



30th Levantine Heritage Foundation Zoom lecture gathering with guest speaker Achilleas Chatziconstantinou
11 March 2024, 6.30 pm (UK time)

The Smyrna Quay book. A decade-long multidisciplinary effort to research and reconstruct the legendary face of the most important ottoman city port

The Smyrna Quay (= I Prokymaia tis Smyrnis). *Tracing a Symbol of Progress and Splendour*, is a two-volume book written in Greek, published in 2018 by George Poulimenos and Achilleas Chatziconstantinou, which aims to introduce in an original but comprehensive manner all the buildings, over 200, that on September 1922 stood on this legendary 3 km-long strip of land, the waterfront of the Ottoman port city of Smyrna (modern-day Izmir), widely known as the “Kai”. The authors followed a multidisciplinary approach, while treating their research subject as a continuous architectural, topographic and historical ensemble. In 2019 the authors of the book received the Lycurgeian Prize of the Academy of Athens and has since been included in the libraries of universities around the world such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia etc. Meanwhile, the research is still ongoing, with a Supplement expected in early 2024.

The Quay became an iconic symbol of Smyrna, a synonym of the progress, cosmopolitanism and the affluence of its inhabitants, throughout the 47 years period which spanned its existence, from its completion in August 1875 to September 1922. It was then that this glorious sight came violently to an end in the aftermath of the Greco-Turkish war (1919-1922), after the recapture of Smyrna by the Kemalist forces and the Great Fire that followed. The majority of the Quay buildings perished and those parts that managed to escape the fire, inevitably fell prey to the reconstruction of the city, by that time officially named İzmir, to such extent that nowadays very few are still intact.

So, what were the resources and the challenges of this epic, unprecedented decade-long endeavour? In which ways did it enlighten us about pre1922 Smyrna and its inhabitants? Each and every one of the grand mansions, theatres, cafés, consulates, clubs and hotels, as well as the bustling port hotels, warehouses, administration buildings and agencies was identified, studied and traced. But our mission was not just to reconstruct their facades, but also to comprehend the multiple aspects of the public and private life in this Anatolian city-junction, where the European west wind blew strongly for centuries. These edifices reflected not just the lives of their inhabitants, a dynamic, multiethnic society, but also the spirit of the city itself, an unparalleled example of endurance, entrepreneurship and love for life.

Booking essential: <https://achilleas-chatziconstantinou-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk>



Smyrna quay phases



Achilleas Chatziconstantinou was born in 1972 in Athens Greece to parents from Smyrna and Andros island. He holds a BSc title in Geology (Kapodistrian University of Athens, 1994) and an MSc in Geographic and Geodetic Information Systems (UCL, 1995). He is a Trustee of the Levantine Heritage Foundation (www.levantineheritage.com), whose mission is to promote the research, preservation and education of the heritage, arts and culture of the communities of the Levant region encompassed by the former Ottoman Empire between the 17th and 20th centuries. He has co-authored with George Poulimenos the two-volume book **The Quay of Smyrna. Tracing a Symbol of Progress and Splendour** (*To Kai tis Smyrnis. Anichnevontas ena Symvolo Proodou kai Megaleiou*), Kapon Editions, Athens 2018. In 2019 the book was awarded the Lykourgian price of the Academy of Athens. In 2021 he participated as speaker and historical advisor in the Greek documentary titled **The Waterfront**, written and directed by Angelos Kovotsos.

For more than two decades he has been researching the topography and history of Smyrna/Izmir and greater area, writing press articles and lecturing on related topics.