

Introduction

GALATA WAS THE EUROPEAN PORT of Constantinople/Istanbul and had been a crossroads of trade among Asia and Europe, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean since medieval times. Although many books have been written on Ottoman-European trade, the port of Galata has not received much attention until very recently, partly due to a dual approach that has been taken to the history of the imperial capital.¹

In Ottoman contemporary writing (Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnamesi*), Galata was described as the "sin city" and a Frankish town where the "infidel" resided.² In European travel writing, Galata was the enclave of European culture, Catholic Christianity, progress, and modernity, in contrast to the traditional and sleepy peninsula across the Golden Horn during the nineteenth century. This dual approach to the history of Istanbul and Galata has dominated much of the historiography to this date. In reality, the city was more integrated during the eighteenth century than it had been previously as people moved in and out of Galata and set up residence in Pera and the villages along the Bosphorus. Moreover, the diplomatic importance of Pera has been ignored in much of the scholarship. This study will focus on the European port of Galata in Istanbul and its maritime trade with the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, giving particular attention to its connectivity to the port of Marseille from the second half of the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. Indeed, as this book demonstrates, Ottoman economic and commercial policies, the granting of *ahdnames* (commercial and diplomatic treaties) to trading nations, and the legal pluralism of this port played a crucial role in the rise and development of Galata in the early modern period.

THE OTTOMANS IN MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES

The field of Mediterranean studies has become an exciting forum of critical debate and inquiry, with scholars from across disciplines and regions contributing to a growing literature.³ The forthcoming volume by Brian A. Catlos, Mark Myerson, and Thomas Burman entitled *The Sea in the Middle: The Mediterranean World, 650–1650* highlights the contribution of Perso-Hellenic and Islamicate civilizations to the development of Mediterranean history and culture, emphasizing the diversity and connectivity of this region and its peripheries from the ancient to the early modern periods. Moreover, the works of scholars in the field of Indian Ocean studies have offered important analytical and critical perspectives as well as correctives on cross-cultural trade and alternative models of economic development.⁴

However, with few exceptions, the Ottoman Empire has been absent from the master narratives of the Mediterranean except when it was at war with Europe. For Henri Pirenne, the unity of the Mediterranean that existed during the Roman period was disrupted by the Germanic invasions and the rise of Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic expansion into Europe.⁵ Thus, religion in its most essentialist expression became the defining characteristic of a complex and dynamic civilization that has been viewed as lagging behind the West and unable to modernize following the Western model. The failure of the Ottoman Empire to become an Atlantic maritime power and participate in the colonization of the New World in the sixteenth century is yet another aspect of this “decline paradigm.”⁶

Fernand Braudel elaborated on the role of the Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean world in his meganarrative of the sixteenth century. Braudel (1902–85) wrote his history of the Mediterranean, which was first published in 1949, from a prison camp in Germany.⁷ Unlike Pirenne, he emphasized the unity of the Mediterranean in its geographical makeup and its connectivity through trade. But Braudel was still ambivalent about the role of Islam and Muslims in Mediterranean history since for him the Ottoman Empire was largely a military power and not a commercial one.⁸ On the other hand, Braudel in his later writings also argued that the Ottoman Empire was not very different from the Byzantine Empire in its socioeconomic makeup and that Constantinople/Istanbul⁹ bridged the two empires. He described the impact of the Ottoman Conquest of Constantinople in 1453 in the following manner:

In the early days, the Turkish conquest took a heavy toll on the subjugated peoples[,] . . . but the Conqueror was not deficient in political wisdom, as can be seen from Muhammad II's concessions to the Greeks summoned to Constantinople after 1453. Eventually[,] Turkey created, throughout the Balkans, structures within which the peoples of the Peninsula gradually found a place, collaborating with the conqueror and here and there curiously re-creating the patterns of the Byzantine Empire. This conquest brought a new order, a pax Turcica.¹⁰

Braudel did not elaborate on the institutions of the Ottoman government, its commercial and economic policies vis-à-vis European states, due to limited research opportunities and material available to him in the Ottoman archives back then. But in his *Structures of Everyday Life*, he included Istanbul (as well as Cairo and Isfahan) as an important port in the urban and maritime networks of the Mediterranean.¹¹ Although Braudel privileged the Western city in its unparalleled freedom and autonomy, he also praised Istanbul for its religious diversity and commercial sophistication:

Of course[,] every town varied slightly from this pattern, if only because of its importance as a market or craft center. The main market in Istanbul, the two stone bedestans, was a town within a town. The Christian district of Pera and Galata formed another town beyond the Golden Horn.¹²

Istanbul did not completely fit the so-called model of Islamic cities due to its Greco-Roman as well as Italian heritage in the port of Galata prior to the Ottoman takeover. Some Ottomanist historians have proposed foregrounding Istanbul as the center of the Mediterranean world and have highlighted the integral role of the Ottoman Empire in the history of Western Europe in the early modern period.¹³

The legacy of Fernand Braudel and the Annales School of historiography has been particularly strong in the field of Ottoman studies, especially at its inception in Turkey with founding fathers like Ömer Lütfi Barkan, Fuad Köprülü, and Halil İnalcik. However, the exploration of Ottoman as well as European archives by scholars on the study of Ottoman institutions and their transformation has been an important corrective to the scholarship of an earlier generation of scholars who could not write beyond the paradigms of “holy war” or the “sick man of Europe,” a historiography influenced by a century or more of European travel narratives on a “decaying empire.”¹⁴

GALATA IN THE OTTOMAN “WORLD SYSTEM”

Indeed, as the heir to both the Byzantine and Seljuk Empires, Perso-Islamic and Roman civilizations, the Ottoman Empire created its own “world system,” with Istanbul as the “middle ground” or bridge between East and West, a transit port with networks of trade extending into the Balkans (*via ignatia*), Iran (the Silk Route), India (the spice trade), and the Mediterranean world (the Levant trade). Its urban, commercial, and legal institutions were a blend of Roman and Perso-Islamic practices that the Ottomans developed further.

Like the Byzantine Empire, Istanbul was bound by its geography and location to serve as a bridge between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, Asia, and Europe. The diplomatic, military, fiscal, commercial, and economic policies of the Ottoman state followed the Byzantine model but also departed from it important ways. For example, like the Byzantine state, the Ottoman state considered the provisioning of the imperial capital to be very important to its economic policies and its legitimacy. The revival of the economy of Istanbul after the conquest, the return of its former residents, and the resumption of trade with the Italian city-states were key to the policies of the Ottoman sultans. To gain control of the Black Sea trade, Sultan Mehmed II was determined to drive Genoa from her colonies such as Caffa and Chios. The next important step was to drive Venice from her colonies on the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean (i.e., the Morea and Cyprus), thus enhancing Ottoman hegemony over the islands and ports. After the defeats of the Knights of Rhodes in 1522 by Sultan Süleyman I (1520–66) and of Cyprus by Sultan Selim II (1515–20) in 1571, the entire eastern Mediterranean fell under Ottoman state control. It was also essential for the Ottoman state to control Christian piracy to make the eastern Mediterranean safe for maritime trade.

The conquest of the Mamluk state was also driven by economic as well as by political motives. The Mamluks had kept European traders out of the Red Sea trade and confined them to Alexandria, where they could have their own consuls but had to pay higher taxes than Muslims did.¹⁵ The Ottoman conquest of Egypt and Syria in 1517 was also crucial for the control of the Red Sea trade and the supply of grains, coffee, and sugar from Egypt to Istanbul.¹⁶ In his fascinating book *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, Giancarlo Casale has underscored the commercial policies of Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha in Egypt to revive the spice trade after the conquest in 1517 despite Portuguese attacks. Casale has also argued that Ottoman cartographers like Piri Reis had advance knowledge of trading posts on the eastern shores of Africa as

well as on the Indian Ocean.¹⁷ The Ottoman state was also trying to expand into the Persian Gulf, defeat the Portuguese strongholds in Yemen and Hormuz (on the Persian Gulf), and expand into the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century.¹⁸ The Ottoman-Safavid Wars were in part motivated by the control of commercial centers like Tabriz and the Silk Route as well as of Baghdad and the Persian Gulf.

However, the Ottoman expansion into the eastern Mediterranean ports and islands generated strong religious and ideological backlashes all over Europe, even among Ottoman allies like France. Although Venetian and French merchants and travelers had acquired an intimate knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and its institutions, the “Turk” nevertheless became a menace, an intrusion, and a military and economic rival that had to be defeated and driven out of Europe, particularly after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Thus, the search for a direct route to the Persian Gulf and India was part of the ideological as well as the commercial agenda to undermine the Ottoman Empire.

Palmira Brummett has captured the wild imagination and curiosity of Europeans about the Ottoman Empire in their mapping and collecting of information and images as well as in their narrations about the exotic kingdom.¹⁹ The image of a “fallen Turk” and Muslim captives on a map of a fortress or port city symbolized European victory.²⁰ The narratives of European travelers and diplomats supplemented and reinforced these images, particularly after the Ottoman defeat at Lepanto in 1571. Cross-cultural contacts and exchanges between Englishmen and Ottoman subjects also created anxieties as well as great curiosity and interest that gave rise to their portrayal in English plays from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Moreover, the themes of captivity, conversion to Islam (“turning Turk”), and becoming renegades and entering Ottoman service created great interest in the stories of these individuals, exacerbating anti-Muslim sentiments in Europe.²¹

However, trade and diplomacy were also important aspects of Ottoman-European encounters, as reflected in the signing of commercial and diplomatic treaties (*ahdnames*) and the settlement of European communities in Ottoman ports that generated intense commercial and cultural contacts.²² The Ottoman Empire created its own international law through the granting of *ahdnames* to friendly nations to boost trade despite the outbreaks of war and hostility, even by friendly nations. The *ahdnames* mediated peace in order to resume trade after these violent episodes on the Mediterranean. Joshua White’s recent study has underscored the importance of *ahdnames* in

regulating maritime trade and suppressing North African piracy on the Mediterranean.²³

As a result, Mediterranean ports like Venice, Marseille, and Galata became sites of diplomacy, commercial exchange, and cultural encounters. David Abulafia has underscored the importance of studying Mediterranean ports and people who crossed the sea to trade. Ports were places where corsairs and renegades, displaced Moriscos and Marranos, and enslaved Christians and Muslims as well as converts mixed and where the identities of the local population were constantly being reshaped.²⁴ Julia Clancy-Smith is opposed to the binary and monolithic study of the Mediterranean (Christian versus Muslim) and instead proposes to study it as a layered zone of contact and a borderland where the movement and migration (both long-term and temporary) of people (both forced and voluntary) in ports like Tunis profoundly shaped the cityscapes and the identities of the newcomers. She is right to point out that every zone had a different trajectory of contact and interaction and that it is difficult to mark the boundaries of Europe, particularly in the nineteenth century, when the number of European residents in ports like Tunis, Algiers, and Galata multiplied by several folds.²⁵ Tobias Graf's recent study of European renegades (mainly Italian and German) and converts to Islam who entered Ottoman service at the elite level has also revised the binary vision of the Mediterranean, emphasizing the fluid identities and networks of these individuals during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁶

In contrast with North African ports, Istanbul was the epicenter of the Ottoman Empire, where the European countries had to play the diplomatic game to compete with each other and implement the articles of the *ahd-names*. In Istanbul, the size of the European communities was still limited, and they had not yet formed a settler society or a colonial cityscape, though Pera was emerging as their hub. Moreover, Galata had a different trajectory and power structure than Tunis, Izmir, and even Alexandria did, one in which Europeans (mainly the French and English) did not yet wield considerable influence in the eighteenth century. In Galata/Pera European ambassadors often had to turn to the grand vizier and dragomans drawn from local non-Muslim communities to help them navigate the complex and competitive diplomatic and commercial world of the Levant and to seek legal protection from tax collectors, bandits, and pirates as well as from merchants and producers. While Constantinople/Istanbul was a port *par excellence*, Marseille and Galata were both in perfect locations with maritime access to

more than one sea that brought provisions, slaves, silks, and spices as well as colonial goods. Following the pathbreaking scholarship of Fernand Braudel and others, a comparative and critical perspective to the study of the Ottoman Empire and eastern Mediterranean cities based on the exploration of Ottoman as well as European archives has emerged.²⁷

STATE AND COMMERCE IN OTTOMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

First of all, it is necessary to reaffirm a simple truism, which has been consistently denied in the scholarly literature: Ottoman society, like all human societies throughout history, was fluid and dynamic. Moreover, it retained these qualities throughout its history, including the so-called period of decline in the seventeenth century.

RIFA'AT ALI ABOU-EL-HAJ²⁸

An important research question in Ottoman studies has revolved around the role of the state in regulating economic life in its urban centers. The study of state institutions has assumed a central role in Ottoman studies, and historians have long argued that the Ottoman state considered provisioning its capital and collecting revenue its most important economic priority in the early modern period. Indeed, the Ottoman state exercised great control over the institution of landholding for a long time. It also maintained a tight control over the production and distribution of foodstuff and raw materials through guilds and imposed price ceilings on basic goods, discouraging profiteering and competition in the economy, particularly in Istanbul.²⁹ The state, according to this view, did not protect or promote its own merchants while it opened its markets to foreign merchants and goods, thus harming its own production and the well-being of its artisans, who had to compete with importers of Western goods. This historiography assigns the Ottoman state total control over its economy and a fixed policy that changed little over time.

Inalcik's pioneering works on the development of Istanbul and Galata after the conquest, as well as those on the history of the Black Sea trade based on archival sources that he had unearthed, have opened an exciting pathway to rigorous studies of urban life.³⁰ In addition, his studies of the silk trade between Bursa and Tabriz based on the Islamic court records of Bursa have underlined the importance of these sources for commercial history.³¹ Like

the discovery of the Cairo Geniza records by Shelomo Dov Goitein that shed great light on the activities of Jewish and Arab merchants in the Mediterranean trade during the medieval period, the exploration of Islamic court records has played a similar role in the study of Ottoman social and economic history in the early modern period.³²

Rifa'at Abou El-Haj has warned us about essentialist arguments, abstract and moralistic approaches that assign the Ottoman state and society unique and unchanging characteristics without any comparative studies with the rest of the Mediterranean world or Western Europe.³³ He attributes the transformation of the Ottoman state structure and economy to internal conditions such as monetization, privatization of revenue collection (tax farming), and the rise of provincial magnates. He has rightly observed that the sultan as the epicenter of the state had lost much of his power to an oligarchy of civilian groups and grandees in the seventeenth century, in contrast with the rising absolutist monarchies in Europe like France.³⁴ Mehmet Genç has also emphasized the role of the institution of tax farming in the privatization of revenue collection during the eighteenth century. But according to him, the state still played an important role in assigning tax farms and confiscating the properties of local notables and merchants, thus preventing the accumulation of capital and merchant investment in production.³⁵

Inspired by the scholarship of Genç, Ariel Salzmann's important study of the expansion of the institution of tax farming and lifetime tax farms in the eighteenth century has also underscored the commercialization of the Ottoman economy and the rise of local notables as well as the emergence of a group of janissaries and non-Muslim bankers who were based in Istanbul. This development also led to the establishment of a network of Jewish, Armenian, and Greek financiers who lent money to tax farmers and the state.³⁶ However, the participation of janissary-artisans, migrants, merchants, and ulema households in urban movements and rebellions in Istanbul during the eighteenth century undermined the authority and legitimacy of the sultan as the epicenter of power.³⁷ More recently, Baki Tezcan and Ali Yaycioğlu have also argued against the grain of the absolutist state in their scholarship on the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.³⁸

Bin Wong has observed a similar trend in Chinese historiography. According to this historiography, an autocratic and centralized state controlled the economy in the early period. Moreover, Wong has argued that scholars have highlighted the contrast between Chinese imperial policies and those of European states by focusing on the winners like England and France

based on a single model of economic development.³⁹ Like Abou-El-Haj, Wong has argued that this type of historiography cannot trace change and the transformation of the economy, commerce, and urbanization that led to the relaxation of state control over the markets.

Francesca Trivellato's important study on the role of the Jewish trading diaspora has offered a different model based on family partnerships as vehicles of cross-cultural trade in the Mediterranean. She has also underscored the continuity of family firms and the plurality of business forms and practices despite the rise of corporate capitalism in the West.⁴⁰ This is not to deny that family firms among Jews, Armenians, and Greeks were based purely on blood ties and did not include outsiders (Europeans) as agents and creditors, which was the case in Ottoman ports. Like the Jewish and Greek trading diaspora, the Armenians of New Julfa in Isfahan formed a corporate body and assembly of merchants and enjoyed wide networks in the Levant.⁴¹

The Ottoman state indeed promoted the market economy and valued its merchants to achieve security and stability.⁴² Perhaps we can trace this transformation better in its port cities and periphery than in the center of the empire. Moreover, ports across the Mediterranean shared certain institutions of commerce, practices, and cultures. For example, commercial partnerships (*commenda* in Latin) spread from the Islamic Middle East to Islamic Spain in the medieval and early modern periods.⁴³ The offices of dragoman (in Turkish, *tercuman*: interpreter) and *simsar* (broker), for example, existed in both Venice and Galata. The *şehbender* (chief of port) in Ottoman ports and cities represented the interests of merchants, as did the Venetian *bailo*. In short, Ottoman ports shared many commercial institutions and practices with western Mediterranean ports like Venice.

Gilles Veinstein has correctly warned us that our understanding of Ottoman commercial policies toward European merchants is based on limited research in the Ottoman archives.⁴⁴ Niels Steensgaard argued some time ago that Muslim merchants deliberately kept their commercial activities secret and did not leave behind much of a record about their caravan and maritime trade. But Halil Sahillioğlu's discovery of a list of caravan merchants who arrived into Aleppo in 1610 and included Iranian, Arab, Indian, and Turkish as well as European merchants underlined the importance of digging into the archival material.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the study of cross-cultural trade following Philip Curtin's seminal work has emerged as an important topic in the recent scholarship.⁴⁶ The exploration of Ottoman and European archives has enhanced scholarship on

cross-cultural trade. For example, Edhem Eldem's rigorous study of French archives has shed important light on French trade in Istanbul during the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ In the same vein, Daniel Panzac's study of French trade with the Levant also offers important insights on the role of French ships in domestic trade as well as on partnerships between Ottoman and French traders.⁴⁸ Ottomanist scholars have also carried out important studies on Cyprus, Crete, Izmir, Salonica, and other ports, emphasizing connectivity.⁴⁹ Daniel Goffman's study of Izmir in the Levant trade shows that the power of state had receded in western Anatolia during the seventeenth century.⁵⁰ Michael Talbot's recent study on diplomatic and commercial relations between England and the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century has underscored the shrinking role of England in the commerce of the Levant due to competition with France, the Ottoman-Iranian and Anglo-French Wars, and the diminishing importance of the Levant in English trade as compared with England's role in the East and West Indies trade.⁵¹

There is ongoing debate among historians on the meaning and impact of *ahdnames/capitulations* on the Ottoman economy.⁵² Some historians have blamed them in part for the decline of the Ottoman economy during the early modern period.⁵³ More recently, some scholars have argued that the Ottoman plural legal system and the capitulations led to "hundreds of thousands" of Ottoman minorities taking flight from Ottoman legal jurisdiction and becoming protégés of European states. They have maintained that a coherent Ottoman bourgeoisie never came into existence. Those merchants who potentially could have been part of it preferred European protection and legal jurisdiction to Ottoman jurisdiction due to the "lack of transparency in the Ottoman legal system"; the restrictions of Islamic law concerning inheritance, which divided the property of the deceased among heirs; and the Ottoman state's "lack of interest in the local economy."⁵⁴ Thus, Islamic law and legal pluralism as well as the regime of *ahdnames* are viewed as the primary obstacles to the development of Western-style capitalism in the Ottoman Empire. Huri Islamoğlu has critiqued this binary vision of the world economy based on the liberal and secular Western trajectory and the peripheralization of non-Western economies due to the "Islamization" of its legal institutions.⁵⁵ She has called for a revision of the world system approach that is based on the model of European development. She is critical of the view that claims that the penetration of Ottoman markets by Western goods and the latter's divergence from the Western model of capitalism led to the underdevelopment of the non-West. Instead, she has emphasized the

institutional and legal transformation of the empire that started in the eighteenth century to respond to global changes.

Furthermore, historians of Mediterranean and European ports have started exploring the Venetian, French, and English as well as the Dutch archives to shed light on commercial and cultural contacts in Ottoman ports.⁵⁶ Eric Dursteler's studies on Ottoman-Venetian trade as well as on the Venetian community in Istanbul have revised the notion of a divided Mediterranean. He has instead recognized fluidity and connectivity as important features of Mediterranean ports like Venice and Istanbul. The works of Benjamin Arbel, Natalie Rothman, and Steven Ortega have underscored the importance of the Venetian archives for the study of commercial contacts between the Ottoman Empire and Venice.⁵⁷ Similarly, the exploration of the Dutch archives has led to important findings by Alexander De Groot, Maurits van den Boogert, and Ismail Hakki Kadi on the Ottoman-Dutch trade and the legal status of Dutch traders in Galata. These studies have revised the notion of a passive state capitulating to European economic and colonial interests.⁵⁸

Moreover, some scholars have adopted comparative studies of Ottoman ports and caravan cities, going beyond the essentialist model of the "Islamic city" provided by Max Weber and other scholars.⁵⁹ Suraiya Faruqi and Gilles Veinstein have recently presented some of these findings in a collective volume on the activities of Ottoman merchants in Anatolia and the Balkans as well as in Europe.⁶⁰ Other scholars have suggested comparing Mediterranean ports like Barcelona and Indian Ocean ports like Bengal in the nineteenth century.⁶¹

My own study of Galata builds on these and other works and offers an alternative way of examining an Ottoman port through its layered history, legal pluralism, merchant networks, and connectivity. I also emphasize the unique role of Galata as a crossroads of commerce between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, the East and the West. I argue that merchant partnerships and networks played an important role in Galata's international trade as well as in its financial institutions.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 provides an urban context for Ottoman-European encounters in Galata and Pera while part 2 offers a legal

framework through a comparative and analytical study of *ahdnames* (diplomatic and commercial treaties) as legal institutions of trade. As such, part 2 provides an important legal and diplomatic framework for the study of commercial and cultural encounters presented in part 3, which focuses on the domestic and international trade of Galata. Throughout this study, I use the term *ahdname* (treaty with a friendly nation) and avoid its Western usage, *capitulation* (Latin *capitula*: headings in a treaty), to emphasize the contractual and legal aspect of an institution that has been greatly misunderstood in the general scholarship. In part 3, I focus on a “thick history” of Galata’s trade and merchant networks in domestic and international trade. This part also examines cultural (sexual and religious) encounters between the French and Ottoman residents in Galata and Pera as well as in villages on the European shore of the Bosphorus to shed light on the nature and limits of Ottoman pluralism.⁶²

In chapter 1, I emphasize the layered history of Galata and study continuity and change from Byzantine and Genoese rule to Ottoman administration. Basing my argument on Ottoman surveys and archival and narrative sources, I contend that the Ottoman takeover of this port undermined Latin control but also left much of the old urban fabric intact since the port had been taken peacefully. However, an important priority for the sultan was the creation of a Muslim space as well as the settlement of Muslims and Marrano Jews, many of whom had arrived after their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Chapter 2 traces the development of Pera, the suburb and necropolis of Galata outside the walls, in the seventeenth century. Due to the spread of congestion, crime, and plague in walled Galata, Pera became the diplomatic hub of the empire, with Western European embassies lining Rue de Péra (*Beyoğlu*). The role of the Tanzimat reformers as opposed to the roles of local communities and European residents in the transformation of Ottoman ports like Galata and Izmir has been at the heart of the debate on the nature of the urban transformation of Galata and greater Istanbul.⁶³ I emphasize the impact of fires and plague in the imposition of central control over migration, policing of the streets, and the establishment of building codes in Pera and Galata.

In part 2 (chapters 3 and 4), I examine the impact of *ahdnames*—or commercial and diplomatic treaties—on the status of Ottoman ports, their legal pluralism, and international trade. I trace the origins of *ahdnames* to the Mediterranean and Islamic states and offer a comparative analysis of a series of *ahdnames* granted by the Ottoman state to the Italian city-states as well as to Western European nations from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth

centuries. I argue that the ahdnames/capitulations predated the Ottoman Empire and were Mediterranean and Islamic legal institutions intended to ease trade across religious divides as well as cohabitation and trade among communities of faith in port cities. I agree with Maurits van den Boogert that the ahdnames were not tools of Western European colonialism and that the Ottoman state maintained control over the implementation and revocation of their articles well into the nineteenth century.

Part 3 (chapters 5 through 7) examines the implementation of the ahdnames by focusing on domestic as well as on European trade. Contrary to the proponents of Ottoman absolutism, I argue that the Ottoman Empire practiced a combination of laissez-faire commercial policies with its allies in the Mediterranean trade while it controlled and protected domestic trade and its own merchants on the Black Sea until the late eighteenth century.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, the state faced constant challenges from its own merchants and artisans, who were against promoting the interests of foreign merchants. Linda Darling's important study on the "Circle of Justice" has underlined the continuity of this tradition from the ancient Near East to the modern period.⁶⁵ As Marshall Hodgson keenly observed, the "unitary contractualism of Islamdom" meant that ultimate legitimacy was not based in the autonomous and hierarchical corporative offices of the Occident but in the "egalitarian contractual responsibilities of the state."⁶⁶ Though the Ottoman state did not follow the Western model of capitalism, it developed its own responses to change and practiced a combination of laissez-faire and protectionist policies.

As I show in chapters 5 and 6, the Ottoman state paid close attention to the implementation of the articles of the ahdnames as well as to the *shari'a* through its law courts and through the process of petitioning the Imperial Council, which was open to all subjects (Muslim and non-Muslim men and women) as well as to foreigners. Thus, the Ottoman state's laissez-faire economic policy of providing opportunities for everyone to trade worked simultaneously with its protectionist policies to uphold the interests of its own merchants, producers, and consumers, depending on economic circumstances.

Chapter 6 examines the rise of France in the Levant trade from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. Although France enjoyed the status of most favored nation and obtained favorable ahdnames from the Ottoman Empire, French traders still faced numerous challenges in Ottoman ports from local traders and officials. This competition was best reflected in legal proceedings between French and Ottoman merchants in the Islamic courts

of Galata and the process of the ambassador's petitioning the Imperial Council, which I explore.

Chapter 7 continues this critical perspective by focusing on the cultural encounters between Ottoman and French subjects in Galata and Pera. I contend that French traders had become embedded in the social life of Ottoman ports and that some had acquired fluid identities as "Levantine" through intermarriage and long residency in Ottoman ports by becoming Ottoman subjects. Despite the growing number of Europeans, particularly French subjects, in Ottoman ports in the eighteenth century, interfaith sex and conversion at the hands of Catholic missionaries generated anxieties and tensions within these communities.

The Epilogue focuses on the impact of the French Revolution in 1789 and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 on Franco-Ottoman relations and the status of French subjects in Galata and Pera. The French Revolution and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt ended the special relationship between the two states and the old era of Levant Company monopolies. The Ottoman Empire's signing of bilateral *ahdnames* with France and England opened European markets up to Ottoman traders while lifting all bans on Ottoman exports and internal visas. The impact of this new set of commercial treaties led to a manifold increase in the volume of trade between the Ottoman ports and Europe (primarily England) and the incorporation of ports like Galata and Izmir into the global economy after the Crimean War. The appendix provides a sample of Ottoman documents that I have translated into English.

A central question in this book revolves around the role of Ottoman merchants in European trade. I maintain that before the rise of the Levant Companies, Muslim merchants were not absent from the European trade and had been active in Venice and Ancona since the sixteenth century, if not earlier.⁶⁷ However, due to the monopolistic policies of the English and French as well as the Dutch Levant Companies, Ottoman merchants (especially Muslims) were not welcome in European ports like Marseille and London. Bruce Masters has underscored the intolerance of European ports as well as the impact of Sunni-Shi'i rivalry and the Ottoman-Safavid Wars in the withdrawal of Muslim merchants from the Levant trade with Europe. Christian piracy in the Mediterranean was another factor in attacks on Ottoman ships. But Ottoman Armenian and Greek merchants filled the gap, as best reflected in the monopoly of Armenians in the silk trade.⁶⁸ Daniel Panzac's fascinating study of French shipping in the Ottoman Empire has shown that Muslim merchants entered into commercial partnerships with

French captains to transport their goods to European ports during the Russo-Ottoman Wars in the late eighteenth century.⁶⁹ My own research of Ottoman archival sources corroborates Panzac's findings and sheds light on the activities of a handful of Muslim merchants in Europe and the challenges that they faced.

Moreover, recent scholarship based on regional studies has shown that Ottoman merchants adjusted their portfolios and shifted to different trade routes and markets when European companies took over trade in major ports in the Levant and the Indian Ocean. Nelly Hanna is critical of scholars who have assigned a passive role to merchants, offering a static model of state control and rigid guild structure and attributing change to capitalist stimuli from the West to the declining economy of the eighteenth century. She instead argues that the Egyptian textile industry survived with large-scale exports to North Africa, Syria, and Europe through the first half of the eighteenth century. The change came when refined sugar exports from Marseille, Trieste, and Fiume replaced Egyptian sugar in the eighteenth century and led to the conversion of vast agricultural lands to cash crops like cotton destined for export.⁷⁰ Hala Fattah has also emphasized the flexibility and diversity of local merchants and their family firms in investing in regional and long-distance trade in bulky goods as well as in local textiles during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She has also highlighted the resistance of local merchants and producers to European penetration of the markets as well as to local and state controls through boycott, sale of contraband, and insurrection in nineteenth-century Arabia.⁷¹

In a critical essay on the "quest for an Ottoman bourgeoisie," Edhem Eldem has noted historians' and social scientists' avoidance of applying the term *bourgeoisie* to Ottoman merchants. He has pointed to the problematic definition of Ottoman merchants as "comprador or dependent bourgeoisie," most of whom were members of Ottoman minority communities.⁷² This tendency was in part the outcome of the nationalist historiography and the dependency theories of 1960s and 1970s and the popularity of the concept of *comprador bourgeoisie* in Turkey. Thus, the "Ottoman bourgeoisie" appear segmented along ethno-religious lines, divided into bureaucratic and commercial groups that were conflict ridden, fragile, and dependent on a Western capitalist class. This book is a corrective to the paradigm of a "fragmented and dependent bourgeoisie," underscoring deep tensions and competition between Ottoman non-Muslim and European traders in Istanbul during the eighteenth century.

A NOTE ON PERIODIZATION AND SOURCES

Parts 1 and 2 of the book cover the long *durée* in the history of Galata from the Ottoman Conquest to the early nineteenth century, thus providing an important historical backdrop to the commercial, social, and cultural developments during the long eighteenth century. That century was an important period in the transformation of the Ottoman economy and society in Istanbul, with the rise of provincial notables and tax farmers as well as financiers. It was also an era of long wars against Russia and Iran that led to a deep economic crisis. Additionally, this period was very eventful in Western Europe, characterized by long continental wars, the Ottoman-French alliance against the partitioning of Poland, and Russia's expansion into the Black Sea. Anglo-French rivalry was also strong over the colonies in the West Indies and America as well as over trade routes in the Levant and the Indian Ocean. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars intensified these developments, which had a direct impact on the lives of members of French communities in Ottoman ports and on the rise of French and English colonial projects to partition the empire.

The availability and exploration of Ottoman and European archival sources as well as of embassy accounts and travel literature have been crucial in studying the history of European trade in the Levant. For a long time, scholars of the Ottoman Empire had assumed that due to limited archival records on merchants, they had not had a strong presence and legal status in Ottoman society, unlike corporate groups like artisans and guilds. Niels Steensgaard has rightly argued that Muslim merchants kept their trade portfolios and knowledge secret and that the absence of source material does not reflect lack of activity or interest in commerce by peddling traders. Moreover, both Steensgaard and Janet Abu-Lughod have emphasized the sophistication of Muslim commercial culture and the use of bills of exchange and letters of credit.⁷³ Abu-Lughod has argued that too often scholars project developments that took place in the modern period, such as Western capitalism, backward. She points out that Islam was not inimical to capitalism. However, this picture is being revised since scholars now have greater access to the archives and are able to study Islamic court records for various parts of the empire.⁷⁴ Although many commercial contracts were oral, when disputes arose, the lawsuits and petitions left a paper trail in the court registers and the Imperial Council. Moreover, all merchants (Ottoman and foreign) had to register their transactions in the Islamic courts and to obtain a document

that they could use in lawsuits and claims. The Islamic court records of Galata cover a long period from the early sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries.⁷⁵

In Galata, the Islamic court records also contain lawsuits brought by European subjects. The Imperial Council had jurisdiction and a higher authority than the Islamic courts had over the implementation of the articles of the ahdnames. Europeans who lived in provincial ports and towns preferred to submit their lawsuits and petitions to the Imperial Council via their ambassador rather than to the Islamic courts due to the shari'a's preference for Muslim male witnesses. But occasionally non-Muslims also were used as witnesses in cases that involved non-Muslims.

There was busy traffic between the French Embassy in Pera and the Imperial Council after the signing of the Ahdname of 1740 that led to the expansion of trade between the two states. Every Wednesday, the ambassador and one of his dragomans traveled from Pera to the Sublime Porte in Istanbul proper to present written petitions in Ottoman translation to the grand vizier on behalf of the French nation. These documents are now kept in the Collection of Foreign Nations (*Ecnebi defterleri*, *ADV.N.DVE collection*) and *name-yi hümayun* registers at the Başbakanlık Archives.⁷⁶ They make up more than one hundred volumes that cover foreign city-states and countries from Venice to Iran and the United States from 1567 to 1922.⁷⁷ I have focused on the study of registers for France in the eighteenth century, which begin in 1750 (vol. 100) and continue through the early nineteenth century. Several folders for each year contain around one hundred or more original documents (of one to three pages) in the form of handwritten petitions by the dragomans on behalf of ambassadors who represented French subjects. Occasionally, French subjects presented petitions directly and signed them. The state would then issue an imperial order to local officials and the kadi to look into the lawsuits in accordance with the articles of the ahdnames. A single document would contain the original petition in Ottoman translation signed by the ambassador, the report of Ottoman officials, and the imperial order in response to the petition, thus providing great insight into the legal procedure and the content of disputes as well as into the perspective of the state toward the implementation of the articles of the ahdnames (see appendix).

Many documents in this collection (several registers per year) deal with daily commercial affairs such as requests for permission for French commercial ships as well as for subjects and protégés to travel between ports. They

also deal with requests from the ambassador and consuls for the issuance of imperial orders for *berats* (patents of appointment) for consuls and dragomans. As well, the files contain copies of actual *berats* that were issued to French subjects and protégés. In addition, summaries of these petitions, together with the imperial orders issued to local officials, were copied in bound registers for each nation (*Fransa ahkam defterleri*).⁷⁸

Prior to the eighteenth century, the Mühimme Registers (registers of important affairs) contained summaries of petitions by European ambassadors and imperial orders in response to them. But they were sporadic and became systematic only in the eighteenth century, probably with the establishment of the Office of Chief Chancery, or the *reis ul-küttab*, which was in charge of foreign affairs (see chapter 4). Furthermore, the collection of imperial orders for Istanbul (*Istanbul ahkam defterleri*) is an important source for studying the activities of maritime traders, merchants, and artisans in Galata and greater Istanbul as well as disputes among artisans, guilds, and merchants that were submitted to the Imperial Council.⁷⁹

Ottoman customs registers also offer details on the entry of foreign ships into Galata and their cargoes as well as on customs dues.⁸⁰ Customs revenues in Ottoman ports were farmed out to non-Muslims, mostly to Jews in Izmir and Galata. But in the eighteenth century, they were mostly farmed out to Ottoman elites (janissaries and merchants). Istanbul had several customs stations, including one in Galata. The study of Ottoman customs registers is still in a preliminary stage, but scholars have started using them to gain a better understanding of Ottoman commercial policies and an overall picture of trade not only with Europe but also with the Black Sea, India, and Iran.⁸¹

Correspondence between the members of the Levant Company in Ottoman ports and the Chamber of Commerce in Marseille is preserved in the archives of the Chamber of Commerce in Marseille. I have briefly explored these sources to compare them with Ottoman sources. They are invaluable documents on commercial transactions and bankruptcies of French merchants, but they do not shed much light on day-to-day activities and legal issues faced by French traders. The French ambassador also sent regular reports to the Chamber of Commerce in Marseille about the daily affairs of French subjects, most of the time regarding commercial affairs.⁸² The Chamber in Marseille maintained systematic statistical data on French trade with the Levant based on the reports of the embassy in Istanbul as well as on files on the bankruptcies of merchant houses in the eighteenth century.⁸³ In addition, consular courts handled disputes among members of

European communities. The records of the secretariat of the embassy, the minutes of the assembly of the nation in Istanbul, and the correspondence of the ambassadors are kept in the archives of the city of Nantes.⁸⁴

In addition, European (mostly French) embassy accounts offer great insights into the world of diplomacy in Pera while other European writers present views of life in the Ottoman Empire. The travel literature of the period has been the object of much scrutiny and critical analysis since Edward Said's seminal work on *Orientalism*.⁸⁵ However, this material must be approached with a great deal of caution since it often reflects the bias of European observers of the Ottoman Empire. French ambassadors and dragomans like Antoine Galland kept official diaries about their interactions with the Sublime Porte as well as with local communities that were published later.⁸⁶ Moreover, European (primarily English) women offered an alternative "gaze" on the Ottoman Empire since, due to their direct interactions with Ottoman women in the eighteenth century, their accounts were less sexualized than those of their male counterparts. However, as Mary Roberts has noted, English women had created their own "gaze" that reflected a hierarchical relationship with Ottoman women and fantastic narratives, some of which displayed a strong bias.⁸⁷ Therefore, we have to balance European narrative sources with Ottoman archival material to get a more accurate picture.