



The Neo-Ottoman Frontier: Vernacular Revision in Post-Earthquake Antakya

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Abstract

Antakya, also known as Antioch under Roman, Byzantine, and Crusader rule and **أنطاكيّا** (Antakiyah) under Umayyad, Mamluk, and Ottoman rule,¹ is a historically contested city. Due to its geographic location and, in part, to the mythological weight of the city's supposed foundation by Alexander the Great, Antioch has served as a mediator between two complex lineages, one Hellenistic-Roman-Byzantine and the other Islamic-Arab-Ottoman. This meditative position has contributed to modern Antakya's cultural diversity² and to a unique historical trajectory that has both contributed to and contradicted the states—whether nation-states in the current era or the pre-capitalist empires and caliphates that preceded them—that subsumed the city of Antioch as a municipality. However, Antioch has not historically asserted independence, autonomy, or acted as a city-state within larger states; instead, Antioch's foundation and legacy have been incorporated into the symbolic identity of various states, fueling prototypical national myths³ or serving as a regional capital capable of consolidating power through its historical weight and legitimacy. This dynamic has shaped the city itself, as its history and legacy are intentionally tailored and repackaged to serve the interests of various metropolises, a process that manifests physically in the city's urban form and visual language.

1 - Grigoriadis, Ioannis N. "Antioch's Last Heirs: The Hatay Greek Orthodox Community between Greece, Syria and Turkey." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 46, no. 2 (2022): 268.

2 - Can, Şule. "The Syrian Civil War, Sectarianism and Political Change at the Turkish-Syrian Border." *Social Anthropology* 25 (2017): 174-175.

3 - Brown, David. "The Conceptual Languages of Nationalism" in *Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural, and Multicultural Politics*. Psychology Press, 2000. 24.

Introduction

Geographically, Antioch sat in a small valley at the western end of the Southeastern Taurus Mountains, the same physical barrier that repeatedly prevented the Umayyad Caliphate from spreading into the Anatolian Plateau⁴ and later served as the fluid frontier between

the declining Byzantine Empire and the expanding Seljuk Empire.⁵ The areas surrounding this mountain range are fertile lowlands, serving as the initial impetus for the city's foundation and as a key site for agricultural production and civilian taxation, which made control of the

4 - Verhoeven, F. R. J. *Islam: Its Origin and Spread in Words, Maps and Pictures*. London: Routledge, 2013. Plate 6, Plate 7.

5 - Beihammer, Alexander D. "Defection across the Border of Islam and Christianity: Apostasy and Cross-Cultural Interaction in Byzantine-Seljuk Relations." *Speculum* 86, no. 3 (2011): 598-602.



Fig1 - Raddato, Carole. Trajan/Hadrian's Aqueduct Today, Antioch on the Orontes. Photograph: Antakya, Turkey. Flickr, 2022.

city economically desirable. Modern Antakya occupies the same valley, but has shifted to the West bank of the Orestes River, and migrated southward. Remnants of old Antioch are scattered throughout the north-east of the city, with portions of the city walls and the Roman aqueduct (fig.1) system visible parallel to the river. As a historically walled (fig.2) and heavily populated city, Antioch was an economic and administrative power on the Mediterranean coast. Until the Rashidun Caliphate's eventual siege of Antioch in the late 7th century, the city was never captured by force, earning it a regional reputation as a stronghold and self-sufficient fortress. The origin of Antioch's *symbolic* weight, on the other hand, is inextricably linked to the cultural legacy of Alexander the Great, the source of the national mythology of countless modern nation-states and historic empires, and arguably a core ideological motivation for the Roman Empire's expansionism.

This symbolic weight shifted with the reconceptualization of Alexander as a proto-Christian during the Cru-

sader era—mobilized as a mythological precursor to the reconquest of the East—and with the subsequent reactions of Muslim and Jewish societies to this expansionist project. In the modern era, the historic weight and mythology of Antioch and its longstanding reputation as a site of conflict and exchange between the “Christian West” and the “Muslim East” has been re-mobilized under the Turkish political ideology of Neo-Ottomanism,⁶ a self-conception and foreign policy approach that seeks to expand Turkey's influence across former Ottoman territories and the Arab world at large. In the context of the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquakes, the destruction of a majority of modern Antakya has offered the Turkish state an opportunity to reassess the importance of the city and its potential to embody the ideal of a new Turkish polity, one that liaises between the neoliberal

6 - Yavuz, M. Hakan. “Social and Intellectual Origins of Neo-Ottomanism: Searching for a Post-National Vision.” *Die Welt des Islams* 56 (2016): 438-465.

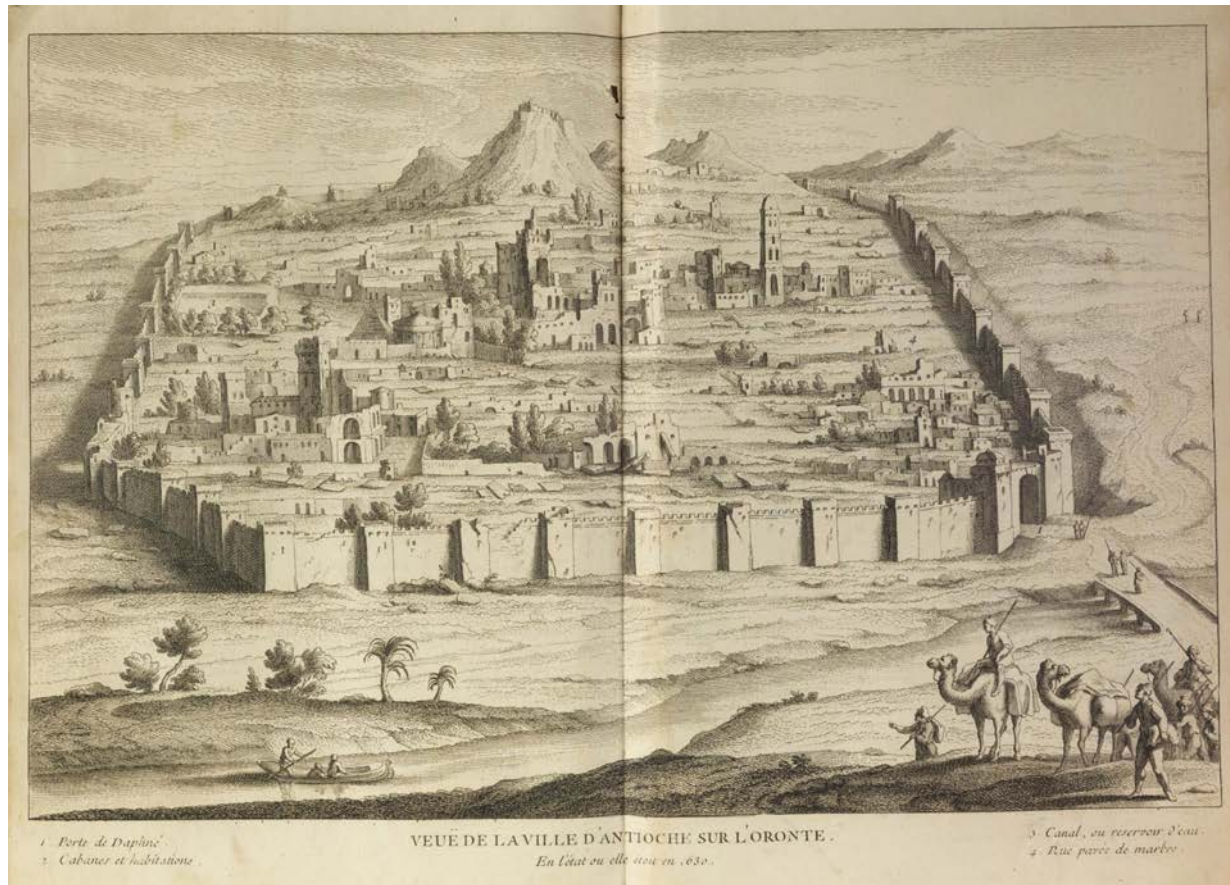


Fig 2 - Calmet, Antoine. "Veüe De La Ville D'antioche Sur L'oronte En L'état Ou Elle Étoit En 1630" in Dictionnaire Historique, Critique, Chronologique, Geographique et Litteral de la Bible. Map, 284 x 432 mm. Paris: Chez Emery, 1722-1728.

capitalism of the Kemalist⁷ republican system and the more complex ideological terrain of Turkey's Neo-Ottoman ambitions.

The Origin of Antakya

In 64 BCE, Roman General Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey) annexed most of the coastal Levant from the Seleucid Empire and established the province of Roman Syria, with the existing city of Antioch as the Roman provincial capital. He accomplished this while using the honorific "Magna," or "the Great," and often referenced Alexander the Great's reported per-

sonal affect and military leadership, placing himself and Rome in Alexander's lineage while actively dismantling a successor state to Alexander's empire.⁸

Roman Antioch, not dissimilar to Seleucid Antioch, became a cultural hub of the Levant and was expanded substantially, in addition to the conversion of the urban center (fig. 2) to support the administrative program of a Roman provincial capital.⁹

7 - Avcioğlu, Doğan. *Türkiye'Nin Düzeni: Dün, Bugün, Yarın*. Üsküdar, İstanbul: Tekin, 2024. 337.

8 - Goldsworthy, Adrian Keith. *Caesar: Life of a Colossus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 154, 249.

9 - Kondoleon, Christine, cur. "Antioch: The Lost Ancient City." Antioch: The Lost Ancient City | Worcester Art Museum, October 8, 2000.



11. RESTORED PLAN OF ANTIOCH BASED ON THE LITERARY TEXTS AND THE EXCAVATIONS. This plan shows monuments and topographical features that actually exist or can be traced on the terrain, and indicates the principal buildings and topographical data known from literary texts and from the excavations. It

does not include buildings of uncertain location known from literary texts. The drawing is based on the restored plan prepared by D. N. Wilber and published by C. R. Morey, *The Mosaics of Antioch* (New York and London, Longmans Green, 1938), p. 17.

Fig. 3 - Downey, Glanville. "Plate 11" in *A History of Antioch in Syria: From Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*. Princeton: Princeton Press, 1961. 756.

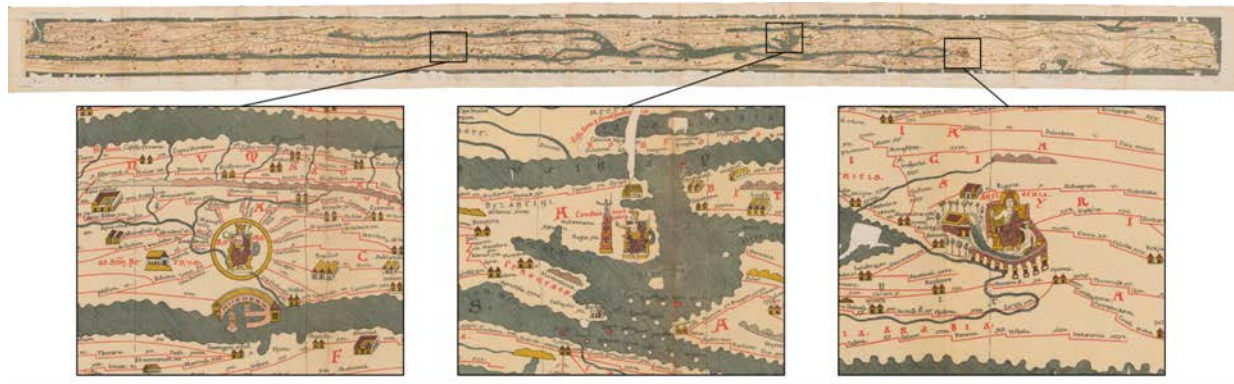


Fig.4 - Miller, Konrad. *Tabula Peutingeriana: Facsimile Edition* (1887-1888). 1-4th century CE.

Roman city planning maintained the Hippodamian grid, but introduced the Imperial Palace on the island, splitting the river. The city center was expanded substantially three times under Trajan, Commodus Augustus, and Constantine I.¹⁰ Antioch's regional weight was sustained throughout the Roman Empire's division and the imperial center's move to Constantinople, with Antioch serving as a critical eastern military and administrative center and containing one of the largest urban populations within the Byzantine Empire.¹¹ However, Antioch's administrative importance was quickly eclipsed by its ecclesiastical role in the rise of Christianity: the destination of large groups of Christians fleeing persecution in Jerusalem and the home of Paul the Apostle during his missions, Antioch became a Christian center dubbed "the mother of the Churches of Asia Minor and Europe"¹² and one of five patriarchates that made up the Pentarchy, alongside Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome, and Alexandria.¹³

10 - Jeffreys, Elizabeth, Jeffreys, Michael, and Scott, Roger, eds. "Book 13: The Time of the Emperor Constantine" in *The Chronicle of John Malalas*. Leiden: Brill, 2017. 173.

11 - Treadgold, Warren. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997. 109.

12 - Metzger, Bruce M. "Antioch-on-the-Orontes." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 11, no. 4 (1948): 70.

13 - Hovorun, Cyril. "Evolution of Church Governance:

By the 4th century, Antioch was regarded with as much importance as Rome and Constantinople, exemplified by its depiction on the Tabula Peutingeriana (Peuting-er Table) (Fig. 4), a map of the roadways and major cities of the Roman Empire. Each of the three key cities is depicted slightly differently; Rome is encircled by a golden ring with a radial array of roads emanating from its center. The figure seated in the throne holds a globe in its hand, a fitting propagandistic element for a map made to demonstrate Rome's global supremacy and the strength of its roadway system.¹⁴ Constantinople's depiction centers on a throned figure similar to Rome's, with what appears to be the Column of Constantine to its left. Antioch, however, is depicted as the largest and in the most detail, with aqueducts and a temple arranged around another central throned figure, this time surrounded by a golden halo.¹⁵ At the time the original Tabula Peutingeriana was created, the Roman Empire was formally split, with Rome and Constantinople serving as relatively equal capital centers. Antioch, however, was not an imperial seat: while Antioch served as the

From the Diaspora-Model to Pentarchy." *Iura Orientalia* IX (2013): 92.

14 - Diederich, Silke. "Empire and Landscape in the Tabula Peutingeriana." In *The Impact of the Roman Empire on Landscapes: Proceedings of the Fourteenth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire* (Mainz, June 12-15, 2019). Brill, 2022. 377.

15 - Ibid, 394.

provincial capital of Roman Syria, a key frontier province in the East, this role would not warrant the city's depiction as an equal¹⁶ to Rome or Constantinople. Instead, the rise of Christianity through Antioch in combination with the city's position in the lineage of Alexander the Great—regarded in the late Roman Empire as the standard for conquest and expansion—imbued the city with a historic weight that rivaled the mythical creation of the city of Rome and the newer Christian mythology of Emperor Constantine's divine inspiration to found the city of Constantinople.¹⁷

This symbolic weight was rapidly undermined in the 6th and 7th centuries, as “no fewer than twelve disasters afflicted Antioch and its surroundings,”¹⁸ including plagues and natural disasters that destroyed large portions of the city and its fortifications. These disasters contributed to the city's rapid fall to the Sasanian Empire, conquest by the Rashidun Caliphate, and transfer to the Umayyad Caliphate, all within fifty years. Under these circumstances, Antioch was renamed to *أنتاكيا* (Antakiyah) and repositioned as a key border city between the Umayyad Caliphate and the declining Byzantine Empire. The dissolution of Roman Syria and the rearrangement of borders also moved administrative power from Antakiyah to Damascus, which served a dual role as the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate and a provincial capital; Antakiyah was subordinated to Damascus and stripped of much of its political and ecclesiastical weight. However, the strategic geographic location of the city regained relevance: the Umayyads repeatedly stationed armies within the city itself in preparation for expeditions and raids into the weaker eastern regions of the Byzantine

Empire, while Byzantine forces often attempted to push Umayyad forces back to reclaim the key Christian city. Until the Ottoman defeat of the Byzantine Empire in the 13th century, Antioch/Antakiyah violently bounced between Byzantine forces, individual Christian regents, the predominantly Arab forces of successive Islamic Caliphates, and eventually Turkic forces of the Seljuk and later Ottoman Empires.

Vernacular Antakya, Pre-Destruction

It is this iteration of Antioch (still called *أنتاكيا* in Ottoman Turkish, romanized to Antakya) that persevered through the Ottoman era, regionally eclipsed by both Damascus and Aleppo. However, unlike the persecution that Jews and Christians faced under the Mamluks, the city benefited from the implementation of the Ottoman *millet* system: Antakya was governed under the *Rum millet* (Roman nation) led by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, and experienced a resurgence of Christian migration, re-asserting itself as a key Christian city under the protection of the Ottoman central sultanate:

“Sunni Muslims, Arabic-speaking Alawites (Nusayris), Christians of different denominations, and Jews coexisted in a city that no longer commanded the economy of the region. There was no drastic change in the Ottoman era. Aleppo and Aintab were the two cities that dominated the economy of northern Syria. Iskenderun [...] rose to the most significant port of the region, serving Aleppo, Aintab, and the Orontes valley.”¹⁹

Under this system, the Patriarch commissioned a number of significant Orthodox churches, including St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church, (Fig.5) reviving the Christian institutions and community of the city. At the same time, the Ottoman sultanate commissioned several large mosques, including the Ulu Mosque (Fig.6) and the Habib-i Najjar Mosque. During this period, two subsequent earthquakes effectively leveled the city: the 1853 earthquake and the 1872 Amik earthquake, which

16 - Arguably, Antioch's large and detailed depiction in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* implies an even greater importance than Rome or Constantinople.

17 - Linder, Amnon. “Ecclesia and Synagoga in the Medieval Myth of Constantine the Great.” *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 54, no. 4 (1976): 1019-1020.

18 - Eger, Asa A. “(Re)Mapping Medieval Antioch: Urban Transformations from the Early Islamic to the Middle Byzantine Periods.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 67 (2013): 95-96.

19 - Grigoriadis. “Antioch's Last Heirs.” 268.



Fig.5 Dosseman. Antakya St. Paul's Syrian Orthodox Church Interior in 2004. Photograph, Antakya, Turkey. Wikimedia, 2004.

destroyed approximately two-thirds of the city.²⁰ This means nearly all the historic buildings that remain in Antakya have been heavily restored, or are recreations of older, original buildings, the details of which few records remain.

What is notable, however, is the persistence of hand-cut stone masonry and the cross-usage of vaults and pointed arches across both churches and mosques. Antakya's built environment, while not separated from the development processes of the Ottoman Empire, maintained some level of municipal isolation. Even as Istanbul (formerly Constantinople) developed with significant

French and German influences²¹ throughout the late 19th century and classical Ottoman architecture was revived under the First National Architectural Movement,²² Antakya's significant sites retained their vernacular, rebuilt throughout the period from the 1880s to the 1910s using the same local stone and unreinforced masonry techniques that dated from the Roman period. This vernacular applied across ethnoreligious bounds, leading to city-wide uniformity, particularly between religious sites.

The Ulu Mosque and St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church,

20 - Ambraseys, Nicholas. *Earthquakes in the Mediterranean and Middle East: A Multidisciplinary Study of Seismicity up to 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 60-814.

21 - Yiğitpaşa, Nadire T. "Fransız Mimarisinin Osmanlı-Türk Mimarisine Etkisizerine Bir Degerlendirme" *ODÜSOBİAD* 12 (2022): 244-246.

22 - Bozdoğan, Sibel. *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002. 16-18.

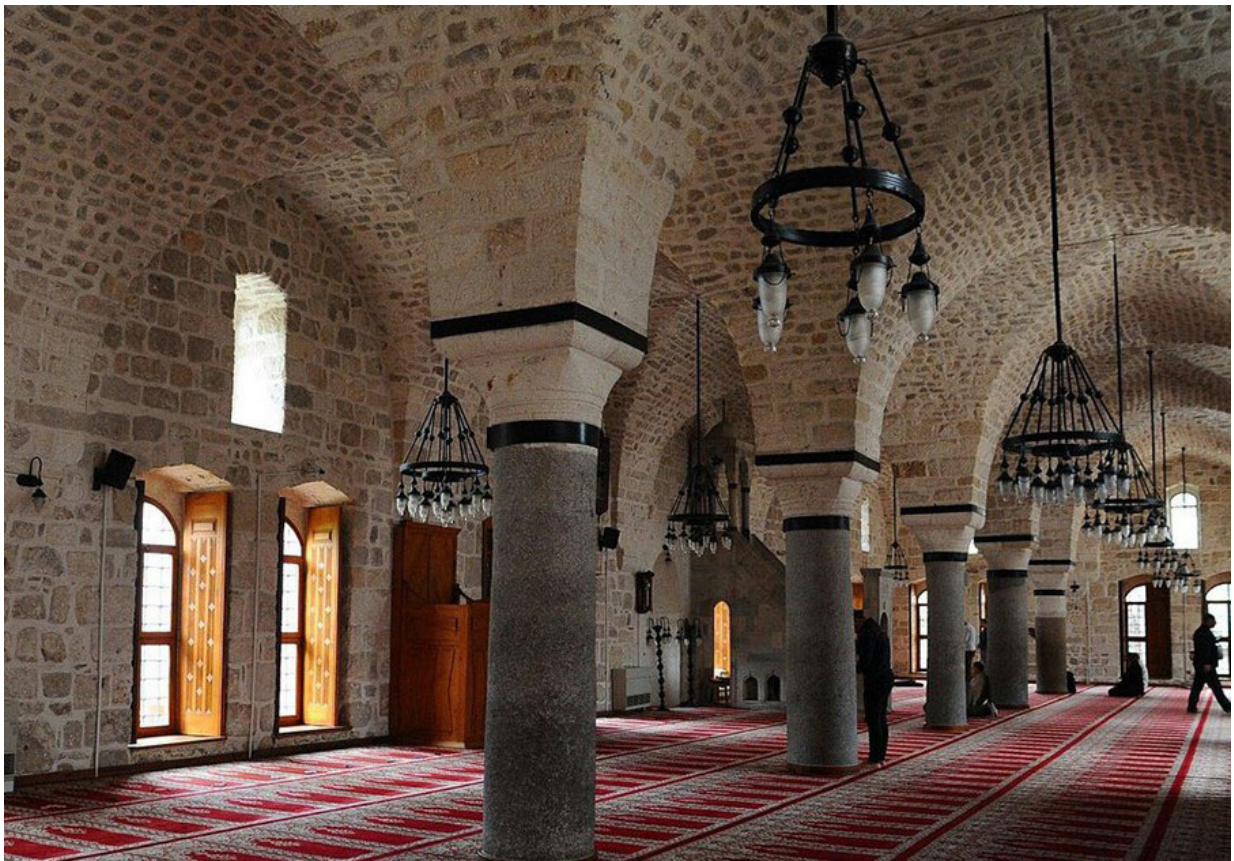


Fig. 6 - Hatay Büyükşehir Belediyesi. *Antakya Ulu Cami*. Photograph, Antakya, Turkey.

for example, share a similar low, cross-vaulted interior, contrasting with the semi-domes typically used in mosques of classical-period Ottoman architecture (and its revivalist branches). In many cases, the same building was refitted to serve as a church or mosque upon successive invasions of the city; this is not the case for either the Ulu Mosque or St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church. The church (Fig.7) also shares a similar facade with the Habib-i Najar Mosque, (Fig.8) composed of sequential double-story pointed arches centered on columns, forming a colonnade in front of both buildings. Both structures employ the same natural limestone, cut in similar proportions, and sourced from the mountain range adjacent to the city. The structural and design similarities should be understood as co-products of a common architectural language and material culture in Antakya, transcending religious authority and millets and existing somewhat separate from late Ottoman architectural developments.

All three structures, the Ulu and Habib-i Najar Mosques and St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church, were either partially or entirely destroyed in the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquakes, which leveled over eighty percent of Antakya.²³ This was a similarly catastrophic event for Antakya's urban fabric as the earlier seismic period in the mid-19th century. However, the Turkish state under the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has siloed the rebuilding process into the central administration, with national contracts drawn between the state, non-governmental organizations, and international planning firms that have pulled power away from Antakya's municipal government and the population itself. Unlike the recovery process in the late Ottoman period, where, despite its waning power, the Rum millet and the

23 - Kenyon, Peter, and Gokce Saracoglu. "A Year After Turkey's Earthquake, Hundreds of Thousands of People Remain in Shelters." NPR, February 9, 2024.



Fig.7 - Gülay, Nurettin. Antakya Eylül 2011. Photograph, Antakya, Turkey. Panoramio, 2011.

officials of the Aleppo Vilayet collaborated to rebuild, post-2023 Antakya is in the hands of the central administration.

The Destruction and Revision of Antakya

Predating the earthquakes of 2023, Antakya was known to contain “the largest proportion of Arab citizens of Turkey,”²⁴ a logical outcome of the territory being annexed and transferred to the new Turkish Republic from

French Mandate Syria through a referendum in 1939. These demographics shifted further with the beginning of the Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War, when a majority of Syrian refugees fled to southern Turkey, including Hatay province. This compounded existing tensions with and systemic discrimination against the Arab residents of Antakya, leading to the entire Arab population of the city being viewed by the Turkish municipality as “guests” rather than residents, with a version of redlining being implemented to push the Arab population into specific parts of the city.²⁵ As the Civil War progressed, how-

24 - Can, Şule. “The Syrian Civil War, Sectarianism and Political Change at the Turkish-Syrian Border.” *Social Anthropology* 25 (2017): 175.

25 - Dağtaş, Seçil. “Whose Misafirs? Negotiating Difference Along the Turkish-Syrian Border.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 4 (2017): 664-665.



Fig. 8 - Ardoğa, Nedim. Habib'i Neccar Mosque. Photograph, Antakya, Turkey. Wikimedia, 2018.

ever, the Turkish administration under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan pushed past the Syrian border and established a semi-permanent occupation of northern Syria, also creating a front organization in the form of the Syrian National Army (SNA) and providing military and logistical support to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the organization that would later take power in 2024.²⁶ By 2023, the Turkish administration had established a firm presence in Syria, engaging in reconstruction efforts and settling both Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens in the occupied buffer zones. This process has been described as Tur-

key seeking “to achieve control and influence through a mix of military occupation and full-scale reconstruction based on the logic of Turkification and the deployment abroad of the domestic apparatus of the Turkish state.”²⁷ The destruction of Antakya in 2023 offered the Turkish government an opportunity to deploy the same reconstruction and consolidation strategy domestically.

Immediately following the earthquakes, a partnership between the non-governmental organization the Türkiye Design Council (abbreviated as TTV, in Turkish)

26 - Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad, ed. *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham's Relationship with Turkey: Primary Texts*, June 3, 2018.

27 - Yüksel, Engin, and Erwin van Veen. *Turkey in North-western Syria: Rebuilding Empire at the Margins*. Clingendael Institute, 2019. 3-4.



Fig. 9 - Foster + Partners. "A New Vision for Turkish Region Devastated by 2023 Earthquake"

and the British architecture firm Foster+Partners was announced.²⁸ In July of 2024, a jointly-developed masterplan for the reconstruction of Antakya was publicly released, accompanied by several statements and quotations from representatives of TTV and F+P. Furkan

28 - Amaya-Akkermans, Arie. "Beyond Rubble - Cultural Heritage and Healing after Disaster." *The Markaz Review*, February 5, 2026.

Demirci, the Chairman of the Türkiye Design Council, acknowledged an "immense responsibility to deliver designs that recognize the rich cultural and historical legacy of this place, while also serving existing communities and future generations." F+P²⁹ also included

29 - Foster + Partners. "A New Vision for Turkish Region Devastated by 2023 Earthquake: Foster + Partners." *News*, July 30, 2024.

a set of renderings, lush with greenery and populated with mosque minarets and citizens, (Fig.9) showing the rearrangement of the city into large megablocks: mixed-use buildings of uniform height shaped around interior courtyards and interspersed with parkland. The master plan centers on evenly distributing public goods, stabilizing the city, and unifying its visual language. However, these formal changes have political impacts: the spatial reorganization and political consolidation of a historically heterogeneous border region, and the stabilization of the Turkish state's "frontier" amid an ongoing project of soft-power projection and regional expansion.

Through the language of resilience, modernization, and heritage preservation,³⁰ the Foster+Partners masterplan participates in the long historical incorporation of Antakya and the larger Hatay province into Turkish national space, transforming a historically majority-Christian, transitory, multilingual border city into a medium-density investment-oriented urban landscape. The Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, for example, completed the restoration of 73 "cultural properties" as of December 2025,³¹ including the full restoration and reopening of the Habib-i Najar Mosque. This is critical historic preservation work, yet, in the context of the F+P masterplan, these monuments and religious spaces are no longer part of the urban fabric but active interruptions to it. If the master plan is executed, these restoration projects will be surrounded by a uniform mass of housing complexes, retail avenues, and mixed-use buildings, all clad in limestone sheathing and facadework to echo Antakya's vernacular architecture, yet entirely divorced from the city's history and natural development.

The maintenance and protection of historical and monumental structures are also key parts of the current iteration of the Turkish national project. In some cases, as with the controversial removal of the Hagia Sophia's

museum status and its conversion to an active mosque,³² it could be argued that the state has abandoned its staunch secularism and aligned itself with an idealized version of its Islamic Ottoman heritage. On the other hand, the state protects thousands of historic churches and other sites that predate Islam, are remnants of the Byzantine era, or date to the Crusades. These two approaches—erasure on one hand and preservation on the other—are not actually contradictory. Where the Turkish national project first attempted to distance itself from religion altogether, the Neo-Ottomanist tendency that has gained dominance in the current central administration (which does not contradict Turkish nationalism, and is rather an extension of it) "means allowing diverse religious or secular lifestyles to co-exist."³³ The diversity of the Ottoman Empire and the perceived prosperity for different groups that the millet system provided are key aspects of the ideology; therefore, the state must tolerate and actively defend ethnic and religious diversity. This approach has limits, however. The national project requires this diversity to exist and flourish within the boundaries of the state apparatus and within the identitarian constraints of the "Turk," a somewhat unstable categorization that can be rearticulated to exclude and marginalize those whose interests contradict the state's. The Kurds, for example, were nearly assimilated into the Turkish national identity before being cast out and nationally oppressed; Circassians, Zaza, and ethnic Greeks were similarly removed from the Turkish national identity after resisting cultural assimilation.

The strongest historical revision of Antakya's reconstruction, then, is the reduction of multiple intersecting yet tangible histories and cultures into a single "multiculturalism." Even after the city's destruction in the late 19th century, the homes, courtyards, parks, churches, and community centers of Armenians, Syriac Christians,

30 - Ibid.

31 - Newsroom Staff. "Türkiye Completes Restoration of 73 Earthquake-Damaged Monuments." *Türkiye Today*, December 30, 2025.

32 - Jamaledine, Ziad. "Hagia Sophia Past and Future." *Places Journal*, August 2020.

33 - Yavuz, M. Hakan. "Social and Intellectual Origins of Neo-Ottomanism: Searching for a Post-National Vision." *Die Welt des Islams* 56 (2016): 463.

Greek Orthodox communities, and other significant minorities in Antakya all coexisted in dense, organic arrangements. What Foster+Partners describe as “urban challenges” and “sprawl” is the city’s actual cultural and historic fabric, now replaced with a facsimile that only references the visual and material language of Antakya’s vernacular architecture, not the urban form itself. This reduction assists both the Neo-Ottoman and Turkish nationalist agenda; as the Turkish Republic expands its influence over the Levant—and, arguably, now holds Syria as a proxy state³⁴—the assimilation of various Syriac and Arab national identities and narratives into an aggregate Neo-Ottoman national identity, all for political and economic purposes, is a real possibility.

Conclusion

The reconstruction of Antakya reveals the instability at the core of the Neo-Ottoman project itself. The city’s historical significance has always emerged from its internal contradictions: Antioch functioned as a Christian patriarchate, an Islamic frontier city, an Ottoman provincial municipality, and a site of continuous exchange between imperial, linguistic, and religious systems, sustaining communities and legacies from each history. Yet, the Foster+Partners masterplan reduces these overlapping histories into an abstracted multicultural aesthetic, preserving fragments of Antakya’s material vernacular while dissolving the urban and social conditions that produced it. Limestone facades, pointed arches, and restored religious monuments remain, but they are detached from the dense and historically contingent urban fabric that gave them meaning in the first place. In this sense, the current reconstruction efforts are not simply restoring Antakya; they are revising it. The city is being reimagined as a legible and governable frontier landscape, one capable of mediating among Turkish nationalism, the rise of Neo-Ottoman soft power in the Arab world, and overall neoliberal development. The humanitarian recovery and heritage preservation projects being undertaken are therefore inseparable from a broader polit-

ical project of territorial consolidation and demographic management, made easier by the destruction caused by a natural disaster.

This revision is not an anomaly within Turkish state formation, but a continuation of the processes through which Antakya has repeatedly been absorbed into larger imperial and national mythologies. Just as Rome mobilized Antioch through the lineage of Alexander, the Crusader states reimagined him as a proto-Christian conqueror, and the Ottoman Empire reorganized the city through the millet system, the contemporary Turkish state now repositions Antakya as both a symbolic and material frontier of the Neo-Ottoman project. The destruction caused by the 2023 earthquakes created the conditions for this transformation by suspending the organic continuity of the city and transferring reconstruction authority to the central administration and its international partners. What emerges in place of vernacular Antakya is not merely a rebuilt city, but a spatial expression of a new Turkish polity: one that selectively incorporates diversity as heritage while subordinating it to the national and geopolitical ambitions of the state. Antakya’s reconstruction is a case study in how urban planning continues to function as an instrument for producing and revising historical memory and national identity.

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