

## Istanbul in the Tulip Age

*We arrived the next morning at Constantinople, but I can yet tell you very little of it, all my time having been taken up with receiving visits, which are at least a very good entertainment to the eyes, the young women all being beauties and their beauty highly improved by the good taste of their dress. Our Palace is in Pera, which is no more a suburb of Constantinople than Westminster is a suburb of London. All the Ambassadors are lodged very near each other. One part of our house shows us the port, the city and the seraglio and the distant hills of Asia, perhaps altogether the most beautiful prospect in the world. A certain French author says that Constantinople is twice as large as Paris. Mr. Wortley is unwilling to own it is bigger than London, though I confess it appears to me to be so, but I don't believe it is so populous.*

—LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU, *THE TURKISH EMBASSY LETTERS* <sup>1</sup>

Lady Montagu, wife of the English ambassador, wrote these words to her women friends and relatives in England about their trip and her Ottoman friends in Edirne and Istanbul during 1717–18. She was in Istanbul during the Tulip Age (1718–1730), which witnessed a construction boom by Sultan Ahmed III (1703–1730) and his grand vizier and son-in-law, Nevşehirli Ibrahim Pasha (1718–1730). The sultan also demonstrated a great interest in all varieties of tulips and had them planted in gardens everywhere to beautify Istanbul. The Tulip Age (*Lale Devri*) is considered Istanbul's first serious cultural opening up to the West that led to the growing establishment in Pera of a Western European colony, particularly with an increasing population of women.

Lady Montagu was impressed by the quality of life in the European colony of Pera, finding that part of the city more cosmopolitan and the whole city larger than Paris and London.<sup>2</sup> The Europeans were traditionally confined to Galata and Pera, but some, like Lady Montagu and later Antoine-Ignace Melling, gained access to Ottoman society and intermingled with Ottoman women. Lady Montagu criticized the bias among some of her predecessors and contemporary European visitors, who often painted a negative picture of a declining empire and a capital plagued by disease and fires.<sup>3</sup>



FIGURE 1. Thomas Allom, *Constantinople [Viewed] from Kasım Paşa*. From *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor Illustrated*, 2 vols. London: Fisher, Son and Co., 1838.

From European narrative accounts, engravings, and sketches, as well as from Ottoman archival material, an urban society emerges that was not very different from European cities like Paris and London in the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The growing wealth of the ruling class and its clients was on display in numerous mansions and villas in the suburbs on the waterfront while the poor overcrowded the old neighborhoods. The old city faced similar problems of demographic expansion, congestion, disease, social violence, and crime as well as an emerging culture of “bourgeois civility” and consumption that followed more or less the same trajectory of development as that of some European cities. The city expanded from the walled towns of Istanbul and Galata to north of the Golden Horn and the suburbs along the waterfront (see figure 1).

Greater Istanbul was divided into four districts: Istanbul proper (inside the walls), Galata (inside and outside the walls), Eyüp, and Üsküdar. Separated by the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, each district developed a distinct urban and social character.<sup>5</sup> The Golden Horn and the Bosphorus divided the city but also connected it to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.<sup>6</sup> In the popular Ottoman imagination, the district of Istanbul was the “abode of felicity,” where the sultan resided, while Galata inside the walls was the “abode of the infidel” and the “sin city,” where the Europeans resided next to the Ottoman non-Muslim subjects. Galata inside the walls

and the hills of Pera to the north became the hub of Western European trade and diplomacy in the eighteenth century. The city's social diversity was changing as the Europeans gained more freedom to move around and as their gaze turned from Istanbul to the European-like modernity and bustle of Galata and Pera in the eighteenth century. Eyüp and Üsküdar were sleepy districts and more rural in character. The more traditional towns of Üsküdar and Eyüp contrasted sharply with European-influenced Galata, which was also becoming more prosperous, middle-class, and diverse in its social make-up and appearance.

In reality, Istanbul proper and Galata were becoming more socially and physically integrated with the settlement of Muslims in Galata and non-Muslims all over greater Istanbul as well as with the movement of the ruling class from the district of Istanbul to the villages along the Bosphorus. Some neighborhoods inside the walls experienced more congestion and social stratification as evidenced by the high rate of crime in both districts. The European community eventually moved out of the walled town of Galata to the hills of Pera in the north.

#### ISTANBUL IN THE EUROPEAN IMAGINATION

European diplomats, merchants, and travelers to the Ottoman Empire recorded numerous accounts of their stays in Istanbul in the eighteenth century. The accounts of diplomats and visitors like the Venetian *bailo* (envoy), the French ambassador Marquis de Villeneuve (1728–41), and the British ambassador John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich (1718–92), focused on Ottoman government and politics, diplomacy, and trade.<sup>7</sup> Others, like James Dallaway, the chaplain and physician to the British embassy in the late eighteenth century, offered a description of Istanbul and its monuments as well as views of life in Galata and Pera.<sup>8</sup> Since the society had become more receptive to foreigners, visitors could more fully detail the world they observed. The more colorful accounts written by women like Lady Mary Montagu dealt with the manners and customs of Ottoman women. For example, she commented on their sexual lives and exposed the use of the veil by some Ottoman women as a cover for illicit affairs.

The manners and customs of the denizens of Istanbul became the theme of Western as well as Ottoman painting and travel narratives, which often complemented each other in a single text.<sup>9</sup> The primary vantage of European artists was the great panorama that featured Istanbul's Byzantine and Ottoman monuments and depicted the beauty and tantalizing mystery of oriental life. The artists' charcoal, oil, and watercolor works were in the style of premodern tourist guides. European artists like the French Jean-Baptiste Vanmour (1671–1737), Antoine-Ignace Melling (1763–1831), and Thomas Allom (1804–1872) illustrated some of these accounts.<sup>10</sup> Other writers commissioned artists to provide sketches for their accounts. For example, Cornelis Galkoen (1696–1764), the Dutch ambassador to the court of



FIGURE 2. Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, *The Scene of a Picnic*, 1726. Courtesy of Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

Ahmed III, commissioned Vanmour in 1726 to paint scenes of embassy receptions to the sublime court and of daily life in Istanbul in the Tulip Age. One painting of a picnic shows janissaries and prostitutes drinking in a public park (see figure 2). A student of Musavvir Hüseyin who was influenced by Vanmour, the illustrious painter of the late seventeenth century Abdülcelil Levni (d. 1732) painted portraits of sultans and a cross-section of Istanbul's residents, including women in their colorful and sexy costumes.<sup>11</sup> Under the patronage of Sultan Ahmed III, he also illustrated the festival of 1720 in his *Surname-yi Vehbi* (Book of Festivities), which depicted the sultan, his grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha, and state dignitaries, together with Istanbul's population, watching the parade of guilds, janissaries, and entertainers. Such Ottoman depictions of everyday life differed from what European artists were representing. The Western accounts of the Ottomans became more tame in the eighteenth century with the decline of Ottoman power.<sup>12</sup> Some Europeans, like François Baron de Tott (1733–1793), a French aristocrat and military officer of Hungarian origin who lived in the empire after 1755, and others who imagined it, like Montesquieu (1689–1755), both admired this alien culture and were repelled by the cruelty and despotism of sultans and janissaries relative to victims—slaves, women, and subjects (chiefly Christian) of the empire.<sup>13</sup> However, the Enlightenment writers were really critiquing the despotism and decadence of the court

of Louis XIV when they focused on the cruelty of harem life in the Ottoman Empire and Persia.

The European accounts and visual representations of harem life and the public bath had a pornographic content that was clearly aimed at the European male.<sup>14</sup> Many commented on the harem they had never visited.<sup>15</sup> The slave market manifested the sexual violence of the Turk against his Christian victim, a theme that became more popular in the nineteenth century. These works were fantasies of Muslim sexuality that reflected the imagination of Western artists, voyeurs, and spectators more than the actual subjects they depicted. These sexually charged scenes fit well with the dramatic setting: a city of minarets, domes, and churches set on seven hills overlooking the blue expanse of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus.

The European fascination with Istanbul was intensified in Orientalist art that developed fully in the nineteenth century as Europe gained the upper hand in Ottoman affairs.<sup>16</sup> Orientalism became a way of thinking, imagining, representing, and writing about the Orient from a position of cultural and political superiority. Istanbul, once the great imperial capital of a powerful empire, was depicted as a city in the process of decline and as picturesque.<sup>17</sup> In Orientalist works, Istanbul was the opposite of London, a city that represented progress, industry, and capitalism in contrast to a decaying Oriental capital. One Italian author, Edmondo De Amicis, equated Ottoman decline with the idleness of the people in Istanbul:

Although at some hours of the day Constantinople has an appearance of industry, in reality it is perhaps the laziest city in the world. Everybody gets up as late as possible. Even in summer, at an hour when all our cities are awake, Constantinople is still sleeping. . . . Then there are the holidays: the Turkish Friday, the Jewish Sabbath, the Christian Sunday, the innumerable Saints' days of the Greek and Armenian calendar, all scrupulously observed. . . . Every day one or the other of the five peoples of the great city goes lounging about the streets, in holiday dress, with no other thought than to kill time. The Turks are masters of this art. . . . Their idleness is the real thing, brother to death, like sleep, a profound repose of all the faculties, a suspension of all cares, a mode of existence quite unknown to Europeans.<sup>18</sup>

Many Europeans, however, appreciated the relatively slow pace of life in Istanbul, its colorful mosaic of ethnic groups, and its slow integration into the modern world. Its air of leisure certainly attracted many European visitors to the city and the villages on the Bosphorus. Places like Galata and Pera offered a shared space of coexistence and intermingling for the Europeans as well as the non-Muslim and Muslim subjects of the empire.<sup>19</sup>

The Ottoman ruling class was equally becoming interested and curious about life in Paris, London, and other European cities. Ottoman envoys to Europe collected information on European progress and reported back to Istanbul. For ex-

ample, Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi, the Ottoman envoy to France in 1720, described French palaces like Versailles as well as gardens, factories, and canals in Paris and in the towns he visited in his embassy report that he submitted to Sultan Ahmed III upon his return.<sup>20</sup> He brought back engravings and plans of Versailles and other palaces from Paris that influenced the construction of Ottoman palaces and other buildings. In addition, European military advisers were hired to modernize the Ottoman military and establish military academies in Istanbul in the late eighteenth century.

Ottoman women were becoming more curious about European women and culture. Antoine-Ignace Melling became the imperial architect to the Ottoman princess Hadice Sultan (1768–1822) and designed her palace and its interior decoration as well as a European garden in the form of a labyrinth in the late eighteenth century. Melling also purchased European goods for Hadice Sultan and taught her the Latin alphabet.<sup>21</sup> Melling's beautiful sketches of the newly built mansions along the waterfront clearly exhibit the influence of French neoclassical, baroque, and rococo styles used in the construction, decoration, and furnishings of the palace of Hadice Sultan and those of other dignitaries in Istanbul.<sup>22</sup> The influence of European fashion among the palace women is also evident in Melling's sketches. However, the adoption of European fashion by the Ottoman elite and particularly by women invited religious scrutiny. The conservative ulema placed bans on European fashion worn by non-elite Ottoman women in public.

#### PATRONAGE OF PLEASURE

*Come, let's grant joy to this heart of ours that founders in distress:  
Let's go to the pleasure gardens, come, my sauntering cypress.  
Look, at the quay, a six-oared boat is waiting in readiness—  
Let's go to the pleasure gardens, come, my sauntering cypress.*

—NEDİM, "SONG," IN HALMAN, *NIGHTINGALES AND PLEASURE GARDENS*

Seeking pleasure was not new among the Ottoman ruling class but its public expression was. What was novel were the public displays of pleasure among upper-class Ottomans, material wealth, royal grandeur, and the growing visibility of Ottoman women in public spaces. Tulip gardens, public fountains and parks became the foci of social interaction, illicit sexual activities, and recreation for the Ottoman elite as well as middle-class men and women (see chapter 5). The trend signaled an intensified sense of leisure among the ruling class and the public at large.<sup>23</sup>

The private funds of the royal household, drawn largely from extensive tax farms and pious and religious foundations, supported the greater portion of these public and private projects (see chapter 3).<sup>24</sup> The Ottoman ruling class invested its wealth in the construction of waterfront palaces, kiosks, tulip gardens, public fountains, and parks that closely resembled the Safavid (1501–1722) royal parks and kiosks in Is-

fahan and the royal gardens in Versailles.<sup>25</sup> Social gatherings known as *helva* feasts were held in the waterfront palaces; during these courtly men and women enjoyed poetry, music, philosophical discourse, and the serving of *helva* (sweet paste).

The craze of sultan Ahmed III (1703–1730) and his grandees for tulips led to the importation of enormous quantities of bulbs from Iran and Holland, which created a huge inflation in the flower markets of Istanbul. Tulips of every variety and color appeared in public parks and royal gardens and as a motif in tiles, paintings, and textiles. The state placed a maximum price of fifty *kuruş* on tulip bulbs and ordered the kadi of Istanbul to prepare a register of their variety and price in 1730.<sup>26</sup> In the seventeenth century, the importation of tulips from the Ottoman Empire into Holland had created an age of Tulip mania that lasted from 1634 to 1637 and led to a financial crash in the tulip market.<sup>27</sup> The high demand for tulip bulbs in Istanbul a century later created a similar situation. Ahmed III ordered the kadi of Istanbul to banish anyone who sold tulip bulbs above the maximum price or exported them from Istanbul. The sultan and his grand vizier, Ibrahim Pasha, spent so much time in tulip festivals during the spring season that the French ambassador, Villeneuve, had a hard time getting an audience with the grand vizier to conduct business.<sup>28</sup> The French ambassador had to turn to Ibrahim Pasha's wife, the powerful Ottoman princess Fatma Sultan, to get the attention of the grand vizier. The sultan held the spring festival under the moonlight in the famous tulip garden in the fourth court of the Topkapı Palace every year. Row upon row of tulips of many varieties and colors were displayed with tiny lamps of colored glass that accentuated the color of the tulips in the garden. Guests were required to dress in colors harmonious with those of the tulips.<sup>29</sup>

A new age of consumerism and celebrations was manifesting itself. Ahmed III marked with great pomp each birth, circumcision, and wedding of his twenty-two sons and twenty-five daughters born to his fourteen favored concubines as well as the events of his nieces.<sup>30</sup> The marriage of the princesses to high-ranking officials was common in the eighteenth century. Fatma Sultan, the five-year-old favorite daughter of Ahmed III, married Silahdar Ali Pasha in 1709 in a ceremony that spared no expense. The sultan also celebrated the military conquest of his grand vizier and son-in-law, as when he commemorated the victory of Silahdar Ali Pasha in the Morea with a week-long royal festival in Istanbul and Edirne in 1715. After the death of Ali Pasha, Nevşehirli Ibrahim Pasha married Fatma Sultan in 1717 and became the grand vizier, gaining more power and prestige as the sultan receded into the background.<sup>31</sup>

The grand vizier was the absolute deputy of the sultan and represented his political as well as executive authority. He was the head of the bureaucracy and the army. The grand vizier also issued orders bearing the sultan's seal and signet. All petitions and appointments had to be submitted to him first. In the eighteenth century, the grand vizier met with foreign ambassadors and negotiated treaties at his headquarters, the Sublime Porte.

Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha and his wife, Fatma Sultan, played an important role in the urban development of Istanbul through the institution of Islamic pious and charitable foundations.<sup>32</sup> They built schools, mosques, libraries, and public fountains from the endowed revenues of urban and rural properties in Istanbul and elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> Ibrahim Pasha also built palatial mansions in Besiktaş (Çırağan Palace) and Kağıthane (Sadabad Palace) from his private funds and revenues from tax farms. Islamic pious and charitable endowments (*vakfs*) had an important part in the development of Istanbul and other Ottoman cities. Members of the ruling class as well as Ottoman queen mothers and princesses endowed revenues from urban and rural properties for the construction and expenditures of mosques, schools, libraries, soup kitchens, hospitals, hospices, and fountains in Istanbul and other cities. Pious and charitable foundations were exempt from taxation and confiscation by the state since they provided religious, charitable, and public services from private revenues in perpetuity.<sup>34</sup> The sultan, his favorite grand vizier, and his daughters as well as members of the ruling class launched a building and cultural effort that enhanced the physical landscape of Istanbul and encouraged settlement in the new neighborhoods along the waterfront.

#### THE ETHNIC MOSAIC

The city that is now Istanbul was founded as Byzantium, an ancient Greek city, in 667 B.C. In 330 A.D., the Emperor Constantine I established it as the capital of the Roman Empire, and it was called Nova Roma or New Rome since it was built on seven hills, resembling Rome. The city was renamed Constantinople after the emperor's death in 337. It served as the capital of the Roman Empire (330–395), the Byzantine Empire (395–1204 and 1261–1453), the Latin Empire (1204–1261), and the Ottoman Empire (1453–1922). Because of its location on the Strait of Bosphorus between the natural harbor known as the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara, the city functioned as a bridge between Asia and Europe.

The city underwent many changes through a series of conquests. The Latin crusaders breached the sea walls along the Golden Horn and took the city by force in April 1204. They sacked Constantinople, looted its treasures, and took its relics to Western Europe. Next, Michael Palaeologus captured the city and restored the Byzantine Empire in 1261. The city slowly recovered but never reached its former glory. The Ottomans tried unsuccessfully to capture the city in 1422. Mehmed II then laid siege to the city from April to May 1453 in an attack that lasted fifty-four days. Finally, on May 29, 1453, the Turkish forces breached the sea walls with cannon fire and stormed the city. Constantine XI, the last Byzantine Emperor, was killed during battle. The Ottoman forces sacked Constantinople and caused so much destruction that Mehmed II had to stop them on the second day of looting.

The aim of the Ottoman conqueror was to turn the former Byzantine capital into



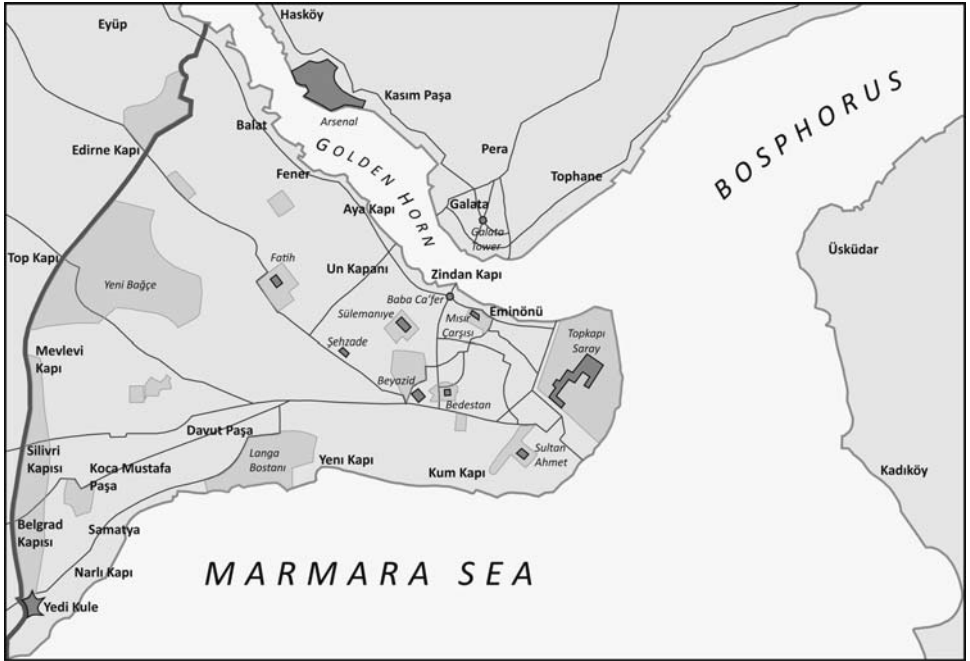
an Islamic-Ottoman imperial city that would surpass its former glory.<sup>35</sup> Mehmed II ordered members of the ruling class to rebuild Constantinople and by force settled Greeks, Armenians, and Turks from Anatolia and Thrace in the city. He also settled many Jews from Edirne in Istanbul. Many Jewish refugees fleeing Spain and Portugal were invited to settle in Istanbul later in the fifteenth century (see chapter 2). Mehmed II also converted six churches, such as Haghia Sophia, into mosques and one into a college and built pious and religious foundations around them to attract Muslim settlers.

The Ottoman resettlement policies enhanced the city's diversity and demographic growth, although initially many Greeks and Latins either lost their lives in battle during the siege or fled. The new Turkish and Muslim settlers prevailed numerically by a small margin over the Christian population in the district of Istanbul (see chapter 2). Galata inside the walls remained predominantly Christian although Muslims were settling inside and outside the walls. The shari'a recognized and protected the confessional and cultural rights of Christians and Jews since they were "people of the book." They maintained their confessional and legal autonomy as long as they recognized the political authority of the sultan and the supremacy of the shari'a and paid the poll tax. The poll tax was a head tax imposed on non-Muslim households in return for protection and autonomy. It was collected as a lump sum from the community, but its amount varied according to the level of income of each household (high, middle, low). The very poor could win exemption from the poll tax.

Mehmed II centralized the administration of non-Muslim communities by setting up their religious heads (the Greek and Armenian patriarchs) in Istanbul. The legal autonomy of various religious communities notwithstanding, there was much overlapping in their legal administration among the kadi courts, the Imperial Council, and the non-Muslim religious courts—if they existed in the early modern period (see chapter 8).

Non-Muslim communities were required to obtain official permission to rebuild and repair their places of worship. As they gained economic and social status, they were more successful in obtaining official permission to repair and build churches and synagogues in new neighborhoods.<sup>36</sup> The Europeans too were able to build Catholic churches in Galata and gain converts, particularly among the Armenians, in the eighteenth century. For example, after a great fire in 1721, the Dominican community in Istanbul was able to obtain permission to repair the three convents of St. Pietro, St. Georgio, and St. Benedetto (Benoit) in Pera.<sup>37</sup>

But this construction invited scrutiny from Muslim neighbors and other religious leaders, who from time to time demanded that the state expel non-Muslims. The state usually supported the Muslim claims relative to the encroachment of Christians in neighborhoods and around mosques and placed bans on the building of non-Muslim houses.<sup>38</sup> Despite these bans, in the eighteenth century many prosperous Muslims, Jews, Greeks, Albanians, and Armenians lived in Galata and



MAP 1. Istanbul. Cartography by Paul Kaldjian, based on Mantran's maps of Istanbul (1962).

Pera and in villages along the Bosphorus such as Ortaköy and Arnavutköy. Even a district like Eyüp with its sacred symbolism for Muslims housed a large Muslim majority and a small number of Armenians, Greeks, and Jews at that time.<sup>39</sup> In business districts, Muslim and non-Muslim artisans often worked together as members of the same guild.

Residential quarters developed around a mosque, church, or synagogue, although many neighborhoods remained socially and ethnically mixed. Each district was headed by a *kadi* (Islamic judge) and his deputies, a *subaşı* (chief of day police), and a market inspector (see chapter 7). The subdistricts were administered by the deputy judge and his staff. These subdistricts were further divided into several *mahalle* (quarters) that were usually headed by a local imam (leader of Friday prayer). Each neighborhood in a subdistrict was self-contained and was locally administered. A group of local notables and non-Muslims in every quarter helped the imam and the *kadi* or his deputies in their daily tasks. The residents were responsible for the collection of garbage and for hiring men from the fire brigade to put out fires.<sup>40</sup> They helped pay taxes, maintain security, and protect the neighborhood against crime. Gates often closed off some neighborhoods at night, and the police imposed a night curfew after the evening prayer. There was no street

lighting until the mid-nineteenth century, and anyone who ventured out at night had to carry a lantern.<sup>41</sup>

The contemporary European sketches and maps highlighted the densely populated districts of Istanbul and Galata on both shores of the Golden Horn in contrast with the less populated districts of Eyüp and Üsküdar. The expansion of the city took place beyond the walls to the north of the Golden Horn in Eyüp, to the hills of Pera north of Galata, and to the villages along the Bosphorus (see map 1).

#### THE SACRED TOWN: *EYÜP*

Eyüp is located on the upper reaches of the Golden Horn, outside the walls of Istanbul. The district developed around the tomb of Şeyh Ebu Ensari, the patron saint of the city and a companion of the Prophet who led the first Muslim siege of Constantinople (674–78), according to legend. The mystical leader Şeyh Ak Şemseddin, who accompanied Sultan Mehmed II during the conquest, discovered the tomb. Sultan Mehmed II later set up an Islamic pious and charitable foundation around the tomb: a mosque with two minarets, a large Islamic religious school, and a soup kitchen. As the third-most sacred site in the empire (after Mecca and Medina), it developed into a major pilgrimage center and burial site for the Ottoman elite and religious dignitaries. In addition, Eyüp's vast and scenic cemeteries contained the tombs of leading religious figures and Ottoman dignitaries. Members of the Ottoman dynasty regularly paid visits to Eyüp during religious festivals. The girding of a new sultan took place in Eyüp as well.<sup>42</sup>

Eyüp also served as the bread basket of greater Istanbul. Greek, Armenian, Albanian, and Bulgarian grocers and gardeners supplied vegetables and fruits from its vast gardens and orchards to the rest of the city during the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup> The Beylik farm supplied fresh milk and yogurt for the palace; local vineyards produced wine.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Armenians worked in forty-two pottery workshops in the Defterdar neighborhood.<sup>45</sup> Rural migrants from the Balkans also settled in Eyüp and supplied the city with foodstuff and seasonal workers.<sup>46</sup>

Eyüp's sweet springs, meadows, gardens, and orchards gave it a rural character and made it a favorite location for summer residence. The beautiful meadow of Kağıthane that overlooked the Golden Horn was on the road to Eyüp and was a favorite spot for Friday picnics and fishing.<sup>47</sup> Nedim (1681–1730), a poet of the Tulip Age, praised the gardens and the sweet waters of Kağıthane as a spot for lovers.<sup>48</sup> Members of the Ottoman dynasty built summer mansions and palaces in Eyüp. It was there that in 1721 Nevşehirli İbrahim Pasha built the Saḍabad Palace for Ahmed III, where the sultan and his grand vizier held many banquets and festivities. Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) endowed and built a mosque-tomb complex for his mother, Mihrişah Sultan, there. However, among the more conservative residents of Istanbul, Kağıthane became synonymous with ruling-class decadence and moral decline.

THE ROYAL DISTRICT: *ISTANBUL*

The triangular peninsula, the old city of Constantinople and Istanbul proper, was bounded on the west by the Theodosian walls (seven kilometers in length) built by Theodosius II in the first half of the fifth century A.D., by sea walls on the north and along the Golden Horn, and by the Sea of Marmara on the south. The city walls had twenty-seven gates that opened into several neighborhoods.<sup>49</sup> The district of Istanbul had fifteen subdistricts; each was named after a mosque complex, and each was divided into several quarters in the late seventeenth century.<sup>50</sup> The quarters did not spread beyond the walls, and the population within was dense.<sup>51</sup> Harbors and bays rimmed by fishing villages and wooded orchards dotted the shores of the Bosphorus.<sup>52</sup>

The Greek communities lived along the seacoast in Kum Kapı, Samatya, and Fener. The headquarters of the Greek Orthodox patriarchate had been located in Fener since 1601. Members of the Greek Phanariot community carried out trade on the Black Sea, supplied dragomans (translators) to the Porte, and were appointed as princes of Moldavia and Wallachia. The Jewish community lived mainly in Balat and Ayvan Sarayı along the left bank of the Golden Horn in the eighteenth century (see chapter 2).<sup>53</sup> The Armenians and the gypsies lived by the western wall in Sulu Kule and Samatya. The headquarters of the Armenian patriarchate was in Samatya. The Greek Orthodox and Armenian patriarchs were appointed by the sultan with extensive rights to administer the religious, legal, and cultural affairs of the Greek Orthodox and Armenian communities throughout the empire.

The district of Istanbul contained the Topkapı Palace, the Hippodrome, the Friday mosque of Aya Sophia, and the Grand Bazaar. The Topkapı Palace complex, the private residence of the Ottoman dynasty and the center of government, stands on the first hill at the eastern tip (Saray Burnu) of the peninsula. Mehmed II built the palace over parts of the Great Byzantine Palace and the Acropolis in 1479.<sup>54</sup> Enclosed by walls and divided into four courts, the Topkapı Palace contained public buildings where government business was conducted. The Topkapı Palace housed more than 6,000 people, of whom 500 were women, in the late eighteenth century, according to some accounts.<sup>55</sup>

The first court of the Topkapı Palace, also called the janissaries' court, contained military installations, the armory, the mint, and the Executioner's Fountain, where the executioner washed his hands after beheading high officials. The second court contained the Imperial Council, which functioned as a cabinet and a higher court of appeals (see chapter 8); the Inner Treasury; the Public Records Office; the grand vizier's office; and the palace kitchens (ten spacious rooms) that served food for several thousand people daily in addition to the poor. The executioner's room with a small prison was at the gate of the second court. The third court contained the

Throne Room, where the sultan received officials, petitioners, and foreign ambassadors; the Pavilion of Holy Mantle, where the relics of Prophet Muhammad were preserved; the Privy Chamber; the Campaign Chamber; the Treasury Chamber; the palace school, the mosque of the janissary agha (head of the janissaries), and the library of Ahmed III.

The imperial harem, the tulip garden of Ahmed III, and kiosks were located in the fourth court, the center of the private life of the sultan and his family, which overlooked the Sea of Marmara.<sup>56</sup> The imperial harem was a vast building that occupied parts of the second and third courts and had more than three hundred rooms that housed several hundred female members of the dynasty, Ottoman princes, and their large staff headed by the chief black eunuch.<sup>57</sup>

The Topkapı Palace was used as the royal winter residence in the eighteenth century. Sultan Ahmed III commissioned a public fountain across the outer (Bab-i 'Ali) gate of the Topkapı Palace, added a library to the palace, and restored several buildings such as the Imperial Hall, the dining rooms (the fruit room), and the petition chamber. Persian decorative floral patterns and the French rococo style marked the new additions to the palace made by Ahmed III, Abdulhamid I, and Selim III in the eighteenth century.

Adjacent to the Topkapı Palace was the Friday mosque of Aya Sophia and the former Byzantine Hippodrome. The Hippodrome was the ancient ceremonial center and the public square. Built by Emperor Setemius Severus in 1203, it was later extended and remodeled by Emperor Constantine the Great. It contained obelisks and columns, three of which still stand today; the Ibrahim Pasha Palace (grand vizier of Sultan Süleyman); and the mosque of Sultan Ahmed I (the Blue Mosque).<sup>58</sup> Due to its function as a ceremonial center and location, many riots began in the Hippodrome in ancient (532 A.D.) and Ottoman times (see chapter 3). Under the Ottomans, it was renamed At Meydanı and continued to function as the ceremonial center. Processions, military drills, and public festivals celebrating the birth and circumcision of Ottoman princes and the birth and wedding of princesses took place in the Hippodrome. The janissary barracks (old and new rooms) and the Et Meydanı (meat square), where janissaries received their meat ration, were located on Divan Yolu and near the Hippodrome. The rebels used the Hippodrome as their base in 1703 and 1730 (see chapter 3).

The commercial hub of the city was located very close to the Hippodrome and the Topkapı Palace. The Divan Yolu (*via ignatia*) branched out in several directions from the Hippodrome and connected the area to the mercantile center of the city, the Grand Bazaar and its surrounding residential and commercial districts on the one side as well as the Egyptian Market and the port (Eminönü area) on the other side on the Golden Horn. Most of the 3,667 shops, numerous *hans* (guest houses) and caravanserais, mosques, *medreses* (Islamic seminaries), hospitals, and hospices

were part of the Fatih, Bayezit, Süleymaniye, and Turhan sultan imperial pious and charitable (*vakf*) foundations that were built during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in this district.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, the shipment, provisioning, and distribution of foodstuff and raw materials took place in the port area on the Golden Horn, where ships from all over the empire and the Mediterranean ports anchored. The Un Kapanı (flour depot) and Yemiş iskelesi (fruit scale) distributed flour to bakers at government-set prices and fruits citywide. In the marketplace various religious communities mingled together, carried out business, and belonged to the same guilds. As would be expected, this area also became a center of crime due to its commercial wealth and social diversity.

The district of Istanbul was under stricter government control than the rest of city because the Topkapı Palace, the main residence of the sultan and his family, was located here. The administration of the city was under numerous officials: the grand vizier and his retinue of janissaries, the chief kadi (Islamic judge) of Istanbul, the chief inspector of markets, the chief of night police, the chief of day police, the *agha* (commander) of janissaries in Istanbul, and the head of the palace guards (see chapter 7).

#### THE EUROPEAN HUB: GALATA

Galata and Pera, on the opposite side of the Golden Horn from the district of Istanbul, were the hub of Western European trade and the center of diplomacy, finance, entertainment, and European residence in the early modern period. The walled town of Galata was a former Genoese colony, part of the Italian trading settlement on the Black Sea during Byzantine times. Galata had gained full autonomy because of its alliance with the Byzantine Empire against Venice during the restoration of Byzantine rule in 1261. It also had lent financial and military support to Byzantine forces during the Ottoman siege of March–April 1453. Some merchants had collaborated with the Ottoman army and handed the keys of the city to Mehmed II two days after the fall of Constantinople.<sup>60</sup> Because of its timely surrender, Galata survived as a distinct city within a city under the Ottomans.

The Ottoman sultan had rewarded the colony by granting capitulations to Genoa and partial autonomy to the town. The treaty provided the Genoese colony with religious and commercial freedom, security, and protection of property as well as exemption from extraordinary taxes, forced labor, and residents' service in the army. The colony also received the right to elect freely a person to represent its interests before the sultan. In return, the residents had to agree not to build new churches or ring their bells too loudly.<sup>61</sup> These privileges were later granted to other Italian city-states and western European nations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Mehmed II divided the community in Galata into two groups, the non-

Muslim Ottoman subjects who paid the poll tax and the subjects of Genoa who resided temporarily in Galata for commerce. The first group of non-Muslim subjects (*zimmi*s) included Greeks, Jews, Armenians, and some Genoese. The second group, defined as protected non-Ottoman merchants, received the freedom to trade in return for payment of customs dues. Both groups enjoyed distinct legal and religious autonomy.

To establish Ottoman control over Galata, Mehmed II razed some of the land walls and kept the sea wall intact.<sup>62</sup> However, the walls were restored by his son Sultan Bayezid II (1481–1512). The Galata tower (100 feet high and 50 feet in diameter) functioned as a fire-watch facility, a prison for indebted merchants and slaves, and a storage place. Galata was divided into three wards separated by inner walls that still stood in the seventeenth century. Its sea walls and inner walls had eleven outer gates and six inner gates opening into different neighborhoods.<sup>63</sup>

Galata inside the walls was a densely populated subdistrict with 200,000 non-Muslim and 64,000 Muslim residents in its eighteen Muslim, seventy Greek, two Armenian, one Jewish, and three Frankish quarters in the seventeenth century.<sup>64</sup> The Jews lived predominantly in the village of Hasköy outside the walls, a dependency of Galata on the right bank of the Golden Horn.<sup>65</sup>

In the fifteenth century, Galata had eleven Catholic and nine Greek Orthodox and Armenian churches and only two mosques. However, the number of mosques had increased to twelve inside and around the walls of Galata by the sixteenth century.<sup>66</sup> Many Moriscos fleeing Spain had settled in Galata and had converted the Dominican church of Mesa Domenko into Arab Cami'i in the early sixteenth century. There were also two Mevlevi lodges in Galata and Beşiktaş that housed the Mevlevi Sufis. In the eighteenth century, as more non-Muslims settled in the district of Galata, the number of Greek churches in the district of Galata rose to forty despite an earlier ban on church construction.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, Western European nations were again able to restore and build new Catholic churches according to the Treaty of Carlowitz and as their commercial presence grew after 1699.

Holland, France, and Great Britain negotiated commercial treaties that granted them extraterritorial rights, freedom of trade, lower customs duties (3 percent), and legal immunity. France succeeded Venice as an exporter of silk textiles and other luxury goods.<sup>68</sup> Capitulations granted to France in 1740 also protected the Catholic community and led to an increase in French missionary activity in the eighteenth century. The number of French residents increased from forty in 1682 to 175 in 1719.<sup>69</sup> The growing French community resided in the neighborhood of Bereketzade. European embassies moved to the vineyards of Pera to the north of Galata in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their palaces had a large staff and retinue that employed many people. The French embassy even contained a church, a law-court, a printing press, and a prison.<sup>70</sup> The British embassy built summer residences in villages along the Bosphorus in Büyükdere and Tarabya.

Galata became an important commercial and financial center where many wealthy Armenian and Jewish merchants operated as agents for the European nations and as bankers for members of the ruling class, including tax farmers and janissaries.<sup>71</sup> European goods cleared through the marina of Galata, where ports, warehouses, shops, custom houses and workshops were located on the waterfront in Karaköy, Mumhane, and the Azap Kapı. Galata had a covered market with twelve domes, 3,080 shops, twelve major houses of commerce, *hans*, and a wheat depot that belonged to Greeks and Franks.<sup>72</sup> The arsenal and shipyard in Kasım Paşa and the gunpowder factory and cannon foundry in Tophane were the military-industrial sector of Istanbul and employed many workers and galley slaves.

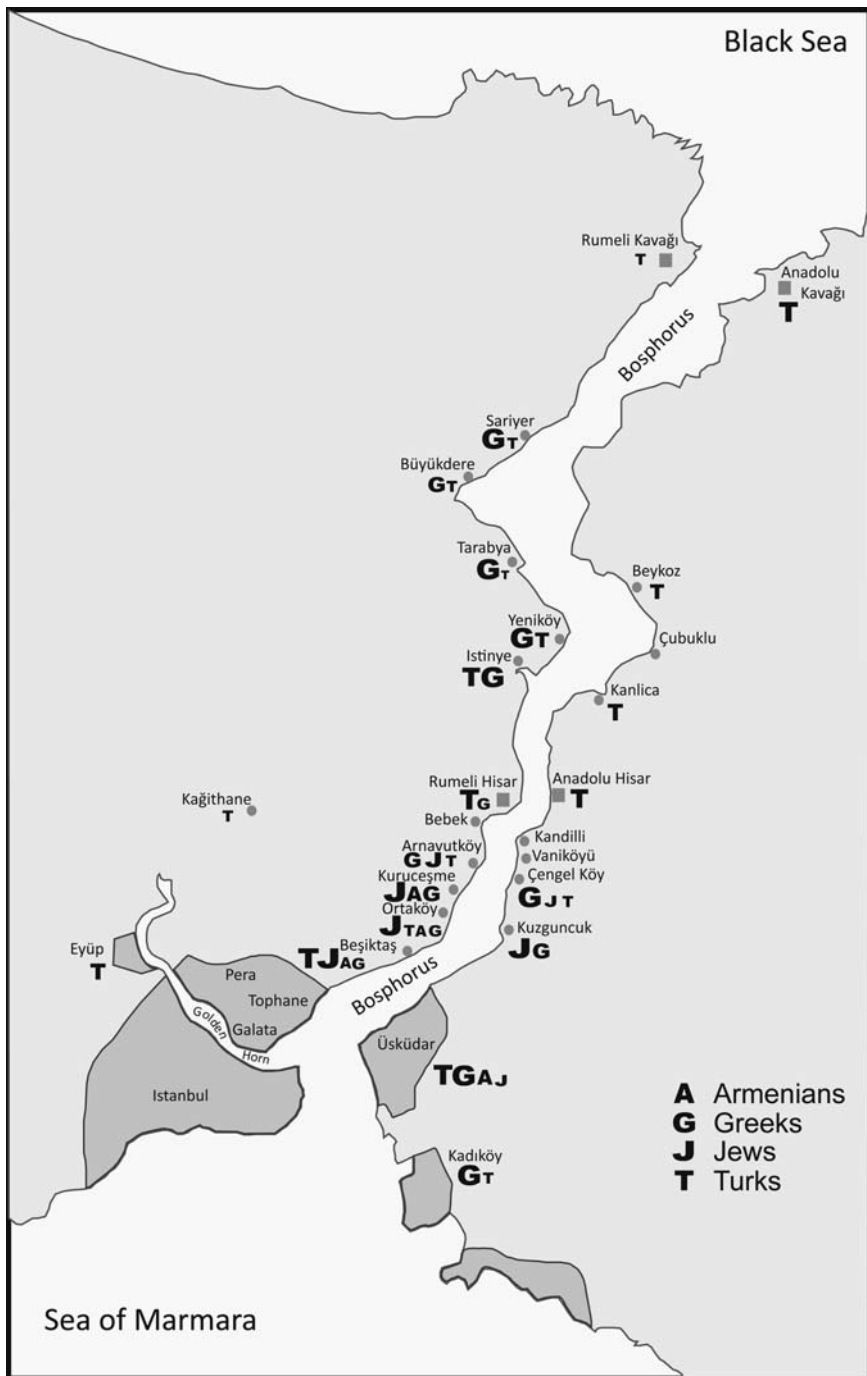
Galata inside the walls also contained the red-light district of Istanbul, with many brothels and taverns along the harbor catering to sailors, merchants, janissaries, and a large number of single and working-class men who resided in bachelors' rooms (see chapter 5). Evliya Çelebi (1611–89), the well-known Ottoman traveler and resident of Istanbul, counted two hundred houses of ill repute and taverns along the seashore walls in the mid-seventeenth century; these were operated by Greeks and Jews, each serving a clientele of five hundred to six hundred Muslims and non-Muslims in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>73</sup> Serving alcoholic drinks to Muslims was forbidden by the *shari'a*, but many Muslim visitors took respite from the watchful gaze of neighbors and local officials when they frequented the many taverns and brothels in the winding alleys of Galata and along the harbor of Kasım Paşa.

Galata was the most crime-ridden area of the city, requiring greater policing. Mehmed II appointed a chief kadi, *subaşı* (police chief), and *voyvoda* (mayor) to oversee the affairs of residents.<sup>74</sup> The chief kadi of Galata was the most important official and reported directly to the sultan. His deputies held court in the subdistricts and worked closely with the heads of non-Muslim communities. The *voyvoda* was appointed by the sultan, functioned like the mayor, and worked with the chiefs of day and night police. The market inspector controlled weights and scales and supervised prices. The *agha* of janissaries held law and order particularly in red-light district, where brawls occurred frequently (see chapter 7).<sup>75</sup> The non-Muslim and European communities had their own officials and representatives who worked with the kadi and police officials to maintain law and order.

The population of Galata inside the walls dispersed as time went on to the villages on the European shore of the Bosphorus like Beşiktaş, Ortaköy, and Bebek that were mixed in ethnic and social makeup (see map 2). All these villages were ethnically, religiously, and socially mixed. Beşiktaş had, in addition to a Muslim majority, one Greek and one Jewish quarter, six thousand summer houses, and many gardens belonging to notables and grandees.<sup>76</sup>

The sultan and members of his household, particularly the princesses, constructed palaces and mansions along both shores of the Bosphorus, visible symbols of conspicuous consumption. The Çırağan Palace, built by Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha,





MAP 2. Villages along the Bosphorus Identified by Ethnic Populations. Cartography by Paul Kaldjian, based on Mantran's maps of Istanbul (1962).

and the Dolmabahçe palace as well as Yıldız Palace were located in Beşiktaş. Ortaköy was inhabited predominantly by Greeks, Armenians, and Jews.<sup>77</sup> The palace of Hadice Sultan (1768–1822), daughter of Mustafa III (1757–74), in the Defferdar neighborhood is the most famous.<sup>78</sup> Ottoman princesses Beyhan Sultan (1765–1824) and Esmâ Sultan the elder (1726–88) also owned palaces in Ortaköy and Bebek.

#### THE ASIAN HUB: ÜSKÜDAR

On the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, the district of Üsküdar was a smaller settlement of five subdistricts known for its cypress groves, peaceful villages, cemeteries, and carved tombstones.<sup>79</sup> Üsküdar was a well-populated district with seventy Muslim quarters, eleven Greek Orthodox and Armenian quarters, and one Jewish quarter during the seventeenth century.<sup>80</sup> The villages of Kadıköy, İstavros, Beylerbeyi, and Kuzguncuk on the same side of the Bosphorus had populations of Muslims, Greeks, and Jews and contained the mansions and gardens of grandees.<sup>81</sup> Üsküdar also contained mosque complexes endowed by royals. The great mosque complex called the Atik (old) Valide Cami was built by the great architect Sinan for Nur Banu Sultan, mother of Murad III, in 1583.

It was composed of a mosque, *medrese*, hospice, bath, and guesthouse. The Yeni Valide mosque complex of queen mother Gülnüş Sultan (d. 1715), which was built between 1700 and 1710, included a public fountain was also located close to the shore of Üsküdar. Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) built a mosque and the modern Selimiyye barracks in 1800 to house the new troops.

Üsküdar never developed into an international port but did become an indispensable *entrepôt* of Asian goods on their way to Istanbul and Galata. Its primary trade was with Iran, many of whose merchants carried on a caravan trade in silk and other commodities and resided in the *hans* of Üsküdar. The Iranian envoys lived in Üsküdar and, like European envoys, were not allowed to reside in the district of Istanbul. Great caravans of pilgrims encamped in Üsküdar for several weeks prior to their march to Mecca every year. Moreover, it was a place of banishment for Ottoman officials who fell from favor.<sup>82</sup>

The administration of Üsküdar was in the hands of the kadi and his five deputy judges, a *subaşı*, and a division of the janissary corps. Its population did not increase at the same rate as that of the districts of Istanbul and Galata because its population flow was in the direction of trade, industry, and government activities.

#### PLAGUES, EARTHQUAKES, AND FIRES

The constant occurrence of natural disasters like plagues, earthquakes, and fires checked the population growth in Istanbul, knocked down and reduced many buildings to ashes, transformed the urban fabric, and more importantly, forced mem-

bers of the ruling class to move outside the densely populated walled towns. The plague epidemics hit Istanbul almost every year. Istanbul has been hard-hit by great and small earthquakes throughout its history. Moreover, due to overpopulation and the use of wood as the usual building material in the makeshift houses of the poor, fires occurred frequently, destroying whole neighborhoods and districts.

Plague epidemics decimated the populations of Istanbul and other major towns in the early modern period. Istanbul was on the intersection of major maritime and caravan trade routes that followed the Istanbul-Edirne-Sofia route. The bubonic plague spread by rats on board ships bound from Istanbul to Bursa, Izmir, and Alexandria. In Istanbul, it first infected the arsenal in Kasım Paşa and then spread quickly to areas along the Golden Horn and to Galata. It was spread by travelers and mariners to *hans*, janissary barracks, public baths, coffeehouses, barbershops, and bachelors' rooms, and from these places it infected the rest of the city through human contact.

In Istanbul, the plague usually occurred in the spring, worsened in the summer season, and lasted until autumn. The main carrier of the plague was a flea that lived on rats on ships and in old clothing, bedding, rugs, wool textiles, and other goods belonging to the victims and spreading through human contact as well. The rats usually survived well in humid and dark places. The reuse of clothes and the furnishings of the victims caused a rapid explosion of the epidemic. In premodern societies, the recycling of unwashed clothes and used furniture was an everyday practice. The Bit Pazarı (flea market), shops, bachelors' rooms, *hans*, and bathhouses helped spread the disease from the port areas and infected people in the rest of the city. The plague's intensity was characterized by different degrees of fever and infection. It usually started with symptoms like weariness, discomfort, fever, pain, flashy eyes, and buboes. Children and the elderly were naturally more vulnerable. Cleanliness, dry weather, good personal hygiene, health, and lack of human contact were considered natural protections against the plague. However, it was very difficult to maintain order, cleanliness, and human isolation in a port city like Istanbul. Human refuse and garbage were disposed of in the Sea of Marmara and on the outskirts of the city. Moreover, nomads, merchants, soldiers, sailors, and pilgrims helped spread the bacillus from Iran and eastern Anatolia to the Balkans, the Aegean, the Mediterranean, and North Africa and vice versa.

Big plagues broke out every twenty or thirty years and either preceded or followed famines and other natural disasters, claiming 10 to 20 percent of the population of Istanbul, Izmir, Salonica, Aleppo, Alexandria, and Cairo between 1700 and 1850.<sup>83</sup> Istanbul had the highest number of plague-ridden years (94 years), followed by Egypt (72), western Anatolia (50), and central and southern Syria (50), from 1700 to 1850.<sup>84</sup> The plagues of 1705, 1726, and 1778 in Istanbul claimed a mortality rate of 12 to 20 percent of the total population.<sup>85</sup> The plague of April 1778 started in Galata and claimed 1,000 dead every day.<sup>86</sup> It halted all economic activity from

spring to autumn. The European communities in Pera and Galata took refuge in Büyükdere and Tarabya. The plague reappeared in 1780 and 1781 in the same cities of Salonica, Istanbul, and Edirne. Smaller outbreaks occurred almost every year and made up the majority of plagues in Istanbul (81.6 percent) although only a small number (10 percent) had grave demographic consequences.<sup>87</sup> In Istanbul and other cities, the average annual mortality rate from the plague was 1 to 1.2 percent of the total population.<sup>88</sup>

In the absence of systematic research on Ottoman medical practices, it is not clear what measures the state and the medical community in Istanbul undertook to treat patients and protect against the plague in the eighteenth century. According to Lady Montagu, who resided in the Ottoman Empire from 1716 to 1718, the residents of Edirne used some type of inoculation for smallpox.<sup>89</sup> The periodic inspection of *hans* and bachelors' rooms to prevent migration into the city and the isolation of the sick and the dead were plague-control measures. The local residents, shopkeepers, and attendants of mosques and public baths were in charge of maintaining hygiene. The chief of city cleaners and the chief of garbage collectors employed 1,000 workers to collect the garbage from the streets of greater Istanbul.<sup>90</sup> Most of the Ottoman population resorted to prayer and intercession with the saints and religious authorities to deal with natural disasters. The members of the elite took refuge outside the city in summer resorts and summer houses.

The Western European countries adopted some sort of quarantine system in the late seventeenth century. The spread of plague to Europe through the maritime route stopped after 1743, thanks to the introduction of temporary barriers on the waterfronts in Provence and Marseilles. Prior to these measures, the plague of 1720–23 had claimed 126,000 lives in Provence and a quarter of the residents of Marseilles.<sup>91</sup> The Austrian government built the first military sanitary cordons along the Ottoman frontier (2400 kms) in 1812.<sup>92</sup>

Plague epidemics were not the only disasters hitting Istanbul. The city of Istanbul is located on the great Anatolian fault line that runs from northern Anatolia to the Sea of Marmara. As a result, Istanbul, Izmit, Edirne, Bursa, and Izmir are regularly subjected to major earthquakes.<sup>93</sup> The district of Istanbul was hit by two major earthquakes on September 2, 1754, and May 22, 1766.<sup>94</sup> According to the reports of the English ambassador, Porter, and a Dr. Mackenzie, the earthquake of September 2, 1754, shattered the towers and the land walls of the district of Istanbul from Edirne Kapısı to Yedikule and damaged the domes and minarets of some imperial mosques. Some buildings of the Topkapı Palace were also damaged, and two pavilions were demolished. The Galata Tower was cracked, and the prison in Galata collapsed, burying the people inside. Aftershocks continued from September until January and caused further damage to the Topkapı Palace and the tower of Yedikule.<sup>95</sup>

The next major earthquake took place on May 22, 1766, in a region to the east

of the Sea of Marmara, causing heavy damage to the towns of Izmit, Edirne, and Bursa and to greater Istanbul. It took place early in the morning of the third day of the Feast of the Sacrifice and began with a loud subterranean sound followed by a two-minute shock. Many people died in the ruins of their houses; the death toll was between 4,000 and 5,000 people. Extensive damage occurred in the districts of Istanbul, Galata, and Pera and in some of the villages along the Bosphorus. The land walls of the city were ruined, together with two towers of Yedikule Prison. The imperial mosque of Mehmed II and its complex were heavily damaged. This earthquake also caused damage to 173 small mosques and baths. Several buildings in the Topkapı Palace, including the mint, the imperial kitchens, and the towers, were damaged or ruined, forcing the sultan to live under tents for several days. Many *hans*, such as the Vezir Hanı, were ruined. The vaults of the Grand Bazaar and the slave market collapsed. The water supply channels were also broken. Some parts of Galata and Kasım Paşa were damaged, and the sea flooded the coastline opposite Galata and the villages along the Bosphorus. In addition, some islands in the Sea of Marmara sank halfway into the sea. The town of Izmit was also hard hit, and several towns and villages on the Gulf of Izmit and on the south coast of the Sea of Marmara were destroyed.<sup>96</sup> This earthquake, the continuing aftershocks, and the fires that followed it caused great unrest in Istanbul, and the authorities worried about the potential for rebellion. People lived in the open for some time.

A second earthquake hit Istanbul, Bursa, Edirne, and the region of Thrace two months later on August 5, 1766. Fortunately, this time Istanbul did not suffer much; some mosques and masonry buildings that had probably been weakened in the May quake were destroyed, three roads in front of the customs house cracked, and about thirty people were killed and one hundred injured.<sup>97</sup> Aftershocks continued for two years, and it took five years to rebuild some of the public buildings that had been destroyed during these two earthquakes and the fires. Many people died under the collapsed houses, mosques, and *hans*. Many of those who survived became homeless and lost their loved ones. The state undertook certain measures to rebuild public monuments but could not provide much in the way of relief for individual victims.

Fires sometimes followed earthquakes like the one in 1766. The fires of Istanbul were as old as its history, but they occurred more frequently and claimed more victims in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to congestion, overbuilding, and arson. In Istanbul, nine of twenty-three major fires between 1613 and 1780 occurred in the eighteenth century.<sup>98</sup> The great fires occurred in 1633, 1660, and 1693, burning down 300 mansions and 280,000 houses in 1660.<sup>99</sup> The fire of 1696 destroyed half of Galata and burned down three Latin churches, Saint-Benoit, Saint-George, and Saint-François. After this fire, the state issued an order for the expulsion of the French nation from the Bereketzade quarter and built a mosque in place of the church of Saint-François.<sup>100</sup>

Many fires started in the kitchens during the hot summer season and rapidly

spread to the nearby buildings, consuming many quarters and neighborhoods within hours. The great fires of 1717, 1720–21, 1756, 1770, 1782, and 1784 destroyed many commercial and residential areas of the capital.<sup>101</sup> Lady Montagu described a fire that burned down five hundred houses in Galata in 1717.<sup>102</sup> The fires of July and August 1782 lasted for two days and three nights and destroyed 10,000 houses between Fener and Balat along the Sea of Marmara as well as mosques, churches, shops, mills, ovens, warehouses, and the janissary barracks. They claimed at least 5,000 victims. The fire of August 1784 started in Balat and spread east to Fener, destroying many mansions, small houses, and mosques.<sup>103</sup> Acts of arson by rebellious janissaries and artisans were the cause of smaller fires (see chapter 4).

The use of wood in the makeshift houses of the poor and overcongestion were the main reasons for the rapid spread of fires. It was almost impossible to put out these fires and to save the lives and property of the residents. The janissaries had the sole authority to extinguish the fires by pulling down the burning houses rapidly. A French convert to Islam established the *tulumbacı* corps (fire brigade), which used pumps to extinguish fires, in 1719. The fire department put out the fire of July 8, 1721, with the help of 150 firemen.

#### STATE REGULATIONS TO CONTROL FIRES

The Ottoman state attempted to regulate society in its major urban centers through forceful settlement policies, a ban on migration to major cities, and the issuing of building codes. The offices of the prefect of Istanbul, the chief architect, the kadi, the *subaşı*, and the local imam (leader of prayer) supervised the application of these regulations. These regulations acquired a greater sense of urgency in the eighteenth century due to overcrowding, frequent fires, earthquakes, plagues, and shortages of water, essential materials, and foods. Natural disasters such as earthquakes often created great discontent, undermined the economy, and led to riots. The state only invested in the repair of mosques and palaces and lacked a program to help the majority of victims during fires, earthquakes, and plagues.

The government of Ahmed III issued a series of regulations banning the use of wood in the construction of *hans*, bachelors' rooms, and shops. It also limited the height of houses to two stories and the size of upper-level living rooms. The state banned construction of houses along the water and by the walls although these bans were often violated. The state required a permit from anyone who desired to pull down houses and remodel and construct new ones.<sup>104</sup> After a major fire, all the Jewish houses in the Çift Mahalle near the Yeni Cami and outside the fish market in Eminönü were to be razed, according to an imperial order issued in 1728. The residents were expelled, and their land was incorporated into the port along the Golden Horn.<sup>105</sup> The state also placed a ban on the construction of houses, shops, and bachelors' rooms in a *han* in Gedik Paşa, which burned down in the fire of 1751.<sup>106</sup> In

another example, the government of Mahmud I issued an order to the kadi of Istanbul to prevent the construction of bakeries and bun stands and shops due to fire hazard in the Kantarçılar market in November 1756.<sup>107</sup>

The report of Derviş Mustafa Efendi (d. 1817) on the fires of July and August 1782 offer a local perspective on the causes of the fires and the damage they caused. He attributed the great fires to drought, summer heat, overbuilding, and the use of wood as the main building material. He also suggested certain measures, such as a ban on rural migration and the enforcement of building codes by the state, to prevent future fires.<sup>108</sup>

After major fires, the state set up night curfews and banned the use of festive illuminations at night. An order issued to the kadi of Istanbul in October 1769 banned the congregation of women and children at night to celebrate the victory of Muslim soldiers due to fire hazards and illicit activities among the crowd.<sup>109</sup> The night police and his men were usually the only ones allowed to carry lanterns, and they arrested those who violated the curfew.

Ahmed Refik's coinage of *Lale Devri* (the Tulip Age) to describe the Ottoman *ancien régime* provides a modern perspective by Turkish as well as Western historians on the perceived consumerism and decadence of the court of Ahmed III (1703–1730) that led to the Patrona Halil rebellion of 1730.<sup>110</sup> Modern historians tend to take the partisan views of contemporary Ottoman authors or nineteenth-century travelers and diplomats uncritically without regards to their patronage ties. Historians also have not paid adequate attention to the social transformation of the city during this period. Moreover, the history of Istanbul is linked very closely to the history of the Ottoman state, its rise and decline.<sup>111</sup>

Although the Ottoman state exerted great control over the administration of the city of Istanbul and its economy, particularly in the district of Istanbul, the rest of greater Istanbul followed its own path of development like any other city.<sup>112</sup> Despite government regulations, greater Istanbul expanded outside the walls and along the waterfront as members of the ruling class moved from the Topkapı Palace to the suburbs along the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus. A flourishing European community in these areas had also become an important part of Istanbul's social landscape, and its narratives and sketches of the city assumed a central place in Ottoman history. A new sense of leisure and pleasure as well as consumerism became evident with the growing visibility of the dynasty and its female members.

Meanwhile, as an increasing number of rural migrants settled in the commercial and industrial area of the Golden Horn, Galata, Kasım Paşa, and Tophane became more working-class and congested. Fires and the plague caused more devastation in these areas than in the suburbs, causing more poverty and inviting more government regulation and policing than was present in other areas. The rebels in

1730 gathered force in this core area and attacked the new mansions and palaces along the Golden Horn as well as the commercial buildings belonging to European traders and their non-Muslim protégés in Galata.

Mediterranean and European cities faced similar problems of rural migration, food shortages, riots, frequent fires, the plague, growing poverty, and crime. Not surprisingly, other early modern states sought similar solutions for these and other urban problems.<sup>113</sup> The state intervened regularly in urban life to prevent fires and the plague and to control congestion as it did in European cities such as Paris. Like many Mediterranean and European cities, Istanbul had become a more socially divided and polarized city during the eighteenth century.