



Metro excavations revealed the history of İstanbul, history books will be reviewed

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Archeological excavations are always so called tedious works, coupled with ancient cities underground works they are often criticized as slowing down the projects. However, they may reveal the history of some fascinating cities even changing the history books like the discoveries made in Istanbul during metro constructions.



A Byzantine shipwreck discovered at Yenikapi – www.Dailysabah.com

Istanbul was the capital of two of two big empires, East Roman Empire (Byzantine Empire) and Ottoman Empire. In year 361, Istanbul (Constantinople) was the most populated city in the world with a population of around 300,000, being Europe's largest and wealthiest city. Istanbul was also settled by Phoenician, Greek trade colonies from around 700 BC. Until the conquest of Istanbul by the Turks in 1453, there were also Genoese trade colonies in Istanbul. Today Istanbul is a very fast developing city reaching to a population of 14 Million people.

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Although Istanbul's a funicular subway system of 573 m in length was designed and constructed by French Engineers in 1875 and put in operation between Karaköy and İstiklal street which is still in operation, the excavation of Metro lines started early in the 1990's. The length of Metro lines reached up to 45 km in 2004, 141 km between 2005-2013 and 400km in 2014-2019, and expected to reach up to 800 km after 2019 and these contractual activities revealed the history of this fascinating city.

The archeological studies covering an open excavation area of within 40,000 square meters during the construction of the Marmara, Undersea Metro Line in 2008, uncovered Neolithic settlements in İstanbul. This proved that İstanbul was inhabited 8500 years ago, 3500 years earlier than previously thought. Different burial traditions dating back from Neolithic times indicate that groups from different cultures used to live together side by side meaning that İstanbul's cosmopolitan character dates back to prehistoric times.

One of the most interesting excavations in the world today is in the Great Harbor, built by Theodosius I in Constantinople discovered during metro works in Yenikapi. 37 shipwrecks most dating to the 6th to 7th centuries AD were discovered making it by far the biggest collection of craft known from Antiquity Remains of the ships of different dimensions and types dated from the fifth and 11th centuries were unearthed. Some were found with their cargo. In addition to numerous amphorae of various types, and whatever was used during daily life was came across with several Byzantine gold coins. These were registered in the İstanbul Museum inventory offering to the Heritage of the World a fascinating collection for human history. Just in the Byzantine layer 45,000 items were found in Marmaray and metro archaeological findings which took İstanbul's history back 6,500 years.

Underlying the Byzantine harbor there was yet more archaeology in the form of an extensive Neolithic layer. There is little Bronze Age or Iron Age material known from İstanbul, but Neolithic material is widely scattered throughout the city. This is the first time however that the Neolithic levels have been properly uncovered.

The other important discovery done in 2017, for the History of İstanbul was made during the subway station in Beşiktaş. The ancient site was dated to early Bronze Age, 3500 BC. Around 70 kurgans were found side by side, just like the Etruscans in Italy. Kurgans are Turkish burials spread from Siberia to Europe but Western scholars say they were used by Indo-European people, hence a common feature for ancient Turks and the ancestors of the

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Indo-Europeans. Kurgans were not known to have existed in Turkey (Anatolia) until the discovery of a kurgan burial a couple of years ago, near a lake in Silivri, Istanbul about 80 km from Besiktaş. These are just amazing discoveries that will change history books.

Metro excavations in İstanbul emphasized again that city underground works and archeological excavations are two sisters' scientific activities. Although one necessitates fast and the other one low speed, so called tedious activity, they cannot be separated from each other offering an invaluable service to human being.

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