation but not sustained funding. In practice, costs such as Zoom subscriptions and website hosting have been met through improvised or in-kind solutions, often borne by individual members or covered through temporary arrangements. Ensuring long-term viability will require diversified funding—through grants, institutional partnerships, or community-based

crowdfunding—structured in ways that preserve the platform’s ethos of openness, inclusivity, and horizontal governance.

Another tension concerns visibility and attribution. As the initiating figure and primary organizer, the founder (the author of this dissertation) has often been closely identified with Bizantolog in public and institutional settings. While this reflects sustained labor, it risks obscuring the platform’s collective character. At times Bizantolog is perceived not as shared infrastructure but as an extension of an individual academic trajectory.

This dynamic, common in founder-led projects, runs counter to Bizantolog’s ethos of decentralization and distributed labor. Several episodes illustrate how it has been reinforced. In the acknowledgments of *The Political and Intellectual History of the Council of Nicaea* the editor wrote: “Some of the papers included in this volume were presented on November 4, 2020, during a program held via Zoom with the support of Koç University’s Center for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies and the Bizantolog platform. We are grateful to Şebnem Dönbekci, who runs the Bizantolog group.”¹¹¹⁶ Here, gratitude to the platform was redirected personally, conflating institutional collaboration with individual authorship and reinforcing the symbolic capital tied to Bizantolog’s early association with GABAM.

A similar situation arose in 2024 with the conference Rethinking Byzantine Studies in Türkiye: Concepts, Terms, and Methods I. As noted in section 8.4.9, Bizantolog was invited to present the co-authored paper on virtual communities and new media. However, the invitation was addressed solely to the founder. When personal circumstances prevented her attendance, no invitation was extended to the other co-authors, and the paper was withdrawn. While likely administrative, the episode illustrates how institutions can default to founder-centric representation despite collective authorship.

Such perceptions are not limited to formal academic spaces. Informal interactions—including social media responses—can similarly reinforce individualized attribution. A comment on Bizantolog’s public post celebrating its 100th bulletin read: “Congratulations for your efforts, Ms. Şebnem and the entire team.”¹¹¹⁷ While well-intentioned, such

¹¹¹⁶ Turhan Kaçar, ed., *İznik Konsili'nin siyasi ve entelektüel tarihi* (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2023).

¹¹¹⁷ Sema Gökcan (@fsemagokcan) reply to Bizantolog, “Mart 2023’ten bu yana Bizantolog platformunun hazırlayıp üyeleriyle paylaştığı haftalık bültenlerin 100. sayısı bugün üyelerimizin e-posta kutularına ulaştı,” June 30, 2025.

phrasing implicitly centers the founder as the platform's authorial core, reifying conventional hierarchies of credit and recognition in a project explicitly committed to horizontal governance.

In recognition of these dynamics, the Bizantolog team has, from the outset, taken steps to diffuse representational authority. Strategies have included using a rotating model for public representation, foregrounding newer members in content production and event moderation, and deploying institutional email addresses and collective identifiers in external correspondence. These measures, while still evolving, reflect a broader effort to pre-empt the centralization of authority and affirm Bizantolog's identity as a collectively governed scholarly community.

As part of this ethos, Bizantolog deliberately avoids using formal academic titles such as "Professor" or "Associate Professor" in its events, publications, and internal communication. This practice is intended to foster a more democratic and inclusive culture of scholarly exchange.

8.6.2 Digital Fragilities and Platform Ethics

In its digital operations, Bizantolog must contend with risks specific to online ecosystems.¹¹¹⁸ One is ideological insularity, or "echo chambers," in which algorithms steer users toward reinforcing content, producing increasingly homogeneous discursive spaces.¹¹¹⁹ While Bizantolog's interdisciplinarity helps counteract this, the risk of epistemic narrowing persists—whether through institutional clustering, geographic concentration, or interpretive biases. Algorithms that reward emotional intensity and polarizing content can also amplify exclusion, particularly where academic issues intersect with heritage politics or contested histories.

Another challenge is the so-called "dead internet theory," which suggests that a growing share of online content is generated by bots, algorithms, or AI rather than human users. While its strongest claims remain speculative, the underlying dilemma is real: opaque algorithmic mediation makes authentic engagement and trust harder to sustain. Empirical studies confirm the rising presence of bots across major platforms since 2019,

¹¹¹⁸ I thank Zeynep Olgun for her valuable contributions to the development of this section.

¹¹¹⁹ Virginia Morini, Laura Pollacci, and Giulio Rossetti, "Toward a Standard Approach for Echo Chamber Detection: Reddit Case Study," *Applied Sciences* 11, no. 12 (2021).

especially on X (formerly Twitter), where automation, spam, and trolling distort visibility metrics.¹¹²⁰

Bizantolog's response has been to prioritize organic growth and careful moderation over paid promotion or viral tactics. Trust is built through transparent authorship, peer sharing, institutional reposting, and field-specific content. Its most viewed YouTube videos—such as the 2020 Classical Greek summer school lectures—bear minimalist titles and avoid sensational phrasing, reflecting a strategy of long-term credibility rather than attention economies.

Structural risks, however, remain. Moderation grows more complex as digital conditions shift. In February 2023, following the devastating earthquakes in southeastern Türkiye, Bizantolog issued its first public message outside academic programming—a gesture of solidarity that marked an ethical turn in its digital presence. More recently, Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter has compounded challenges, with weakened moderation, rising bot activity, and ideological deregulation prompting many academics to migrate to Mastodon or Bluesky.¹¹²¹ Bizantolog has kept a presence on X for visibility and archival continuity, but these shifts have sparked internal debate over diversification and long-term strategy. Sustaining an independent voice in such an environment requires not only technical agility but also ongoing reflection on where and how scholarly communities should appear.

8.6.3 Sociopolitical Pressures and Academic Precarity

Beyond digital challenges, Bizantolog operates in a national and disciplinary context shaped by political volatility, cultural polarization, and institutional fragility. These dynamics intersect with its mission in ways often beyond the platform's control.

In Türkiye, as elsewhere, the humanities are vulnerable to shifting state priorities, restricted funding, and ideological scrutiny. Byzantine heritage is especially politicized, entangled with national identity, religion, and contested historical narratives.¹¹²² Right-wing populist groups, online and offline, have recast Byzantium through conspiracy frameworks—portraying it as antithetical to Turkish-Islamic values or linking scholarship

¹¹²⁰ Rachit Shukla, Adwitiya Sinha, and Ankit Chaudhary, "TweezBot: An AI-Driven Online Media Bot Identification Algorithm for Twitter Social Networks," *Electronics* 11, no. 5 (2022).

¹¹²¹ Kai Kupferschmidt, "As Musk Reshapes Twitter, Academics Ponder Taking Flight," *Science* 378, no. 6620 (2022).

¹¹²² Durak, "The Popular Perception of Byzantium in Contemporary Turkish Culture."

on Byzantium to elitism, secularism, or foreign interference. Such discourses reflect broader populist tactics of grievance, anti-intellectualism, and distrust of academia.¹¹²³

For Bizantolog, this creates a delicate balance between openness and caution. Public programming may attract genuine interest but also hostile actors eager to frame it as ideologically suspect. Conferences, seminars, or social media posts can be lifted out of context and circulated as evidence of cultural provocation, particularly on platforms where academic nuance collapses into viral shorthand.

These risks are not theoretical as content on Byzantine history—especially Hagia Sophia, religious imagery, or heritage preservation—has proven highly vulnerable to politicization. In extreme cases, distortions spill into traditional media, creating reputational risks for individuals and projects alike. Bizantolog mitigates such threats through careful moderation, neutral language, and avoidance of polemics, but vigilance remains essential to safeguard contributors and preserve independence.

Looking ahead, strengthening institutional alliances—particularly with bodies that can confer reputational protection—will be vital. Equally important are continued investments in digital literacy, moderation protocols, and internal guidelines to resist ideological capture or backlash. Together with challenges of labor and funding, these sociopolitical pressures underscore the fragility of virtual scholarly communities and the need for adaptive, ethically grounded strategies for survival.

8.7 Strategic Development and Future Directions

Having demonstrated both viability and adaptability, Bizantolog now enters a new phase of strategic development. This stage builds on its commitments to inclusivity, accessibility, and innovation while addressing the challenges outlined above. Planned initiatives aim not only to sustain momentum but also to institutionalize Bizantolog's contributions to Byzantine studies and the digital humanities.

8.7.1 Peer Training, Capacity Building, and Infrastructure

A key axis of sustainability is cultivating digital and organizational competence from within. Most humanities scholars receive little training in web administration, content management, or digital outreach, so Bizantolog has prioritized peer-led technical learning

¹¹²³ Olga S. Hünler, "Popülist sağ ve sosyal medyada nefret söylemi," *Eleştirel Psikoloji Bülteni*, no. 8 (2019): 6-23; Duygu Özsoy, "Tweeting Political Fear: Trolls in Turkey," *Journal of History School (JOHS)* XXII, no. 22 (2015): 537-38.

as both necessity and empowerment. Since 2019, contributors have acquired skills in web management, video editing, and social media analytics through informal exchange. The next step is structured workshops for coordinating members, affirming digital fluency as both a pragmatic requirement and a transferable academic asset.

Infrastructure development accompanies this training. Current projects include automating weekly bulletin distribution, updating member records, and finalizing a social media protocol with a broader strategy and task calendar. To improve coordination, the team is testing collaborative platforms such as Slack to streamline communication while retaining Bizantolog's informal and responsive character.

8.7.2 Programmatic Expansion and Community Engagement

In coming years Bizantolog aims to deepen programming and strengthen its role as a multigenerational community. Central to this vision is the creation of a graduate conference in late antique and Byzantine studies, to be developed in partnership with institutions. A 2023 proposal to the Istanbul Research Institute did not materialize, but the initiative remains active.

Other planned formats include *Current Topics and New Projects in Byzantine Studies* (lectures and workshops on contemporary debates); interviews and site visits highlighting excavations and fieldwork; and *Remembering Our Professors' Mentors*, where senior scholars reflect on their intellectual predecessors. Building on its track record, Bizantolog will continue summer schools and training modules on areas such as monumental painting, iconography, and manuscript studies, alongside field trips to complement digital learning. The Bizantolog Academic Support Network, launched in 2025 to provide targeted financial aid for early-career scholars, will also expand as a flexible, community-driven alternative to conventional funding.

8.7.3 Archival Functions and the Preservation of Scholarly Memory

As it matures, Bizantolog increasingly functions as a knowledge hub for Byzantine studies in Türkiye. This archival role is epistemic as well as logistical, preserving field memory and constructing historiographic infrastructure.

Two documentation projects are central. The planned Byzantine Theses Repository, initiated through this dissertation, will consolidate MA and PhD research in the field, offering a reference tool especially for early-career scholars outside major centers. The

Istanbul Circular Archive, a curated collection of institutional correspondence and conference announcements, though inactive since 2023, will be preserved and made accessible on Bizantolog's website.

Complementing these efforts, Bizantolog will systematize dissemination of its recorded webinars and lecture series, reinforcing its dual identity as a producer of scholarly programming and a living archive of field knowledge.

8.7.4 Institutional Positioning and Financial Sustainability

Bizantolog's long-term viability depends on diversified funding and stronger institutional positioning. While early operations relied on volunteer labor and small contributions, the next phase prioritizes external support: competitive grants in digital humanities and public scholarship, sponsorships from academic and cultural institutions, and carefully designed crowdfunding consistent with Bizantolog's ethos of openness and peer governance.

Formal institutional configurations are also under consideration: registering as an independent association, affiliating with a university research center, or adopting a hybrid structure balancing flexibility with legitimacy. Governance will likewise be formalized to ensure continuity.

Together these measures mark a shift from informal experimentation to strategic consolidation. Bizantolog's evolving infrastructure offers a forward-looking model of participatory, digitally literate scholarship—particularly valuable in contexts where academic support systems remain fragile.

8.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined Bizantolog as both a scholarly intervention and a generative infrastructure, grounded in the findings of this dissertation and shaped by broader currents in digital humanities and academic precarity. Emerging from a fragmented field with little institutional support, Bizantolog has developed into a peer-driven platform that reimagines collaboration through digital means, epistemic decentralization, and public engagement.

Rather than replicating established models, it has forged a distinctive synthesis—combining open-access pedagogy, archival functions, and grassroots governance. Its trajectory underscores both the affordances and the limits of digital academic

infrastructures, particularly in contexts marked by uneven resources and generational discontinuities.

The analysis presented here shows that Bizantolog is not only a response to disciplinary constraints but also a model for how early-career scholars can reconfigure academic community through collaborative, media-literate, and structurally attuned practices. In this sense, it reclaims infrastructure as both a conceptual framework and a practical field of intervention within Byzantine studies.



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Appendix 1: Notes on Style

This thesis follows the *Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition* (CMOS) for capitalization, italics, quotation marks, and citation formatting. Also, the thesis follows Koç University's PhD format template and rules whenever applicable. The following notes establish conventions applied consistently throughout the text.

Titles of Standalone Work: Standalone works are italicized, in line with CMOS. This category includes books, plays, films, television shows, paintings, sculptures, photographs, newspapers, and magazines. Scientific and taxonomic names (genus and species) are also italicized. Foreign words or phrases not naturalized into English are italicized (e.g., *raison d'être*, *ad hoc*), while naturalized forms such as etc., via, or vis-à-vis are not.

Titles of Subordinate Works: Subordinate works such as articles, essays, and book chapters are set in roman type and placed in quotation marks, using headline-style capitalization.

Dissertations and Theses: Dissertations and theses are cited as unpublished works, in quotation marks and roman type. Capitalization follows the rules of the language of the thesis. Thus, English titles are headline-style, Turkish and other Romance-language titles are sentence-style, and German titles retain capitalization of all nouns. Example: "Politics and Piety in Ottoman Egypt" (English, headline style); "Bizans İstanbul'unda gündelik hayat" (Turkish, sentence style); "Die Kunst der byzantinischen Kirchen" (German, noun capitalization).

Capitalization of Non-English Titles: Titles of works in languages other than English are cited in sentence style, following CMOS. Only the first word of the title (and subtitle, if any) and proper nouns are capitalized. German titles retain capitalization of all nouns, in line with German orthography. This practice is followed consistently in both footnotes and the bibliography, even when published sources appear in headline style (as is common in Turkish publications).

Foreign-Language Journals: Journal titles are italicized in all cases. They are cited in their original language and form, with capitalization preserved according to the conventions of the language of publication. Thus, English journals appear in headline style, while Turkish journals appear as proper nouns, typically with each word capitalized, for example *Tarih ve Toplum* or *Toplumsal Tarih*. German journals retain noun capitalization. An English translation may be provided in parentheses on first mention if useful.

Events, Conferences, and Projects: Named conferences, symposia, workshops, exhibitions, and projects are capitalized in title case but set in roman type, not italicized and not placed in quotation marks. Example: The ISGBS titled A Century of Byzantine

Studies in Türkiye. Individual papers, lectures, or talks within such events are set in quotation marks.

References to Chapters and Parts: References to sections of the thesis follow CMOS. Generic references are lowercase and set in roman type (e.g., *chapter 5, part II*). Specific references including titles capitalize the section name, followed by the title in headline style, roman type, without italics/quotation marks (e.g., *Chapter 5: Mapping the Terrain*).

Tables and Figures: Tables and Figures should be enumerated within each chapter, i.e., as 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 3.2, etc. While referring to the tables and figures the first letter should be in capital (i.e., such as Table 2.1 or Figure 2.1). Sub-figures should be enumerated by adding the corresponding lowercase letter, such as Figure 3.1a. The sub-figures should not have captions, their information rather be included in the caption of the Figure. Table captions should be located above the Tables whereas Figure captions should be placed below the Figures. All captions should end with a period.

Disciplines, Methods, Historical Periods, and Academic Titles: Disciplines and fields are set in lowercase, for example *Byzantine studies*, *sociology of scientific knowledge*, and *digital humanities*. Historical periods are lowercase unless part of a proper noun: *medieval West*; *Eastern and Western Europe*. Chairs, professorships, and academic offices are capitalized only when used as formal, specific titles. Thus, *Chair of Byzantine Art at X University* is capitalized, but generic mentions such as *a chair of Byzantine art* are lowercased with the exception of division names in YÖK Academic system that are capitalized in chapter 6 to distinguish them from broader disciplinary fields.

Abbreviations: Full names of institutions, symposia, methods, and alike are given at first mention in each chapter, with abbreviations used thereafter.

Personal Names: Full names are given at first mention in each subsection (down to third-level heading), with surnames used thereafter. Turkish names retain the dotted İ and other diacritics (e.g., *İşler*, *İlber*), but anglicized forms use standard I (e.g., *Istanbul*, *Iznik*).

Platform Name and Website Conventions: Throughout this thesis, the name of the platform is given as Bizantolog, while its website is referred to as Bizantolog.org. In line with CMOS, website titles are set in roman type, capitalized in title case, and presented without quotation marks. Platform names are treated as proper nouns in roman type. At the first mention in each chapter or major section, the full form Bizantolog.org is used to clarify the relationship between the platform and its website. Subsequent references use Bizantolog for the community and Bizantolog.org only when specifically referring to the website as digital infrastructure.

Appendix 2: Oral History Interviews

Interviewee	Interview Date	Interview Location	Interview Duration
Semavi Eyice	July 28, 2017	House, Kadıköy	2:25:50
Ebru Parman	October 6, 2017	House, Kadıköy	0:53:34
Zeynep Ahunbay	November 21, 2017	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	0:57:30
Doğan Kuban	December 4, 2017	House, Beykoz	1:10:10
Ayla Ödekan	January 11, 2018	House, Beşiktaş	1:23:13
Tolga Uyar	January 23, 2018	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:23:02
Melek Delilbaşı	April 21, 2018	House, Kadıköy	1:32:03
Koray Durak	July 26, 2018	Boğaziçi University, Beşiktaş	1:01:30
Engin Akyürek	December 11, 2018	Koç University, Sarıyer	3:36:45
Buket Coşkuner	December 12, 2018	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:41:10
Günder Varinlioğlu	December 23, 2018	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:28:58
Yelda Olcay Uçkan	January 18, 2019	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:03:08
Nilay Çorağan	January 21, 2019	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	1:33:46
Elif Keser Kayaalp	February 4, 2019	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	0:52:04
Sema Doğan	February 9, 2019	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:08:32
Zeynep Mercangöz	February 9, 2019	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:47:06
Gülğün Köroğlu	February 25, 2019	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Şişli	1:01:20
Sacit Pekak	March 19, 2019	Koç University, Sarıyer	2:22:46
Turhan Kaçar	March 21, 2019	Medeniyet University, Kadıköy	3:03:40
Suna Çağaptay	March 30, 2019	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:29:09
Zeliha Demirel Gökcalp	April 13, 2019	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	1:24:07
Buket Kitapçı Bayrı	April 15, 2019	Koç University, Sarıyer	2:17:20
Bülent İşler	April 20, 2019	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:32:07
Şahin Kılıç	April 29, 2019	Koç University, Sarıyer	2:11:21
Nevra Necipoğlu	May 28, 2019	Boğaziçi University, Beşiktaş	3:24:15
Murat Keçiş	November 10, 2022	Ramada Hotel, Kartal	3:15:53
Kutlu Akalın	November 19, 2022	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	3:52:26
Ceren Ünal	November 26, 2022	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:24:40
Meryem Acara Eser	November 26, 2022	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	2:22:33
Burcu Ceylan Duggan	December 7, 2022	Koç University, Sarıyer	2:09:02
Özgü Çömezoğlu Uzbek	December 10, 2022	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	1:53:35
Ufuk Serin	December 10, 2022	ANAMED, Beyoğlu	3:04:50
İlber Ortaylı	December 13, 2022	Kronik Kitap, Beşiktaş	0:30:47
Ayşe Çaylak Türker	December 14, 2022	Onsekiz Mart University, Çanakkale	2:40:10
Ebru Altan	January 10, 2023	Istanbul University, Fatih	1:35:34

Appendix 3: Oral History Generic Interview Flow

Introduction

Briefly introduce yourself and state the purpose of the interview.

Confirm permission to record the interview.

Biographical Questions

1. Could you please state your name for the record?
2. When and where were you born?
3. Can you briefly outline your education, including primary, secondary, and university studies?

Education and Academic Career

1. Where did you complete your undergraduate studies? Why did you choose this field and institution?
2. How did you become interested in Byzantine studies? Were there any specific mentors, courses, or experiences that guided you?
3. Could you describe your graduate studies (master's and doctorate)? What were your thesis topics, and who supervised them?
4. Did you face any challenges in accessing resources (e.g., archives, funding, or academic networks) during your studies? How did you overcome these challenges?

Teaching and Mentorship

1. What subjects have you taught, and how have students responded to your courses in Byzantine studies?
2. Have you mentored students pursuing careers in Byzantine studies? What were their challenges and successes?

Research and Contributions

1. What are your primary research interests within Byzantine studies, and how did these evolve?
2. Can you share key milestones or significant projects from your academic career?
3. Have you contributed to interdisciplinary or international collaborations in the field? What were their outcomes?

Conferences and Symposia

1. Have you participated in international or national conferences, symposia, or congresses related to Byzantine studies? Which ones stand out as particularly important in your career?
2. Can you share your reflections or experiences regarding the Twenty-fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies (ICBS)?
3. In your opinion, how do such academic gatherings shape scholarly networks and collaborations in Byzantine studies?

Scientific Production and Publications

1. What challenges have you faced in producing and publishing academic work in Byzantine studies in Türkiye?
2. How would you assess the contribution of your scientific output to the development of Byzantine studies?

Field and Disciplinary Development

1. In your view, how has Byzantine studies developed in Türkiye over the years? What milestones or changes have you observed?
2. Are there specific individuals or institutions that have played critical roles in advancing the field?
3. How does the state of Byzantine studies in Türkiye compare to international trends?

Reflections and Challenges

1. What challenges have you encountered as a scholar of Byzantine studies, both professionally and in public perception?
2. What steps do you think are necessary to further develop the field in Türkiye?
3. What advice would you give to aspiring scholars in Byzantine studies?

Closing

Is there anything you would like to add that we haven't discussed?

Appendix 4: Oral History Informed Consent Form

BİLGİLENDİRİLMİŞ GÖNÜLLÜ OLUR FORMU

Koç Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Arkeoloji ve Sanat Tarihi Bölümü doktora öğrencisi Şebnem Dönbekci tarafından yürütülen, Koç Üniversitesi Etik Kurulları'nın 2017.101.IRB3.054 sayılı onayı ile izin verilen, **Türkiye'de bir Bizansçı Olmak: Türkiye'de Bizans Araştırmalarının Dünü, Bugünü ve Geleceği Sözlü Tarih Projesi** başlıklı araştırmaya katılımınız rica olunmaktadır.

Bu araştırmaya tamamen kendi iradenizle, herhangi bir zorlama veya mecburiyet olmadan gönüllü olarak katılımınız esastır. Lütfen aşağıdaki bilgileri okuyunuz ve katılmaya karar vermeden önce anlamadığınız herhangi bir husus varsa çekinmeden sorunuz.

ÇALIŞMANIN AMACI (Neden böyle bir araştırma yapmaya gerek duyuldu?)

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ülkemizdeki Bizans araştırmalarının ve Bizans kültürel miras çalışmalarının tarihçesini araştırmaktır. Proje kapsamında ülkemizde bu alanlarda çalışmış akademisyenler, araştırmacılar ve müze ve kültürel miras profesyonelleri ile sözlü tarih görüşmeleri gerçekleştirilmektedir.

PROSEDÜRLER

Bu çalışmaya gönüllü katılmak istemeniz halinde yürütülecek çalışmalar şöyledir:

1. Sizinle birlikte belirlenecek bir tarih ve yerde gerçekleştirilecek sözlü tarih görüşmesine katılmak.
2. Video kayıt cihazı ile kaydedilecek görüşme sırasında Bizans araştırmalarına ve kültürel mirasına ilişkin bilgi ve hatıralarınızı aktarmak.

OLASI RİSKLER VE RAHATSIZLIKLAR

Olası bir risk veya rahatsızlık öngörülmemektedir.

TOPLUMA VE/VEYA GÖNÜLLÜLERE OLASI FAYDALARI

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ülkemizdeki Bizans araştırmalarına ve kültürel mirasına ilişkin toplumsal bir bellek oluşturmak, bu alanlardaki çalışmaların tarihçesine ışık tutmak ve toplanacak verileri araştırmacıların kullanımına sunmaktır.

GİZLİLİK

Bu çalışma kapsamında sizinle gerçekleştirilecek sözlü tarih görüşmesine ait video görüntüleri ve görüşmenin transkripsiyonu, yapılacak yayına hazırlama ve düzenleme çalışmalarını takiben bu proje için özel hazırlanacak olan web sitesinde yayınlanarak araştırmacıların ve kamunun erişimine açılacaktır.

KATILIM VE AYRILMA

Bu çalışmanın içinde olmak isteyip istemediğinize tamamen kendi iradenizle ve etki altında kalmadan karar vermeniz önemlidir.

Katılmaya karar verdikten sonra, herhangi bir anda sahip olduğunuz herhangi bir hakkı kaybetmeden veya herhangi bir yaptırıma maruz kalmadan istediğiniz zaman ayrılabilirsiniz.

ARAŞTIRMACILARIN KİMLİĞİ

Bu araştırma ile ilgili herhangi bir sorunuz veya endişeniz varsa, lütfen iletişime geçiniz:

Şebnem Dönbekci
Koç Üniversitesi
Arkeoloji ve Sanat Tarihi Bölümü
T: 0532 287 87 24
E: sdonbekci14@ku.edu.tr

Yukarıda yapılan açıklamaları anladım. Sorularım tatmin olacağım şekilde yanıtlandı. Dilediğim zaman ayrılma hakkım saklı kalmak koşulu ile bu çalışmaya katılmayı onaylıyorum. Bu formun bir kopyası da bana verildi.

Katılımcı Adı-Soyadı

Katılımcı İmzası

Tarih

Araştırmacının İmzası

Tarih

Appendix 5: Oral History Project Introductory Document

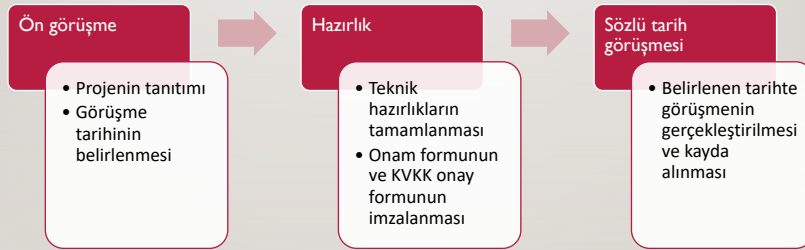
The Oral History Project introductory document served as a comprehensive guide to the project's purpose, goals, and methodology. It details the aim to document the history and evolution of Byzantine studies in Türkiye using oral history interviews alongside qualitative and quantitative methods. The document emphasizes the project's commitment to creating an institutional memory and sharing findings through academic outputs, public engagement, and events such as the Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, ensuring both scholarly and public outreach. It was shared with prospective interviewees to provide them with detailed information about the project's scope and objectives.



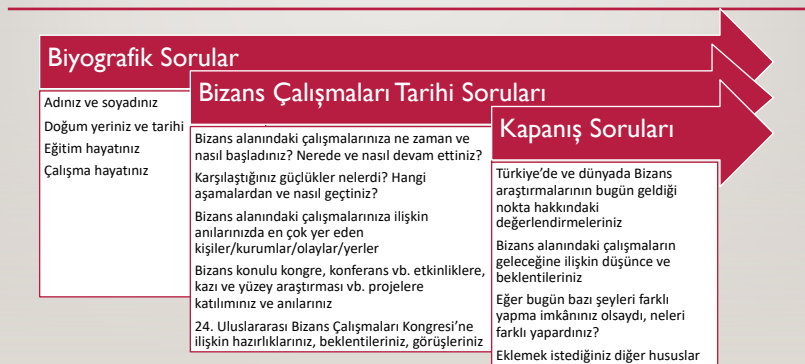
2 PROJE BİLEŞENLERİ



3 SÖZLÜ TARİH SÜRECİ



4 GÖRÜŞME KONULARI



5 TAMAMLANAN SÖZLÜ TARİH PROJESİ GÖRÜŞMELERİ

1. Prof. Dr. Semavi Eyice	15. Prof. Dr. Zeliha Demirel Gökarp
2. Prof. Dr. Ebru Parman	16. Prof. Dr. Nevra Necipoğlu
3. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Ahunbay	17. Doç. Dr. Koray Durak
4. Prof. Dr. Doğan Kuban	18. Doç. Dr. Günder Varinlioğlu
5. Prof. Dr. Ayla Ödekan	19. Doç. Dr. Elif Keser-Kayaalp
6. Prof. Dr. Melek Delilbaşı	20. Doç. Dr. Tolga Uyar
7. Prof. Dr. Gülgün Koroğlu	21. Doç. Dr. Alessandra Ricci
8. Prof. Dr. Engin Akyürek	22. Dr. Buket Coşkun
9. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Mercangöz	23. Dr. Suna Çağaptay
10. Prof. Dr. Sema Doğan	24. Doç. Dr. Bülent İşler
11. Prof. Dr. Yelda Olcay Uçkan	25. Dr. Buket Kitapçı Bayrı
12. Prof. Dr. Nilay Çorağan	26. Dr. Şahin Kılıç
13. Prof. Dr. Sacit Pekak	
14. Prof. Dr. Türhan Kaçar	

6 ARAŞTIRMACI

- Şebnem Dönbekci



Benzer bir sözlü tarih projesi için <http://iaea-history.univie.ac.at/> adresini ziyaret edebilirsiniz.

Viyana Üniversitesi Tarih Bölümü'nden Dr. Elisabeth Roehrich tarafından Uluslararası Atom Enerjisi Ajansı'nın (IAEA) tarihini araştırmak üzere 60. kuruluş yılında gerçekleştirilen bu çalışmada IAEA'nın kuruluşu ve tarihi arşiv kaynakları ve sözlü tarih görüşmeleri temel alınarak ortaya konmaktadır.

Appendix 6: Oral History Recurring Themes

Early Life and Inspirations

1. **Family and Cultural Background:**
 - Growing up near historical sites, ruins, or culturally rich areas instilled curiosity about the past.
 - Supportive families and siblings encouraged interest in history and the arts, often through shared resources or exposure to cultural experiences.
2. **Artistic and Creative Tendencies:**
 - Participation in art-related activities (e.g., painting, competitions) fostered a passion for visual culture and creativity.
3. **School and Early Educators:**
 - High school teachers and curricula inspired many to pursue history or art history through engaging and innovative teaching methods.
4. **Accidental Beginnings:**
 - Some scholars began their journey in Byzantine studies by chance, either through university placements or shifting focus from other fields.

Academic Influences

5. **Mentorship:**
 - The guidance of mentors such as Semavi Eyice, Sacit Pekak, and Yıldız Ötüken was instrumental in shaping scholars' academic directions and methods.
6. **Institutional Foundations:**
 - Hacettepe University, in particular, is often highlighted as a nurturing ground for Byzantine studies, with its interdisciplinary focus and strong faculty.
7. **Fieldwork and Immersive Experiences:**
 - Site visits, archaeological excavations, and hands-on work with historical artifacts were transformative, fostering a deep connection to the material.
8. **Interdisciplinary Foundations:**
 - Scholars often combined art history, archaeology, architectural history, and conservation techniques, enabling holistic approaches to Byzantine research.
9. **Language Mastery:**
 - Learning Greek, Latin, and other specialized languages was and is critical for accessing primary sources, inscriptions, and manuscripts.
10. **Geographical and Regional Focus:**
 - Many developed expertise in specific regions, such as Cappadocia, or specialized topics like paintings, coins, or architectural studies.

Challenges and Barriers

11. **Societal Perceptions:**
 - Byzantine studies often had to be justified in a societal context that prioritized other fields, such as Turkish-Islamic art or architecture.
12. **Limited Resources:**
 - Earlier generations faced a lack of institutional support, funding, and access to research materials, relying heavily on individual professors or mentors to sustain programs.
13. **Gender Dynamics in Academia:**

- Although less explicitly discussed, subtle hints of gendered challenges in academia appeared in narratives, particularly around mentorship and fieldwork.

Teaching and Mentorship

14. Experiential and Visual Learning:

- Site visits, architectural analysis, and hands-on study of artifacts were consistently emphasized as essential educational tools.

15. Commitment to Mentoring:

- Scholars highlighted their responsibility to mentor future generations, often inspired by the support they received in their early careers.

16. Pedagogical Innovations:

- Efforts to make Byzantine studies more accessible and engaging, including integrating technology or interdisciplinary approaches, were noted by several interviewees.

Cultural and Personal Contributions

17. Advocacy for Byzantine Heritage:

- Scholars shared a strong commitment to preserving and promoting awareness of Byzantine cultural heritage within Türkiye.

18. Globalizing Byzantine Studies:

- Efforts to integrate Turkish Byzantine studies into international academic networks and conversations are ongoing.

19. Passion and Lifelong Curiosity:

- Many scholars described their work as fulfilling a personal passion or lifelong intellectual curiosity, with a sense of purpose beyond academia.

Emerging Themes

20. Digital Humanities and Innovation:

- There is a growing interest in using digital tools for Byzantine research, teaching, and preservation, particularly among younger generations.

21. Sustainability of Byzantine Studies:

- Concerns about the sustainability and visibility of Byzantine studies in Türkiye remain a critical issue, with efforts focused on institutionalizing programs and securing funding.

22. Cultural Identity and Legacy:

- Several scholars reflected on how Byzantine heritage contributes to the broader understanding of cultural identity in Türkiye and globally.

Appendix 7: Keywords for Thesis Titles Content Analysis

Keywords (root words)	Thematic Cluster
resim, resmi, painting	Visual Culture
tasvir, betim, depict	Visual Culture
ikonografi/oloji, ikona, iconography/iques, ikonographische	Visual Culture
duvar resim, duvar resmi, wall painting	Visual Culture
mozaik, mosaic	Visual Culture
sahne	Visual Culture
süsleme	Visual Culture
tarih, tarihi, tarihsel, history, historical	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
mimari, mimarlık, architecture, architectural	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
ilişki, münasebet, relation	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
kent, şehir, city	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
sanat, sanatı, art, artistic	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
kültür/el, culture/al cross/multicultural	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
arkeoloji, archaeology, archaeological	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
dini, religious	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
etki, etkileşim, influence	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
kaynak, source	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
faaliyet, etkinlik	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
yerleşim, settlement	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
antik kent	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
ticaret, ticari, commerce, commercial	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
tercüme, çeviri, translation	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
miras, heritage	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
sosyal	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
aziz, saint (cult context)	Thematic and Disciplinary Anchors
imparator, imparatorluk, emperor, empire	Political Structures and Warfare
siyasi/et/al, politik/a, politic/al	Political Structures and Warfare
haçlı, crusader	Political Structures and Warfare
devlet, state	Political Structures and Warfare
kale, fortress	Political Structures and Warfare
asker, askeri, military	Political Structures and Warfare
savaş, muharebe, sefer (excl. crusades)	Political Structures and Warfare
mücadele	Political Structures and Warfare
beylik, beglik	Political Structures and Warfare
geç antik, late antique, late antiquity	Periodization
orta çağ, ortaçağ, medieval, middle ages	Periodization
erken/erken dönem bizans, early byzantine	Periodization
doğu roma	Periodization
orta bizans, middle byzantium/byzantine	Periodization
komnenos, komnena	Periodization
1204	Periodization
geç roma, late roman	Periodization
geç/son dönem/son devir Bizans, late byzantine/byzantium	Periodization

Keywords (root words)	Thematic Cluster
1261	Periodization
ikonoklazma, ikonofili	Periodization
1081	Periodization
kilise, şapel, church	Monumental and Architectural Focus
yapı, building, structure	Monumental and Architectural Focus
manastır, monastic, monastery	Monumental and Architectural Focus
cami, camii, mosque	Monumental and Architectural Focus
ayasofya, hagia sophia	Monumental and Architectural Focus
aziz, saint (site name context)	Monumental and Architectural Focus
sur, wall	Monumental and Architectural Focus
kaya	Monumental and Architectural Focus
saray, palace	Monumental and Architectural Focus
plastik	Monumental and Architectural Focus
devşirme, spolia	Monumental and Architectural Focus
plan (architectural context)	Monumental and Architectural Focus
surp (site name context)	Monumental and Architectural Focus
istanbul	Geographic and Urban Contexts
anadolu, anatolia, asia minor	Geographic and Urban Contexts
kapadokya, kappadokia, cappadoce, cappadocia	Geographic and Urban Contexts
türkiye, turkey	Geographic and Urban Contexts
konstantinopolis, constantinople, constantinopolitan	Geographic and Urban Contexts
kilikia, kilikya, klickien, cilicia	Geographic and Urban Contexts
iznik, nicaea	Geographic and Urban Contexts
akdeniz, mediterranean	Geographic and Urban Contexts
izmir, smyrna	Geographic and Urban Contexts
karadeniz, black sea	Geographic and Urban Contexts
trabzon	Geographic and Urban Contexts
bursa	Geographic and Urban Contexts
kayseri	Geographic and Urban Contexts
konya	Geographic and Urban Contexts
trakya	Geographic and Urban Contexts
göreme	Geographic and Urban Contexts
müze, müzecilik, museum	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
eser	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
koruma, korunma, conservation, preserving, preservation	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
kazı, excavation	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
seramik, keramik, ceramic	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
sikke, coin	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
buluntu	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
malzeme, material	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
taş eser	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
restorasyon, restoration	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
cam, camcılık, glass	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
üretim, üretilen, üretilmiş, production	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts

Keywords (root words)	Thematic Cluster
maden, metal	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
kullanım	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
kandil	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
el yazma, manuscript	Fieldwork and Material Culture Contexts
kadıkalesi	Excavation Sites
nikolaos, Nikola,	Excavation Sites
demre	Excavation Sites
yenikapı	Excavation Sites
amorium	Excavation Sites
olympus	Excavation Sites
1989 (start date)	Excavation Sites
bizans, byzantine, byzantium, byzantinischen	Cultural and Religious Identity
osmanlı, ottoman	Cultural and Religious Identity
selçuklu, seljuk	Cultural and Religious Identity
hristiyan, hristiyan, christian/ity, christianization/ing	Cultural and Religious Identity
islam, müslüman, muslim	Cultural and Religious Identity
ermenî, armenia	Cultural and Religious Identity
ortodoks, orthodox	Cultural and Religious Identity
latin	Cultural and Religious Identity
rum (post-Byzantine context)	Cultural and Religious Identity
sasani	Cultural and Religious Identity
yüzyıl, yy., century	Chronology
13., xiii., 13th, thirteenth (century)	Chronology
10., x., 10th, tenth (century)	Chronology
11., xi., eleventh (century)	Chronology
6., vi., 6th, sixth (century)	Chronology
7., vii., 7th (century)	Chronology
4., iv., 4th, fourth (century)	Chronology
9., ix., 9th, ninth (century)	Chronology
değerlendirilme, değerlendirme, evaluation	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
inceleme/lenme, irdelenme, examination, study/ies	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
öneri, proposal	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
bağlam, context	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
değişim, değişiklik, değişken, change, transformation	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
araştırma, research	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
işığında	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
proje, project	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
sorun, problem	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
örnek, örneklem	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
işlev, function	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
günümüz, bugün, contemporary	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
yorumlanma, commentary, interpretation/ing	Analytical and Interpretive Framing
sunum, presentation	Analytical and Interpretive Framing

Appendix 8: Modularity Report

Modularity Report

Parameters:

Randomize: On
Use edge weights: On
Resolution: 3.5

Results:

Modularity: 0.740
Modularity with resolution: 3.024
Number of Communities: 12



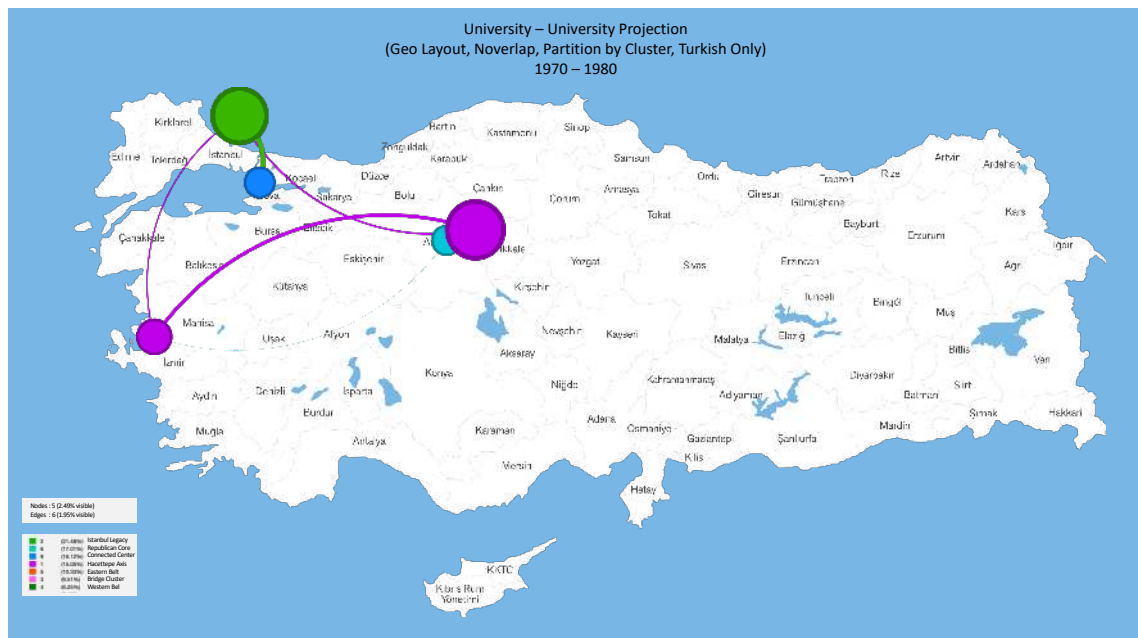
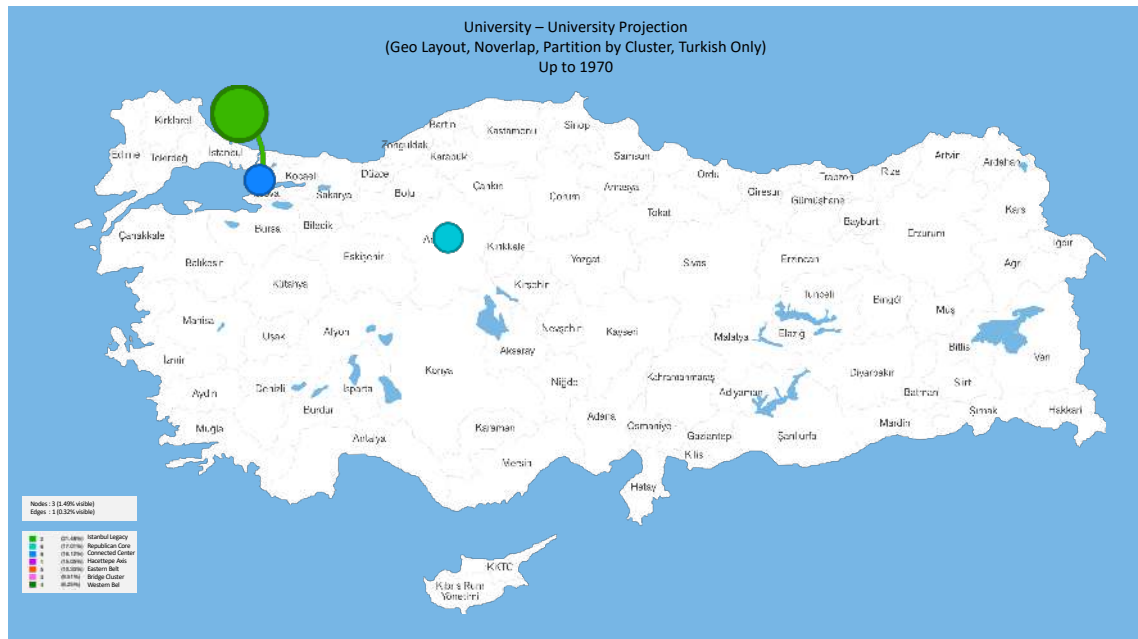
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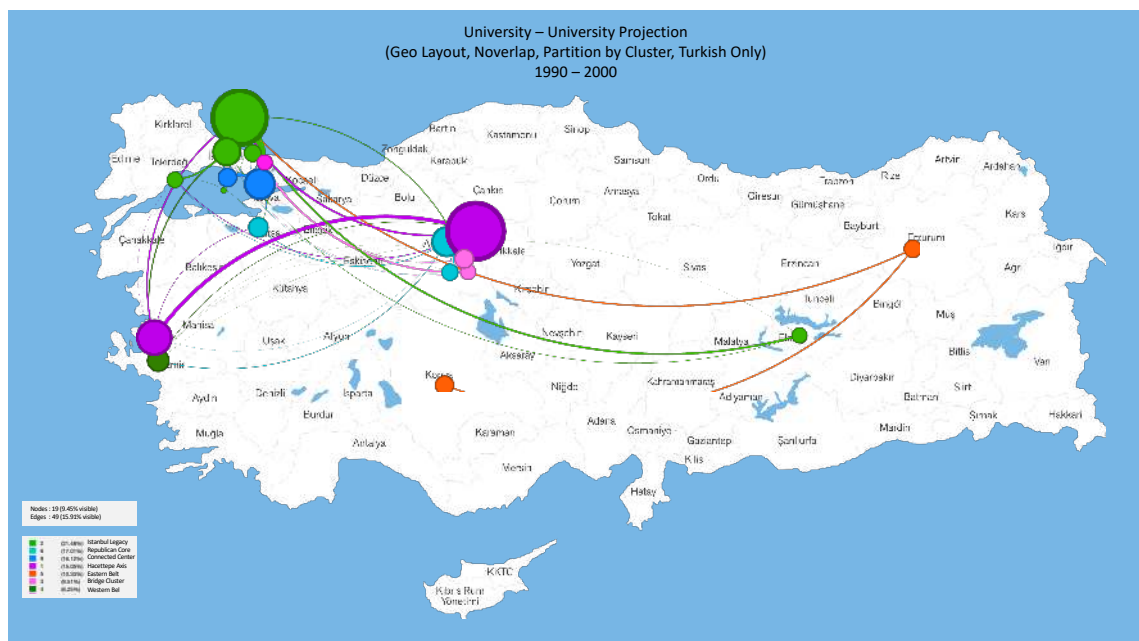
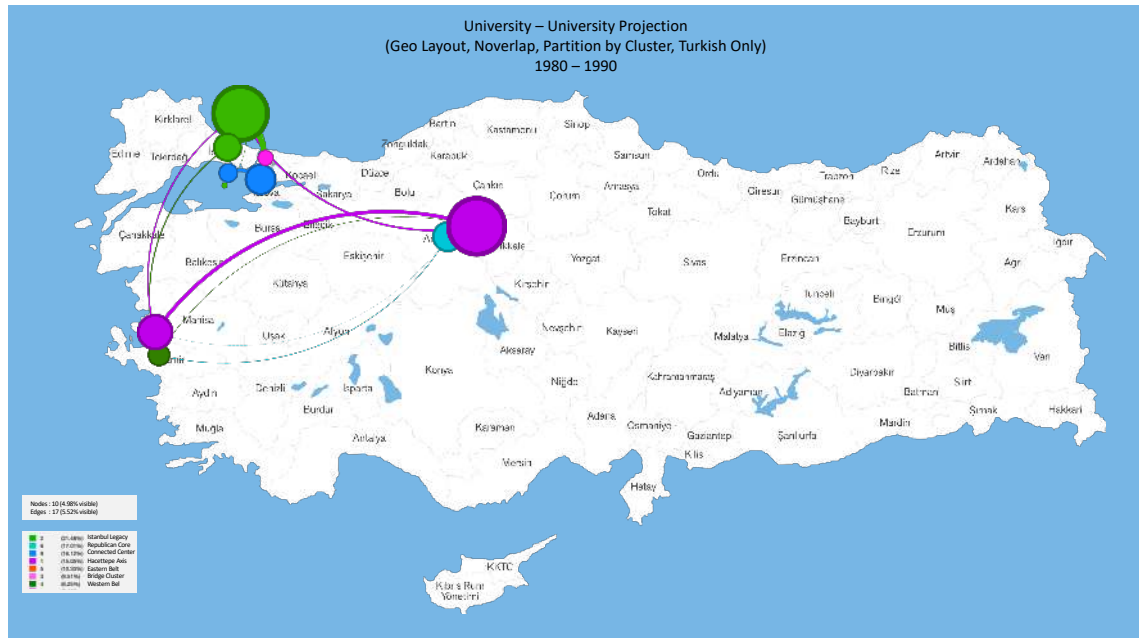
Vincent D Blondel, Jean-Loup Guillaume, Renaud Lambiotte, Etienne Lefebvre, *Fast unfolding of communities in large networks*, in Journal of Statistical Mechanics: Theory and Experiment 2008 (10), P1000

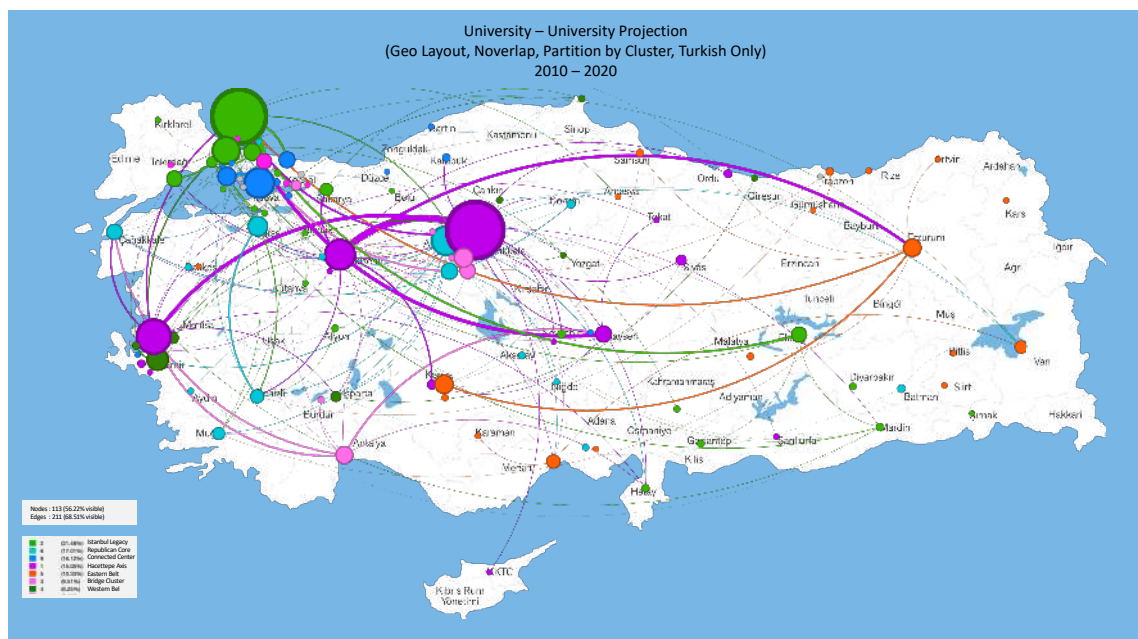
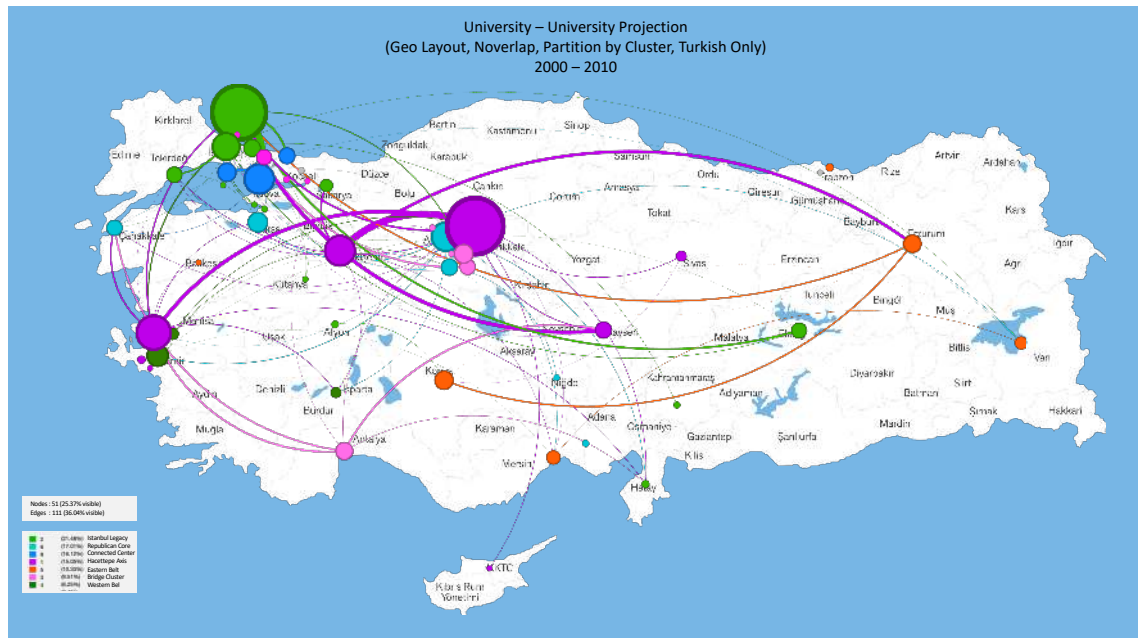
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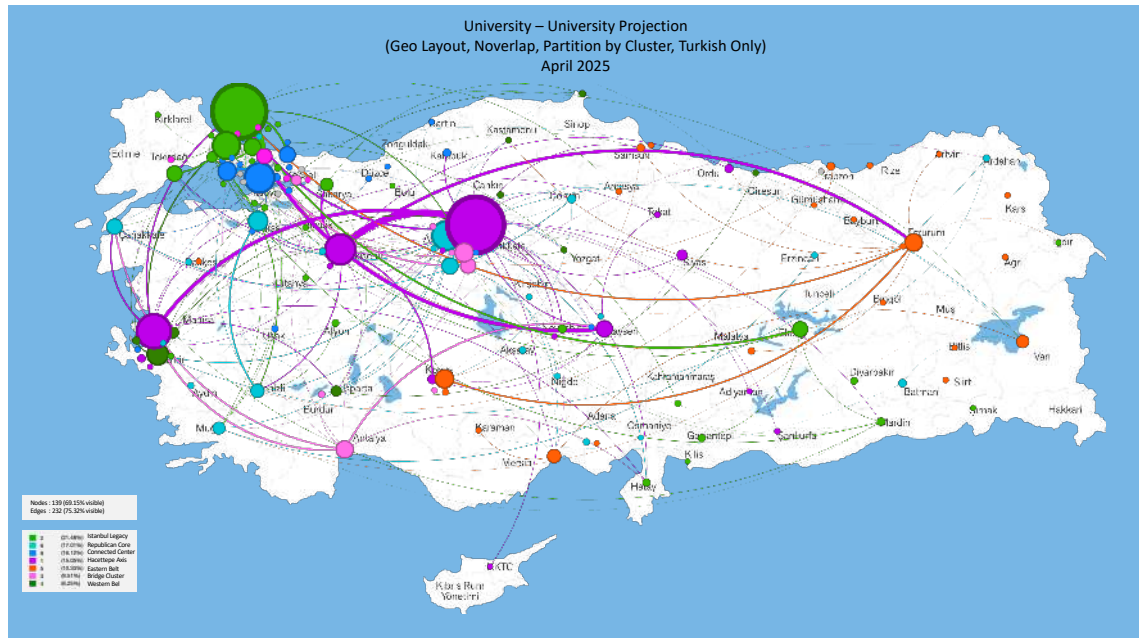
R. Lambiotte, J.-C. Delvenne, M. Barahona *Laplacian Dynamics and Multiscale Modular Structure in Networks* 2009

Appendix 10: Temporal Slicing Network Graphs









Appendix 11: Academics – Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History Keyword

Title	Name	University	Faculty	Department	Division	Basic Field	Subfield	Keyword
Associate Professor	ABDULLAH SINAN GÜLER	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	Science and Literature	Art History	Western Art and Contemporary Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Western Art ; History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Associate Professor	ALESSANDRA RICCI	Koç University	Humanities and Literature	Archaeology and Art History	Archaeology and Art History Program	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Urban Archaeology ; History of Architecture
Research Assistant	ALICAN ÖZKAVRUK	Ardahan University	Humanities and Literature	Art History	Turkish-Islamic Arts History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Urban Archaeology ; Medieval Archaeology ; History of Architecture
Full Professor	ASNU BİLBAN YALÇIN	Istanbul University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology ; Urban Archaeology ; History of Architecture
Lecturer	ATILLA TEKİN	Anadolu University	Literature	Art History	Western Art and Contemporary Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	
Assistant Professor	AYÇA ELALMIŞ	Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University	Science and Literature	Art History	Western Art and Contemporary Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; History of Architecture
Research Assistant	AYÇA KARABACAK	Istanbul University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture
Full Professor	AYŞE AYDIN	Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Full Professor	AYŞE ÇAYLAK TÜRKER	Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Assistant Professor	AYŞE CEREN EREL	Eastern Mediterranean University	Science and Literature	Archaeology and Art History	Archaeology and Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; History of Western Art
Associate Professor	AYSEL NAZLI SOYKAN	Karabük University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; History of Architecture
Assistant Professor	AYŞİN ÖZÜGÜL	Bursa Uludağ University	Science and Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Architecture ; History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology
Full Professor	BEDİA YELDA UÇKAN	Anadolu University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology
Full Professor	BESİM TOLGA UYAR	Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University	Science and Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; Urban Archaeology
Research Assistant	BİLGE BAHAR	Ondokuz Mayıs University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; Urban Archaeology
Associate Professor	BÜLENT İŞLER	Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University	Literature	Art History	Western Art and Contemporary Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology ; Conservation - Renewal and Restoration

Full Professor	BURCU CEYLAN DUGGAN	Akdeniz University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology
Research Assistant	BÜŞRA DİDAR ÖZDEMİROĞLU	Anadolu University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Research Assistant	ÇAĞLA ÇAYLI	Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Assistant Professor	CAHİT KARAKÖK	Necmettin Erbakan University	Social and Human Sciences	Art History	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Full Professor	CEREN ÜNAL	Manisa Celâl Bayar University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Associate Professor	DEMET OKUYUCU	Atatürk University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Assistant Professor	DERYA GÜNERİ	Erciyes University	Literature	Art History	Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Western Art ; History of Architecture
Assistant Professor (Title:Associate Professor)	DİLEK YELİZ MAKTAL CANKO	Ege University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Assistant Professor	DURMUŞ GÜR	Karabük University	Vocational School	Handicrafts	Traditional Handicrafts Program	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Urban Archaeology ; Medieval Archaeology ; History of Architecture
Assistant Professor (Title:Associate Professor)	EBRU FATMA FINDİK	Hatay Mustafa Kemal University	Science and Literature	Art History	Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; History of Architecture
Research Assistant	ELİF GÜNGÖR	Akdeniz University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	
Full Professor	ELİF KESER KAYAALP	Hacettepe University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Associate Professor	EMİNE TOK	Ege University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	History of Architecture ; Medieval Archaeology ; Settlement Archaeology
Research Assistant	ERKAN KAYA	Bursa Uludağ University	Science and Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Full Professor	ESRA GÜZEL ERDOĞAN ULUHAN	Marmara University	Vocational School of Social Sciences	Hotel		Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; History of Architecture
Associate Professor	ESRA KESKİN	Hitit University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Urban Archaeology ; History of Urbanism ; Settlement Archaeology
Full Professor	FAHRİYE BAYRAM	Pamukkale University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Archaeology	Classical Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Associate Professor	FERDA BARUT KEMİRTLEK	Anadolu University	Literature	Archaeology	Classical Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology

Associate Professor	FERİDE İMRANA SİDDİKİ	Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Western Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; History of Painting
Associate Professor	FİLİZ İNANAN	Bursa Uludağ University	Science and Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Research Assistant	FÜLYA SEVİÇ	Trakya University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; Urban History
Assistant Professor	GİZEM ÖNCELEN	Anadolu University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Associate Professor	GÖKÇEN KURTULUŞ ÖZTAŞKIN	Pamukkale University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Full Professor	GÜLGÜN KÖROĞLU	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	Science and Literature	Art History	Western Art and Contemporary Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban History ; History of Architecture
Full Professor	GÜNDER VARINLIOĞLU	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	Science and Literature	Art History	Western Art and Contemporary Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; Urban Archaeology
Associate Professor	GÜNER SAĞIR	Istanbul University	Literature	Museology	Museology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Cultural and Natural Heritage ; History of Architecture
Full Professor	HASAN BUYRUK	Ordu University	Science and Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; Aesthetics in Architecture
Associate Professor	HATİCE AYÇA TIRYAKİ TÜRKMENÖĞLU	Istanbul University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	
Full Professor	HATİCE ÖZYURT ÖZCAN	Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University	Literature	Archaeology	Medieval Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Research Assistant	HAZAL MUTLU	Marmara University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Assistant Professor	HÜLYA COŞGUNARAS	Adıyaman University	Science and Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Assistant Professor	HÜSEYİN ŞAN	Van Yüzüncü Yıl University	Literature	Art History	General Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Architecture ; Cultural and Natural Heritage ; History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Assistant Professor (Title:Associate Professor)	İLKER METE MİMIROĞLU	Necmettin Erbakan University	Social and Human Sciences	Art History	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Associate Professor	İLGÜL KAYA	Yozgat Bozok University	Science and Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Painting ; History of Architecture
Assistant Professor	İLKNUR GÜLTEKİN GENÇ	Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University	Science and Literature	Art History	Western Art and Contemporary Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Full Professor	LALE DOĞER	Ege University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts

Research Assistant	MEHMET ALİ DOĞAN	Mardin Artuklu University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Painting ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Assistant Professor	MEHMET KAHYAOĞLU	Yaşar University	Science and Literature	Science and Culture		Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Painting ; History of Western Art
Associate Professor	MERYEM ACARA	Sivas Cumhuriyet University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology
Research Assistant	MERYEM AKSOY	Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University	Science and Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture
Research Assistant	METİN KAYA	Istanbul University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Assistant Professor (Title:Associate Professor)	MUHSİNE EDA ARMAĞAN	Süleyman Demirel University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Associate Professor	MURADIYE BURSALI	Pamukkale University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology ; Settlement Archaeology ; Ceramics / Inorganic Materials
Full Professor	NİLAY ÇORAĞAN	Erciyes University	Literature	Art History	Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	
Associate Professor	NİLÜFER PEKER	Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University	Science and Literature	Archaeology	Classical Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology ; Settlement Archaeology
Full Professor	OĞUZ KOÇYİĞİT	Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology ; Ceramics / Inorganic Materials
Assistant Professor	ORÇUN ERDOĞAN	Trakya University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	Urban Archaeology ; Urban History ; History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Full Professor	OSMAN ERAVŞAR	Akdeniz University	Literature	Art History	Medieval Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Turkish-Islamic Arts ; History of Architecture ; History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Full Professor	ÖZGÜ ÇÖMEZOĞLU UZBEK	Istanbul University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Assistant Professor (Title:Associate Professor)	PINAR SERDAR DİNÇER	Yozgat Bozok University	Science and Literature	Art History	Turkish and Islamic Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Cultural and Natural Heritage ; History of Painting
Associate Professor	SEÇKİN EVCİM	Ordu University	Science and Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; Urban History
Assistant Professor	SELDA UYGUN YAZICI	Trakya University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Full Professor	SEMA DOĞAN	Hacettepe University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology ; Conservation - Renewal and Restoration ; History of Architecture
Assistant Professor	SEMRA PALAZ YILDIRIM	Uşak University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Turkish-Islamic Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Turkish-Islamic Arts

Assistant Professor	SERCAN YANDIM AYDIN	Hacettepe University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Assistant Professor	ŞÜKRAN ÜNSER	Kapadokya University	School of Applied Sciences	Tourism Guidance	Tourism Guidance Program	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Cultural and Natural Heritage ; History of Architecture
Associate Professor	TAHSİN KORKUT	Van Yüzüncü Yıl University	Literature	Art History	General Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Architecture ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Research Assistant	TANER AKAR	Mersin University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology
Lecturer	TÜLAY YEŞİLTAŞ ULUSOY	Hitit University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; History of Western Art ; Cultural and Natural Heritage
Assistant Professor (Title:Associate Professor)	TÜMAY COŞKUN	Manisa Celâl Bayar University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Full Professor	TURGUT ENGİN AKYÜREK	Koç University	Humanities and Literature	Archaeology and Art History	Archaeology and Art History Program	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology
Associate Professor	UFUK ELYİĞİT	Bandırma Onyedli Eylül University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Western Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Cultural and Natural Heritage ; Urban Archaeology
Associate Professor	ÜMMÜHAN MELDA ERMIŞ	Istanbul University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Research Assistant	VAHİT MACİT TEKİNALP	Hacettepe University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Arts	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Settlement Archaeology ; Urban Archaeology ; History of Architecture
Assistant Professor	YURDAGÜL ÖZDEMİR	Selçuk University	Literature	Art History	Archaeology of Turkish World and Medieval Cultures	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Turkish-Islamic Arts ; History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Research Assistant	YUSUF GÜL	Firat University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Turkish and Islamic Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Turkish-Islamic Arts ; History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts
Assistant Professor	ZEKİ BOLEKEN	Marmara University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	
Full Professor	ZELİHA DEMİREL GÖKALP	Anadolu University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Urban Archaeology ; Urban History
Assistant Professor	ZELİHA ŞENEL	Anadolu University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Early Christian and Byzantine Arts	Medieval Archaeology ; Urban History
Full Professor	ZEYNEP ÇAKMAKÇI	Dokuz Eylül University	Literature	Museology	Museology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Art History	History of Early Christian and Byzantine Arts ; Cultural and Natural Heritage ; Urban Archaeology

Appendix 12: Academics – Byzantine History Keyword

Title	Name	University	Faculty	Department	Division	Basic Field	Subfield	Keyword
Assistant Professor	ABDÜLBAKİ BOZKURT	Mardin Artuklu University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Islamic Political and Civilization History ; Turkish and Islamic Thought History ; Byzantine History
Full Professor	ABDULLAH KAYA	Sivas Cumhuriyet University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Seljuk History ; Byzantine History ; Medieval Cities
Full Professor	AHMET SELÇUKOĞLU	Mardin Artuklu University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Seljuk History ; History of Muslim States and Societies ; Byzantine History
Assistant Professor	ALİ GENÇ	Manisa Celâl Bayar University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Medieval Cities ; Islamic Political and Civilization History
Research Assistant	AZER GÜRCAN	Balıkesir University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History ; Seljuk History
Assistant Professor	BANU ÇETİN ÜNAL	Karadeniz Technical University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	European History ; Medieval Folk Culture ; Byzantine History
Assistant Professor	BEKİR SARIYILDIZ	Giresun University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	History of Muslim States and Societies ; Byzantine History ; Asian History
Research Assistant	BERKAY YEKTA ÖZER	Fırat University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Medieval Cities
Full Professor	BİRSEL KÜÇÜKSİPAHİOĞLU	Istanbul University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History
Research Assistant	CANER TOGAÇ	Hacettepe University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History
Associate Professor	CÜNEYT GÜNEŞ	National Defence University	Army War College	History		Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; History of Institutions ; Medieval Cities
Full Professor	EBRU ALTAN	Istanbul University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History ; Seljuk History
Research Assistant	EMRE KAYMAKÇI	Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History ; History of Muslim States and Societies
Associate Professor	EMRULLAH KALELİ	Giresun University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	European History ; Byzantine History ; Medieval Folk Culture
Assistant Professor (Title: Associate Professor)	ERMAN ŞAN	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Islamic Political and Civilization History ; Byzantine History ; European History
Full Professor	FAHAMEDDİN BAŞAR	Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	History Program	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Seljuk History ; History of Muslim States and Societies
Assistant Professor	FATİH ŞEN	Gümüşhane University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History ; Seljuk History
Associate Professor	FATMA ÇAPAN	Gaziantep University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Roman History

Associate Professor	FATMA İNCE SANCALI	İnönü University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Seljuk History ; History of Muslim States and Societies
Assistant Professor	FATMA KOÇAK	Sinop University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History
Assistant Professor	GONCA SUTAY	İğdır University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Seljuk History ; Byzantine History ; Islamic Political and Civilization History
Full Professor	HALİL İBRAHİM GÖKBÖRÜ	Kırıkkale University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Seljuk History ; History of Muslim States and Societies ; Byzantine History
Assistant Professor (Title:Associate Professor)	HARUN KORUNUR	Munzur University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Seljuk History ; Byzantine History ; European History
Full Professor	HASAN AKYOL	Manisa Celâl Bayar University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Medieval Cities ; Seljuk History ; Byzantine History
Full Professor	HATİCE ORUÇ	Ankara University	Languages, History and Geography	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	European History ; Byzantine History ; Medieval Cities
Assistant Professor	HÜSEYİN ERKAN BEDİRANOĞLU	Muş Alparslan University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	History of Muslim States and Societies ; Turkish and Islamic Thought History ; Byzantine History
Assistant Professor	HÜSEYİN KAYHAN	Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Seljuk History ; History of Muslim States and Societies ; Byzantine History
Associate Professor	LUCA ZAVAGNO	İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University	Economics	History		Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Medieval Cities ; European History
Research Assistant	MEHMET BAYRAM	Aksaray University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History
Full Professor	MEHMET ÇELİK	Mardin Artuklu University	Literature	Syriac Language and Literature	Syriac Language and Literature	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Islamic Political and Civilization History ; Turkish and Islamic Thought History
Assistant Professor	MEHMET YAĞCI	Afyon Kocatepe University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History ; Medieval Cities
Assistant Professor	MUHİTTİN ÇEKEN	Aydın Adnan Menderes University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	European History ; Byzantine History ; Islamic Political and Civilization History
Full Professor	MURAT KEÇİŞ	Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Seljuk History ; European History
Assistant Professor	MURAT YILMAZ	Dokuz Eylül University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Seljuk History ; European History
Full Professor	MUSTAFA DAŞ	İzmir Bakırçay University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History ; Seljuk History
Assistant Professor	NATHAN PAUL LEIDHOLM	İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University	Humanities and Literature	English Language and Literature	English Language and Literature Program	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History ; Roman History
Assistant Professor	NECMETTİN AYAN	Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History ; Seljuk History

Full Professor	NEFİSE NEVRA NECİPOĞLU	Boğaziçi University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Ancient History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Medieval Cities
Associate Professor	NİLGÜN ELAM	Anadolu University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History
Research Assistant	ORHUN KÜSKÜ	KTO Karatay University	Economics	History		Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Islamic Political and Civilization History ; Byzantine History
Research Assistant	OSMAN DOĞUKAN ZORBAY ÖZTUNÇ	İzmir Bakırçay University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Medieval Cities ; Seljuk History
Assistant Professor	RICHARD DIETRICH	Middle East Technical University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Seljuk History ; Byzantine History
Associate Professor	ŞAHİN KILIÇ	Trakya University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History
Full Professor	SAYIME DURMAZ	Çankırı Karatekin University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	European History ; Seljuk History ; Byzantine History
Assistant Professor	SEBAHATTİN ÇELİK	Mardin Artuklu University	Institute of Living Languages in Türkiye		Syriac Language and Culture	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Seljuk History ; Byzantine History ; Islamic Political and Civilization History
Assistant Professor	SERVET DOĞAN	Samsun University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	European History ; Roman History ; Byzantine History
Associate Professor	ŞEVKİ KORAY DURAK	Boğaziçi University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Early Modern History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Islamic Political and Civilization History ; Medieval Cities
Assistant Professor (Title-Associate Professor)	SEVTAP GÖLGESİZ KARACA	Trakya University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	European History ; Byzantine History
Full Professor	SEYHUN ŞAHİN	Dokuz Eylül University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	European History ; Medieval Cities ; Byzantine History
Associate Professor	SİREN ÇELİK	Marmara University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; European History ; Medieval Cities
Assistant Professor	SÜHA KONUK	Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Medieval Cities
Associate Professor	ŞÜKRAN YAŞAR	Manisa Celâl Bayar University	Humanities and Social Sciences	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History
Research Assistant	TÖREBEY GÜNAYDIN	Ankara University	Languages, History and Geography	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Medieval Cities ; Medieval Folk Culture
Assistant Professor	TUNAY KARAKÖK	Bartın University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	History of Muslim States and Societies ; Byzantine History ; Turkish and Islamic Thought History
Full Professor	YUSUF AYÖNÜ	Ege University	Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Byzantine History ; Seljuk History
Assistant Professor	YUSUF BUDAK	İğdır University	Science and Literature	History	Medieval History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Medieval History	Seljuk History ; Byzantine History ; Islamic Political and Civilization History

Appendix 13: Academics – Medieval Archaeology Keyword

Title	Name	University	Faculty	Department	Division	Basic Field	Subfield	Keyword
Lecturer	AYHAN GİRGIN	Sinop University	Gerze Vocational School	Travel, Tourism and Entertainment Services	Cultural Heritage and Tourism Program	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Numismatics ; Greek and Roman Period ; Medieval Archaeology
Full Professor	ANIL YILMAZ	Izmir Katip Çelebi University	Social and Human Sciences	Turkish-Islamic Archaeology	Turkish-Islamic Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Pre-Islamic Turkish Archaeology ; Medieval Archaeology ; Archaeology of Turkish Geography
Full Professor	ERGÜN LAFLI	Dokuz Eylül University	Literature	Archaeology	Classical Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Greek and Roman Period ; Medieval Archaeology ; Ottoman Archaeology
Full Professor	AKIN ERSOY	Izmir Katip Çelebi University	Social and Human Sciences	Turkish-Islamic Archaeology	Turkish-Islamic Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Greek and Roman Period ; Medieval Archaeology ; Urban Archaeology
Assistant Professor	EYYÜP AY	Gaziantep University	Science and Literature	Archaeology	Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Archaeometry ; Early Bronze Age ; Medieval Archaeology
Full Professor	FÜSUN TÜLEK	Kocaeli University	Science and Literature	Archaeology	Underwater Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Marine Archaeology ; Greek and Roman Period ; Medieval Archaeology
Lecturer	ÇİĞDEM ÖZKAN AYĞÜN	Istanbul Technical University	Science and Literature	Sociology	Human and Social Sciences	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Medieval Archaeology ; Marine Archaeology ; Urban Archaeology
Full Professor	DERYA ŞAHİN	Bursa Uludağ University	Science and Literature	Archaeology	Medieval Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Greek and Roman Period ; Medieval Archaeology ; Numismatics
Full Professor	DENİZ BURCU ERCİYAS	Middle East Technical University	Architecture	City and Regional Planning	City and Regional Planning	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Hellenistic Period ; Medieval Archaeology ; Settlement Archaeology
Assistant Professor	MUSTAFA NURİ TATBUL	Bartın University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Settlement Archaeology ; Medieval Archaeology ; Landscape Archaeology
Associate Professor	BÜLENT KIZILDUMAN	Eastern Mediterranean University	Science and Literature	Department of Archaeology and Art History	Archaeology and Art History	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Neolitik Çağ ; Erken Tunç Çağ ; Medieval Archaeology
Assistant Professor	CSILLA BALOGH	Istanbul Medeniyet University	Literature	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Pre-Islamic Turkish Archaeology ; Archaeology of Turkish Geography ; Medieval Archaeology
Assistant Professor	ERTAÇ YILDIRIM	Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Art History	Byzantine Art	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Classical Period ; Greek and Roman Period ; Medieval Archaeology
Assistant Professor	ESRA SAYIN	Istanbul Gelişim University	Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences	Tourism Guidance	Tourism Guidance Program	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Medieval Archaeology
Lecturer	LEVENT ALPASLAN	Akdeniz University	Vocational School of Social Sciences	Travel, Tourism and Entertainment Services	Tourism and Travel Services Program	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Medieval Archaeology ; Greek and Roman Period ; Hellenistic Period
Assistant Professor	DİLEK ŞEN	Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University	Applied Sciences	Tourism Guidance	Tourism Guidance	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Ceramic, Medieval Archaeology, Greek and Roman Period
Assistant Professor	MUNKHTULGA RINCHINKHOROL	Izmir Katip Çelebi University	Social and Human Sciences	Turkish-Islamic Archaeology	Turkish-Islamic Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Pre-Islamic Turkish Archaeology ; Medieval Archaeology ; Archaeometry
Assistant Professor	MURAT TOSUN	Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University	Humanities and Social Sciences	Archaeology	Classical Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Greek and Roman Period ; Medieval Archaeology ; Ceramic
Research Assistant	RUMEYSA OLUTAŞ AKSIN	Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University	Science and Literature	Archaeology	Classical Archaeology	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Numismatics ; Greek and Roman Period ; Medieval Archaeology
Research Assistant	TANJU HAKAN DÖNMEZ	Akdeniz University	Mediterranean Civilizations Research Institute	Medieval Mediterranean Studies		Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Medieval Archaeology ; Greek and Roman Period ; Ceramic
Research Assistant	MUHAMMED HALUK ÖZKAN	Atatürk University	Fine Arts	Basic Education	Basic Education	Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences	Archaeology	Numismatics ; Greek and Roman Period ; Medieval Archaeology

Appendix 14. Search Conference Framework

A. Search Conference Goal

This appendix outlines a conceptual and practical framework for organizing a search conference dedicated to the future of Byzantine studies in Türkiye. Building on the empirical findings and theoretical arguments of this thesis, the conference is conceived as a participatory forum in which the field's diverse actors—students, scholars, institutions, and independent researchers—can engage in strategic, collaborative, and reflexive deliberation.

Grounded in the principle of collective wisdom and informed by the dissertation's commitment to abductive reasoning and participatory action research, the search conference is envisioned not as a one-time event, but as a critical step in fostering a more cohesive, equitable, and sustainable disciplinary future.

B. Key Success Factors

1. Diverse and Inclusive Participation

- Involve scholars across career stages and disciplinary homes (e.g., history, archaeology, art history, architecture).
- Ensure representation from both core and peripheral institutions.
- Integrate international participants, recognizing the transnational foundations of the field.

2. Actionable Outputs

- Structure sessions around key challenges such as graduate training, language instruction, and interdisciplinary research.
- Produce a collectively authored **strategic roadmap** and **policy recommendations** targeting universities, funding bodies, and research centers.

3. Evidence-Based Planning

- Draw directly on empirical insights from the thesis, including:
 - social network analysis of academic lineages and clusters
 - graduate thesis trends
 - oral history findings on mentorship, institutional culture, and access.

4. Interactive and Iterative Structure

- Apply a **Participatory Action Research (PAR)** framework.
- Use collaborative workshops, small-group scenario planning, and feedback loops to foster co-authorship and commitment.

5. Institutional Commitment

- Partner with established research centers (e.g., GABAM, Boğaziçi University's Byzantine Studies Research Center, ANAMED, AKMED, and others) to lend structure, credibility, and continuity.
- Engage institutional actors beyond Byzantine specialists.

6. Digital Integration and Accessibility

- Embed the conference into the existing ecosystem of **Bizantolog.org**, enabling long-term knowledge-sharing and inclusive participation across geographies.
- Ensure digital archiving of outputs and post-conference collaboration.

7. Reflexive and Critical Discourse

- Create space to openly address issues of hierarchy, disciplinary gatekeeping, and the marginalization of Byzantine heritage in national narratives.
- Integrate sessions on equity, epistemic justice, and institutional power.

C. Strategic Planning Axes

The proposed search conference could be structured around four interlocking thematic domains, reflecting both current field conditions and forward-looking aspirations:

1. Disciplinary Development

- Advance interdisciplinary linkages (e.g., with Seljuk, Ottoman, Islamic, and classical studies as well as Armenian, Georgian, Syriac studies)
- Modernize theoretical and methodological foundations
- Expand thematic and chronological scope (e.g., gender, everyday life, late antiquity)
- Strengthen source literacy and language training (Greek, Latin, and others)
- Offer methodological workshops on topics such as Byzantine historiography, paleography, epigraphy, archaeological field methods, and digital humanities

2. Institutional Strengthening

- Build capacity across universities, particularly in underrepresented regions
- Support sustainable infrastructures (research centers, digital archives, labs)
- Improve graduate program design and career pathways
- Foster inclusive mentorship and academic lineages

3. Scholarly Networking and Collaboration

- Foster national scholarly networks and consortia
- Promote interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration
- Strengthen international partnerships and visibility
- Leverage digital platforms for ongoing exchange (e.g., Bizantolog.org)
- Establish a bilingual, peer-reviewed journal in Byzantine studies
- Organize an annual graduate student conference, rotating across institutions
- Support editorial and peer-review training workshops for early-career scholars
- Host grant writing and international fellowship application workshops, especially targeting early-career and peripheral scholars

4. Public Engagement and Cultural Integration

- Integrate Byzantine heritage into public education and cultural discourse
- Support public-facing scholarship, exhibitions, and media presence
- Counter marginalization through inclusive historical narratives
- Engage local communities and heritage institutions as partners

D. Concluding Note

As emphasized throughout this dissertation, the challenges facing Byzantine studies in Türkiye cannot be met through isolated efforts or individual initiative alone. The search conference outlined here offers a model for collective strategic thinking and shared disciplinary stewardship—a forum not just for diagnosis, but for co-authored design. It embodies the principles of reflexivity, equity, and collaboration that underpin the proposals in chapter 7, and provides a practical mechanism for mobilizing the field's diverse energies into coherent and sustainable transformation.