



The First Capital of the Ottoman Empire

The Religious, Architectural, and Social History of Bursa

Suna Çağaptay

An interdisciplinary history of Bursa, from Christian Byzantine city to Ottoman capital

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Conquered in 1326, Bursa, known to the Byzantines as Prousa, served as the first capital of the Ottoman Empire. It retained its spiritual and commercial importance even after Edirne (Adrianople) in Thrace, and later Constantinople (Istanbul), functioned as Ottoman capitals. Yet to this date, no comprehensive study has been published on the city's role as the inaugural center of a great empire. In works by art and architectural historians, the city has often been portrayed as having a small or insignificant pre-Ottoman past, as if the Ottomans created the city from scratch. This couldn't be farther from the truth. In this book, rooted in the author's archaeological experience, Suna Çağaptay tells the story of the transition from a Byzantine Christian city to an Islamic Ottoman one, positing that Bursa was a multi-faith capital where we can see the religious plurality and modernity of the Ottoman world. The encounter between local and incoming forms, as this book shows, created a synthesis filled with nuance, texture, and meaning. Indeed, when one looks more closely and recognizes that the contributions of the past do not threaten the authenticity of the present, a richer and more accurate narrative of the city and its Ottoman accommodation emerges.

Suna Çağaptay is a Post-Doctoral Research Associate at St Edmund's College, Cambridge and a Research Associate at the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge working on the afterlives ancient cities under Christianity, Judaism, and Islam for the "Impact of the Ancient City," project funded by the European Research Council. She teaches at the Faculty of Architecture and Design at Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul.



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