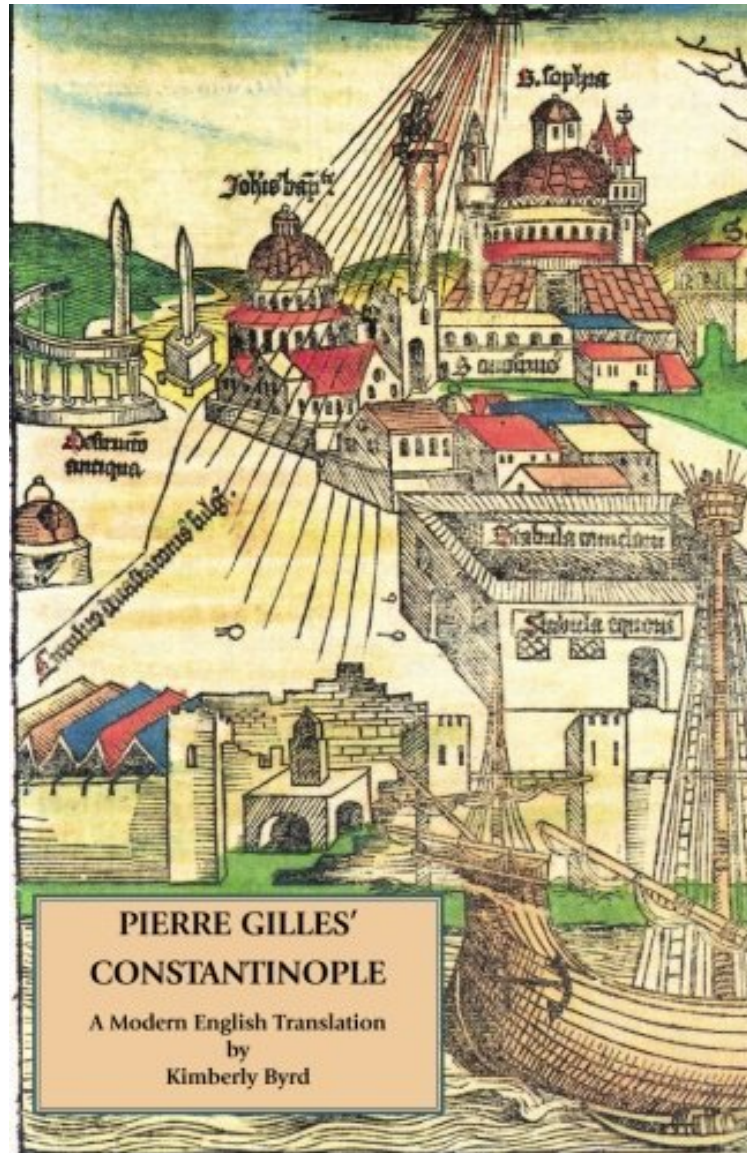


Pierre Gilles' Constantinople: A Modern English Translation

Pierre Gilles, Kimberly Byrd
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Pierre Gilles, Kimberly Byrd : Pierre Gilles' Constantinople: A Modern English Translation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pierre Gilles' Constantinople: A Modern English Translation:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Finally, an updated English translation By Kirialax Because this is effectively a primary text, and since it would be unfair to compare Gilles to modern scholarship, although given some of what is published these days he might just come out rather favourably, I am only reviewing the edition. Pierre Gilles travelled to Ottoman Constantiniyye in the middle of the 16th c. at the behest of the French king. Although his mission to buy manuscripts was a failure on account of the money not arriving, Gilles made the most of his time and travelled around the city and the surrounding countryside cataloguing monuments and artefacts from antiquity and the middle ages. His account is very important because not only is it the first "modern" survey of Constantinople, Gilles notes Romano-Byzantine structures that are no longer extant, as well as giving us the occasional tantalizing glimpse into Ottoman Istanbul under Suleyman the Magnificent. Gilles' knowledge of the sources, particularly Procopius, Cedrenus, and Zonaras and what they have to say about the city is masterful, although the modern reader probably will not appreciate his constant discussions of the text quite so much. Nonetheless, his first hand visitation to many of the structures in question give a great deal of information on how those that survived the Ottoman period did so. For example, it was interesting to note that Gilles remarks the hippodrome was full trees, as any modern visitor to Istanbul will find a large open area paved with stones and with little plant life. As an edition, we should commend Byrd for making Gilles readable and enjoyable, and for finally making a new translation since John Ball's English translation is pushing three hundred years. While the Latin text is not available in this edition it is available for a modest sum from the publisher. Byrd's notes are good and helpful, perhaps especially so for her work in tracking down all of Gilles' references to ancient texts. The introduction is sufficient to gain a good understanding of the context of the text and Gilles' life and career. My only complaint is that many of the photos are just much too small. I understand the publisher's desire to keep them in black and white to keep the cost of the book down, but some are thumbnail size and virtually useless. When the images do appear in a larger size they are crisp and clear, so there is nothing wrong with the images themselves, merely the size. For that I detract a single star, and this negative remark should be held against the publisher and not the author. Kimberly Byrd has produced a much-needed modern edition of Pierre Gilles with good references to the ancient texts and modern scholarship, all in an affordable edition and should be commended for it.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Amazing book a MUST have By J. Beresovoy This book is a must have for ANYONE who has traveled Istanbul or for anyone who WILL travel there. Incredible information about how the city looked back in the 14th century. Detailed information on the topography as well as the monuments. This book has some fabulous photos and images that I have never seen before. I strongly recommend this book for anyone interested in Byzantine history. Kimberly Byrd did a remarkable job in her translation and the commentary. Buy a copy for your friends as well!

Gilles' mission was to find and purchase ancient Greek manuscripts for Francois' humanist library. But while in Constantinople Gilles conceived his own project: to study the history and monuments of the former Byzantine capital on the spot and to publish his findings bolstered and compared with what he could learn from the ancient and medieval sources. The result was his "Topography of Constantinople and Its Antiquities in Four Books." Kimberly Byrd offers a new edition of Gilles' important work. This is published in three parts. The first, Pierre Gilles' Constantinople, includes her complete English translation of the Topography with references to Gilles' sources and to the most important recent scholarship on the city and its monuments. English-speaking readers have long relied on John Ball's 1729 translation and on its modernization published by Italica Press in 1988. This fine edition supplants that volume and offers a fresh and important addition to the scholarship on Constantinople, its ancient heritage, and to the evolving study and practice of classical archaeology in Renaissance Europe. 59 illustrations, 5 maps. Preface, bibliography, index.