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A Tale of Two Port Cities: Ayasoluk and Balat in the Principalities Period

Abstract:

Ephesus and Miletus, the leading port cities of the ancient world in Western Anatolia, both fell into a gradual decline in the Middle Ages. The Arab, Persian and Turkish incursions resulted in instability of the Byzantine authority in the region. Steady silting up of both harbours worsened geographical conditions and caused urban decline, which, in turn, led to spatial transformation in those cities. Under the rule of the Turkish Principalities, however, a series of initiatives started to revive both ports. In the following years, Ayasoluk (Ephesus) ruled by Aynid, and Balat (Miletus) ruled by Menteşid Principalities once again thrived as active overseas ports in the trade networks between East and West. Within the multi-cultural milieu of the 14th century Aegean, Western Anatolia, this time represented by Turkish Principalities, once again counted among the active agents of trade together with the Italian city states (Venice and Genoa in particular), Mamlûks, and the already settled Byzantines (Greek minorities). This talk presents a comparative morphological analysis of Ayasoluk and Balat with a particular focus on the spatial transformations underwent in the Principalities period. Historical documents, texts and visual depictions will reveal the similarities and differences these two port cities displayed regarding the urban form, settlement patterns, cityscape and architecture.

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Publications:

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