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A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul

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When Istanbul Was a City of *Bostāns*

Urban Agriculture and Agriculturists

Aleksandar Shopov

In the introduction to his history of Istanbul, written in Armenian in the mid-17th century, Eremya Çelebi envisions a traveler in a boat sailing along the Marmara coast and approaching his native city by sea. One of the first sights Eremya describes from this riparian viewpoint is a complex of produce gardens in Langa, the Istanbul neighborhood from which the author hailed:

The third gate is that of Davut Paşa. This is the location of the Small Vlanga garden, which is enclosed by two walls all the way until the New Gate (Yeni Kapı). The Vlanga Garden that is called the Big Garden has cucumbers that are very large.¹

Langa is located in the valley of the Bayram Paşa stream (known in the Byzantine period as the Lykus stream) that once flowed beneath the ridge of Istanbul's six hills before emptying into the Marmara Sea. Eremya's work is one of the earliest known references to the Langa gardens' produce. A court document of 1662 recording the prices of produce sold at the market in the neighboring town of Eyüp (about 2 km north of Istanbul's land walls) lists two varieties of cucumber: the first is called "local" or *yerli*, and the second, "*lanğa*". Thus, by that time the Langa gardens were even exporting their famous cucumbers outside the city.² Eremya also mentions the produce garden next to Kadırga port, at the foot of the hill on which the mosque of Sultan Ahmed I, now also known as the Blue Mosque, was constructed in 1617. Here, he notes that "although some of the demand for vegetables is met with imports from the outside, many produce gardens are located in various locations throughout the city".³

Eremya Çelebi treats farming as part of the urban experience, elevating *bostāns* and their produce to the status of landmarks that a traveler arriving by

1 Eremya Çelebi, *İstanbul Tarihi*, trans. Andreasyan, 3.

2 İKS, vol. 28, Eyüb Mahkemesi (Havâss-ı Refia), 74, fol. 9b–3.

3 Eremya Çelebi, *İstanbul Tarihi*, trans. Andreasyan, 4.

water to Istanbul should hope to see. He was hardly alone among his contemporaries in characterizing Istanbul as a city of agriculture. From the mid-16th century on, Istanbul's produce gardens are frequently mentioned in archival and narrative sources. In his *De topographia Constantinopoleos* (1561), the French antiquarian Pierre Gilles, who lived in Istanbul in the 1540s, remarks on the vegetable gardens in "Blanchae" (Langa), noting their location over the former Theodosian harbor.⁴ In 1609, the Polish-Armenian merchant Simeon marveled at Istanbul's many artisanal workshops, schools, coffeehouses, markets, and palaces; but he also mentions "Valanga" or Langa, describing it as an orchard "larger than a city".⁵ By 1734, a survey recorded a total of 1381 produce gardeners, largely migrants from Ottoman Macedonia and Albania, working in 344 *bostāns* within the city walls alone. Small Langa, according to this survey, had 49 market gardens employing 221 people.⁶ *Bostān*, the term used in the survey from 1734, referred at the time to a plot growing vegetables and, to a lesser extent, fruits for the market.

The international fame that Istanbul's culture of urban farming had acquired by the 18th century is attested in Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), whose titular character rejects philosophy in favor of the practical labor introduced to him by a farmer in Istanbul.⁷ A few of Istanbul's *bostāns* are still operating today, with wells and cisterns dating to the Ottoman period (Fig. 11.1).⁸ The Langa *bostāns* existed until well into the 20th century.⁹ Despite this, Istanbul's history has been approached from a standpoint that generally excludes farming from the urban experience and economy. Scholars have emphasized Istanbul's spectacular population boom following the Ottoman conquest in 1453, from fewer than 40,000 inhabitants to nearly half a million in the 16th century. This has helped to paint a picture of early modern Istanbul as a crowded metropolis, which absorbed both rural migrants and goods from the provinces and which was not itself a space of agriculture.¹⁰ Ottoman Istanbul has been described as being surrounded by agricultural "rings", similar to the paradigm Johann Heinrich von Thünen famously laid out in his *Isolated State* (1826).¹¹ Though

4 Gilles, *Petri Gyllii De topographia*, 212–13.

5 Simēon, *The Travel Accounts of Simēon*, 51.

6 BOA, D.BŞM 1841, fols. 16–24.

7 Voltaire, *Candide*, 117–19.

8 Shopov & Han, "Osmanlı İstanbul'unda", 34–38.

9 White, Shopov, & Ostrovich, "An Archaeology of Sustenance", 35.

10 On the early modern "Ottoman command economy" as centered around supplying the capital, see McGowan, *Economic Life*, 10–12.

11 Faroqhi, "Migration into Eighteenth Century 'Greater Istanbul'", 166–67. Faroqhi notes that water distribution designed to facilitate transport distorted the shapes of urban zones outlined in von Thünen, *Isolated State*.



FIGURE 11.1 The *bostān* in Yedikule belonging to the Panagia Greek Orthodox church (also known as Belgrade church), seen from the vantage point of its cistern; the first known mention of this *bostān* is in the 1708 endowment deed of Süleyman Agha (see Shopov & Han “Yedikule Bostanları”, *Toplumsal Tarih* 236 (2013), 34–38)

PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR, JULY 2017

von Thünen’s work has been criticized as “descriptive rather than normative”,¹² his ideas, particularly following the translation of his work into English in 1966, have helped to solidify the perception that a city by definition excludes agriculture. The many produce gardens that flourished within Istanbul’s walled city have therefore been dismissed by both geographers and historians; and there is a lack of knowledge about the processes that led to their formation.¹³

What were the factors that transformed much of Istanbul’s unbuilt land into *bostāns* and maintained this agricultural landscape? Who were Istanbul’s

12 Harvey, “Theoretical Concepts”, 361–74. For a review of the literature that criticizes the fetishization of von Thünen’s model, see Block & DuPuis, “Making the Country Work for the City”, 79–98.

13 Kaldjian, “Istanbul’s Bostans”, 284–304; Bilgin, “Osmanlı Dönemi İstanbul Bostanları”, 86–99. Istanbul’s *bostāns* also challenge the French orientalist framework on the study of urbanism, whereby the ideal-typical “Islamic city” does not produce, and its economic activities are “essentially parasitic”. See Raymond, “Islamic City, Arab City”, 6.

gardeners or *bāğçevān*, as they are called in the Ottoman sources? Growing a profitable amount of vegetables and fruits in a relatively limited space required significant amounts of labor; and the establishment of new *bostāns* involved constructing stone wells, wooden waterwheels, and sheds for storage or dwelling spaces for the gardeners, most of whom were migrants from the countryside—in a sense, urban peasants. The emergence of the *bostāns* profoundly shaped the landscape and environment of early modern Istanbul and was related to new forms of leasing that allowed an urban real estate market to flourish, shifts in medical practices and diets, the migration of laborers into the city, and urban planning concerns around fires and floods that encouraged the inclusion of large, unbuilt agricultural spaces in the fabric of the city.

Following the Ottoman conquest, districts emerged around the newly created sultanlic and vizierial charitable foundations (waqf) that by the mid-16th century controlled much of the unbuilt land in and around Istanbul.¹⁴ The largest produce garden complexes, such as Yeni Bağçe and Langa, emerged on waqf lands in the valley of the Bayram Paşa stream, which divided the city in two. The waqf system was thus central to both the development of the city and its agricultural history. Around the mid-16th century, court documents begin to show waqf land in the city being rented with long-term leases.¹⁵ This was a precursor of the double-rent lease contract, which emerged in the early 17th century and allowed for a lifelong proprietorship over land and buildings, as well as the right to inherit them, or transfer or sell them to a third party. Such leases created the conditions for labor- and water-intensive agriculture to flourish on waqf lands in Istanbul and its surroundings, and were paralleled with investments in construction of wells and waterwheels that facilitated the establishment of control over land.¹⁶ Moreover, land controlled through long-term or lifelong heritable leases was typically leased further with fixed-term leases to middle tenants, who invested further in agricultural production and organized laborers to maximize their profits.¹⁷ In the case of Istanbul's *bostāns*, the new leasing practices also led to increased market specialization,

14 İnalçik, "Istanbul", 229–231.

15 Baber Johansen argues that Hanafi jurists (the official school of Islamic law in the Ottoman Empire) restricted leases to between one and three years, a practice that started in Central Asia in the 9th century; see Johansen, *The Islamic Law*, 34. Ottoman jurists in the mid-16th century found ways to circumvent these restrictions and allow for long-term leasing; see Özcan, *Osmanlı Para Vakıfları*, 211; and Kaya, *Osmanlı Hukukunda*, 30–31.

16 According to pre-classical and classical Hanafi jurists, planting trees and building structures on waqf land justified the "contract of tenancy" (Ar. *ijāra*); see Johansen, *The Islamic Law*, 26.

17 The emergence of an entrepreneur tenant is a phenomenon comparable to the formation of "landlord-capitalist tenant-wage labor structure" in the English countryside, which

including the emergence of new local cultivars of vegetables. The new leases and Istanbul's *bostāns* themselves also depended on migration. During the second half of the 16th century, waves of migration from the countryside to the city intensified, especially from regions where peasants began losing control over their land. Istanbul's agricultural transformation poses what might seem to be a contradiction: an early modern city's growth, rather than necessarily pushing agriculture out, actually incorporated agriculture in its core.

1 Agriculture in the City following the Ottoman Conquest

Prior to the rise of widespread commercial produce gardening in Istanbul, agriculture was already being practiced within the walled city in Byzantine Constantinople. As Alice-Mary Talbot has recently discussed, in the decades before the Ottoman conquest in 1453, patriarchal registers record vineyards throughout the depopulated city and a vibrant viticultural production, which generated revenue for the city's many monasteries.¹⁸ Indeed, the earliest known Ottoman survey of Istanbul, drawn up in 1455, records dozens of wineries.¹⁹ Many of the city's gardens and vineyards were located along the Lykus (later Bayram Paşa) stream, which originated north of the city and flowed for 3 kilometers within the city walls. Others were located in the southwestern areas of the city, where the south-facing slopes of the hills overlook the Marmara Sea. The Florentine monk Cristoforo Buondelmonti, who visited in the 1420s, remarked that large open-air cisterns dating to the Roman period had been transformed into vineyards, and were producing substantial amounts of wine.²⁰

Some of these vineyards, particularly ones along the Lykus stream, continued to exist in the city following the Ottoman conquest, when the city became the new Ottoman capital. The 1455 survey of Istanbul, written two years after the conquest, records a "royal vineyard" (*beg bāj*) somewhere in the lower course of the stream, most likely in Langa, as well as several produce gardeners then residing in the city.²¹ The produce garden complex of Yeni Bağçe, located along the Lykus stream at the point where it entered the walled city, was endowed in 1505 to the charitable foundation of Bayezid II.²² In the sec-

allowed for investment, technological improvements, and, consequently, economic development in the early modern period; see Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure", 30–75.

18 Talbot, "Agricultural Properties", 195.

19 Ibid., 185–95.

20 Buondelmonti, *Description des Îles*, 245; Talbot, "Agricultural Properties", 193–94.

21 İnalçık, *Survey of Istanbul 1455*, 355–359.

22 VGMA, D. 1375, fol. 51.



FIGURE 11.2 Map of Istanbul *intra muros* showing the locations of *bostāns*

ond half of the 16th century, Yeni Bağçe consisted of at least 13 produce gardens under the control of the foundation, many of them leased by urban elites, as we will see later.²³ In 1558, a total of 18 gardens in Langa were endowed to the charitable foundation of Sultan Süleyman (r. 1520–1566).²⁴ An unspecified number were under the control of older sultanic foundations, such as those of Ayasofya and Sultan Selim I.²⁵

Generally, the valley through which the Bayram Paşa stream flowed appears to have been a center of agricultural activity both before and after the conquest (Fig. 11.2). The floor of the valley was more susceptible to the flooding and earthquakes that regularly struck the city. It was therefore more sparsely

23 TSMA, D. 5752, fol. 23b.

24 Kürkçüoğlu (ed.), *Süleymaniye Vakfiyesi*, 27.

25 BOA, MD 56, fol. 9/29 and BOA, MD 51, fol. 42/133.

developed, leaving space for agriculture even during what was otherwise a period of widespread building and development. A disastrous flood in 1574 even prompted the Imperial Council to ban construction along the stream altogether.²⁶ Another case shows that the susceptibility of areas to flooding could be a factor in determining rents. According to a court entry from the winter of 1623, royal architects were dispatched to re-evaluate the rent of a house built on land that was supposedly prone to flooding. Described as being on the “flood path” (*seyl mecrāsi*) by the tenant, a woman named Şemsimah, the land was most likely located in the valley of the Bayram Paşa stream.²⁷ The produce gardens in Langa, many of which were part of the endowment of the Süleymaniye mosque complex, at one point served as a refuge for residents fleeing the “great fire” in 1660 and may have served this purpose during other fires and disasters as well.²⁸

If the valley of the Bayram Paşa stream supported numerous agricultural spaces, Istanbul’s hills also emerged as sites of important produce gardens following the conquest. For example, the palace that would come to be known as the Topkapı Palace, built in the 1460s on Istanbul’s first hill (the former site of the acropolis), included, in its grounds, a produce garden. The Topkapı Palace garden appears to have been highly productive, and its produce was sold in Istanbul’s market.²⁹ Fruits such as strawberries were presented as gifts to Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512) by various Ottoman officials and by sufi dervishes.³⁰ Correspondence from the Ottoman poet, scholar, and official Lami’i Çelebi (1472–1532) also records several gifts of fruit, such as melon, given to other high-ranking officials, suggesting that this was a social practice not limited to the Ottoman palace.³¹ The funeral mosque complex of Sultan Mehmed II (d. 1481)—completed in 1470 on Istanbul’s fourth hill, from where it looked over the city—had four produce gardens, one of which sold, according

26 BOA, MD 26, fol. 128.

27 See İKS, vol. 45, Evkaf-ı Hümâyûn Müfettişliği 1, fol. 135b–1.

28 On the use of the Langa gardens as a refuge during the “Great Fire” (*harîk-i kebîr*) in 1660, see Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul*, 59.

29 The 1505 inventory of the Ottoman inner treasury records two coffers of 150,000 and 100,000 *ağçe*, a significant sum, as income from the palace garden (*bâğçe-i ‘amire*). Giovanni Menavino, a page in the palace in the early 16th century, mentions that the produce from this garden was sold outside the palace (*vendere in la piazza fora del Seraglio*). See Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, 203; and Shopov, “Books on Agriculture”, 558. On the royal gardens along the Bosphorus that also produced for the market, see Necipoğlu, “The Suburban Landscape”, 32–71.

30 Gök, “Atatürk Kitaplığı M.C. O.71 Numaralı”, 149, 151, 158, 227, 371, 372, 498, 566, 568 609, 611, 692, 697, 705, 729, 772, 777, 870, 875, 880, 897, 943, 949, 1029, 1033, 1057, 1089, 1184, 1195, 1197, 1203, 1206, 1237, 1262, 1273, 1382, 1402.

31 Lami’i Çelebi, *Münşeat-i Lâmiî*, ed. Esir, 110, 294.

to the income and expense records of the foundation in 1489/90, 4050 *ağçe* (around 2754 grams of silver) worth of surplus vegetables and flowers on the market.³² The names and salaries of the professional gardeners employed in the mosque complex were likewise recorded.³³ In addition to that of Sultan Mehmed II, the mosque complexes of the grand vizier Mahmud Pasha and the sufi shaykh Vefa, likewise built uphill from the Golden Horn, also featured produce gardens and orchards that generated income for the upkeep of the complexes.³⁴

In the new Ottoman capital, commercial produce gardens emerged both in the valley of the Bayram Paşa stream and in Istanbul's hills, in the newly established sultanic mosque complexes, where cultivating and exchanging produce functioned as a form of royal self-representation.³⁵ That these mosque complexes, which gave architectural form to the new capital and supported the city's growth in the years following the conquest, so consistently incorporated agricultural spaces can be connected to debates surrounding the re-location of the capital, from Edirne to Istanbul. Older elites balked at the centralization policies initiated from the new capital, claiming that Konstantiniyye/Istanbul was not suited to have such a role.³⁶ One objection posed by opponents of the move was the city's long history of being ravaged by the plague, earthquakes, famine, and drought.³⁷ An anonymous chronicle, written at the end of the 15th century, analogizes the ecological volatility of the city—where buildings are built only to collapse—with having unfertile soil: “many seeds were planted, they didn't ripen” (*niceler ekdi tohum götürmedi*).³⁸ The rebuilding of the city, and the establishment of produce gardens next to the symbols of the new imperial ideology, occurred amidst tense debates that were also framed in terms of agricultural fertility.

32 Barkan, “Fatih Câmî”, 310.

33 Ibid., 318.

34 Barkan & Ayverdi, *İstanbul Vakıfları*, 43, 159. Another 15th-century charitable foundation, that of Gedik Ahmed Pasha, in AH 1005–06/CE 1597–98, generated income from the produce garden near the harbor of Kadırga (*‘an muḳāta‘a-ı zemîn-i büstân ma‘â ḫâne der nezd-i lîman-ı Kadırga*); see TSMA, D.1718, fol. 1.

35 Shopov, “Books on Agriculture”, 562.

36 On the opposition to Istanbul as the new capital, and the construction program following the conquest as the expression of the new imperial and cultural ideology; see Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 148–49.

37 Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, 174.

38 The chronicle refers to the legendary founding of Istanbul by Yanko bin Meydan. See Giese, *Die Altosmanischen Anonymen Chroniken*, 81. This chronicle and in particular the stories in it about the founding and the history of the city have been extensively discussed in Yerasimos, *La fondation de Constantinople*.

2 Leasing and Agricultural Investment

In addition to reflecting many of the considerations that shaped the planning and rebuilding of Istanbul following the conquest, the city's produce gardens were also connected to significant changes in control over urban and suburban land—namely, the emergence of long-term lease contracts. Prior to the mid-16th century, agriculturalists typically rented agricultural land in urban areas without intermediaries and for short periods. Archival records of Galata and Üsküdar, which respectively face Istanbul across the Haliç (Golden Horn) and the Bosphorus, shed light on the kinds of leasing practices surrounding *bostāns* in the first decades following the conquest. In 1455, a certain Marko, “a poor Armenian Christian” rented a produce garden (*bostānluk*) located in the moat of the Galata city walls by paying cash to the Ottoman state treasury.³⁹ In 1534/35, a *bostān* located near the mosque of Selman Agha in Üsküdar was leased with a three-year contract to a certain Yusuf.⁴⁰ The price of the lease was 4700 *ağçe*, and the contract, drawn up in the court in Üsküdar, stipulated that each year Yusuf should pay part of the total sum of 4700 *ağçe* to the administrator of Selman Agha's charitable foundation. Such leases, which adhered to the limits for leases of agricultural land that had been prescribed by the Hanafi legal school,⁴¹ allowed a person of relatively modest means to lease a *bostān*; indeed, Yusuf did not hold an elite title such as *Çelebi*, *Hacı*, or *Beg*.

In the second half of the 16th century, however, long-term leases begin to appear more frequently in the documents. Moreover, agricultural land belonging to sultanic charitable foundations in Istanbul began to be exchanged on the real estate market. An imperial order sent in 1585 to the judge of Istanbul notes that some tenants who had been renting *bostāns* belonging to the Süleymaniye waqf in Langa had sold them (*bey' idüüb*).⁴² As a result, from 18 gardens in Langa the foundation was now left with only nine, and the yearly rents from the gardens had plummeted. The order stated that the market gardens that had been sold should be returned to the control of the Süleymaniye foundation, and that new leases should be established to guarantee that the gardens could only be inherited by the tenants' male progeny. The income and expenditure records of the Süleymaniye foundation from later that year show that, thanks to the imperial order, the Süleymaniye foundation was able to collect down payments (*icāre-i mu'accele*) for all 18 of its *bostāns*, a total of 149,600 *ağçe*, in

39 İnalçık, *Survey of Istanbul 1455*, 38.

40 İKS, vol. 4, Üsküdar Mahkemesi 9, fol. 32b–2.

41 Rafeq, “Making a Living”, 116.

42 BOA, MD 58, fol. 10/32.

addition to their annual rents (*icāre-i mü'eccele*) worth 29,290.⁴³ The income and expenditure records from 1585 also names the tenants who held leases for the gardens in Langa, revealing the social status of the people who could afford such long-term lease contracts, many of them wealthy urban elites. For example, the royal food taster in the Topkapı Palace paid a whopping 50,000 *ağçe* for the down payment on a *bostān* in Langa. Other tenants included the son of a caller for prayers, the chief of the palace armorers, wealthy Muslim and Christian women, an Armenian goldsmith, and Orthodox Christian priests.⁴⁴ A similar process appears to have unfolded in Yeni Bağçe, where, in the 1570s, artisans, scholars, and wealthy women were leasing 13 market gardens from the charitable foundation Sultan Bayezid II had established there in 1505.⁴⁵

The imperial order from 1585 that defined the legal status of the *bostāns* in Langa was thus an attempt to negotiate between, on the one hand, the wealthy Istanbulites who aimed to control waqf land in the city, and, on the other, the interests of the administrations of the sultanic charitable foundations and the Ottoman state. The order permitted lifelong lease contracts for *bostāns* to be inherited only in the case of male offspring, while still preserving the rights of the waqf administration over the collection of annual rents, including the down payments that guaranteed the perpetual right to rent *bostāns*. In 1585, a sum of 239,822 *ağçe* entered the royal treasury from the surplus of the Süleymaniye charitable foundation.⁴⁶ The total amount of down payments from the Istanbul properties of Süleymaniye (including storehouses and produce gardens) was 222,408 *ağçe*. This amount suggests that down payments from long-term lease contracts were the primary source of surplus from the foundation that flowed to the treasury, which by the end of the century had rising levels of expenditure.

In the second decade of the 17th century, new types of lease contracts, double-rent leases, emerged for waqf properties. Such leases later became known as *icāreteyn*, though the use of the term *icāreteyn* does not seem to appear in the documents until the mid-17th century. Such lease contracts allowed for the administration to receive even larger down payments, in the initial years of the practice between eight and ten times higher than the annual rent and, by the 18th century, rising to equal the market value of the

43 Barkan, "Süleymaniye Cami ve İmaretî Tesislerine", 128, 131–32.

44 Ibid., 131–32.

45 TSMA, D. 5752, fol. 23b.

46 Barkan, "Süleymaniye Cami ve İmaretî Tesislerine", 119.

property.⁴⁷ In return, the tenants had the right to transfer the property freely to their offspring, including women, or to sell it.⁴⁸

The double-rent leases encouraged tenants to maintain and improve the properties; and anyone renting a produce garden in Istanbul with a double-rent lease wanted a return on their investment. In many cases, this was achieved by subleasing the gardens for a fixed term to tenants who then supervised production there, hiring wage laborers and buying seeds and tools. A case in point is that of a certain Stoyan, whose name indicates an origin in the Balkans and that he spoke a southern Slavic language. In 1661/62, Stoyan rented a *bostān* in Small Langa from Hasan, Hüseyin, and Rahime, who jointly held a double-rent lease contract from the charitable endowment of Süleymaniye. He invested in tools (such as a hoe and a spade) and a horse, his private property that he shared with a man named Yorgi.⁴⁹ As a short-term tenant, Stoyan had paid a fixed rent in cash and most likely hired his own workers. Such tenants invested in farming equipment, utilized high-yield farming practices, and specialized in certain varieties of vegetables—indeed, such as the aforementioned “Langa” cucumber cultivar—in the hopes of increasing their profits and paying back their rents to the *icāreteyn* lease holders. As we will see shortly, entrepreneurial tenants like Stoyan, and the attractiveness of *icāreteyn* leases, also relied on the pool of migrant laborers that, towards the end of the 16th century, began arriving in Istanbul in large numbers from the countrysides. Another case, involving a produce garden just beyond the city walls, shows how tangled the web of property and lease contracts surrounding the newly established produce gardens could be, and how the new lease contracts compelled tenants to invest and innovate. A court record from 1661 names two gardeners, Dimo and his partner Yorgi, who rented a *bostān* in Eyüp from someone who had obtained it with a double-rent contract from the Ali Pasha charitable foundation. Dimo and Yorgi planted trees, which they later sold for a significant sum to a janisary named Ali Beşe.⁵⁰ Their success at growing fruits with a high market value

47 Kaya, *Osmanlı Hukukunda*, 127–32.

48 Male and female offspring could divide the inheritance of such leases into equal shares; see *ibid.*, 192–93. Kenan Yıldız has recently noted examples from the second half of the 16th century in which Ottoman jurists and the Imperial Council permitted women to inherit rental leases of waqf properties, indicating the gradual development of the *icāreteyn* lease contract, as well as the existence of a debate in the Ottoman society about how waqf properties should be leased; Yıldız, “Osmanlıda İcāreteynin”, 34–37.

49 İKS, vol. 19, Bâb Mahkemesi 46, fol. 99a–1.

50 İKS, vol. 28, Eyüb Mahkemesi (Havâss-ı Refîa) 74, fol. 47a–1.

would have relied on propagation techniques such as grafting trees, which they probably planted at the edges of the *bostān*.⁵¹

Legal opinions issued by chief imperial muftis (shaykhs al-Islam) at the end of the 16th and 17th centuries allowed a tenant of land leased from an older waqf to endow any buildings built on the land, or trees planted on it, to their own, new foundation.⁵² Such a lease was obtained with a large down payment (*icāre-i mu'accele*), most likely equivalent to the market value of the land itself. The tenant was allowed, with the approval of the administrator of the waqf, to build or plant on the land and, with the approval of the charitable foundation and the judge, could later endow those properties—including the trees or wells of market gardens—to his or her own newly established charitable foundation. While outright sales of land belonging to charitable foundations were open to legal dispute, a small, largely symbolic yearly rent (*icāre-i mü'ecelle*), which was typically recorded in the endowment deed for the new foundation, could keep the transaction legal by maintaining a formal rental relationship. Thus, although the land itself remained technically under the control of the older foundation, it was now effectively under the control of the new one, which could lease it further, as long as the built structures were maintained, and the land did not fall back into its initial undeveloped state. Both the property endowed to the new foundation and the practice itself are referred to in the scholarship as *muḳāṭa'alı* waqf.⁵³ The practice of endowing lease contracts seems to have become more frequent from the end of the 16th century. Allowing properties on waqf land to be re-endowed, it incentivized private investment in land, including transforming land into *bostāns*. The *bostān* thus played a role in the expansion of the city, as well as the construction of new neighborhoods on land just beyond the city walls.⁵⁴ An example dates to the 1590s, the years immediately following the debasement of the Ottoman *aḳçe* and the deficits that arose in the treasury thanks in part to the simultaneous wars with the Habsburgs and the Safavids. In 1592/93, Hasan Efendi, the head of the finance administration (*defterdār*) of the treasury (*hazīne-i āmire*), established a new charitable foundation in the Ebhemzade neighborhood of Kasım Paşa, an area that faced Istanbul across the

51 Istanbul was not the only early modern city where complex leasing arrangements emerged. For instance, Elizabeth Blackmar has shown that in early modern Manhattan, long-term leases on urban property allowed some artisans to speculate by building houses for rent; Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent*.

52 Kaya, *Osmanlı Hukukunda*, 48–49.

53 Yediyıldız, *XVIII. Yüzyıl'da*, 134–35.

54 Kaya, *Osmanlı Hukukunda*, 50, n.168.

Haliç (Golden Horn).⁵⁵ Hasan Efendi paid the foundation of Sultan Bayezid II, which controlled the land, an annual rent of 27 *aķçe* for a parcel on which he built a mosque, and 12 *aķçe* for a parcel on which he built a school and two houses for the imam and the muezzin. His new foundation also included a *bostān*, for which he paid a higher but still relatively small yearly rent (*icāre-i mü'ecelle*) of 254 *aķçe*. This would have been accompanied by a large down payment, though one whose sum is not specified in the document. As we have seen, such down payments increased the surpluses of sultanic charitable foundations; and these surpluses, particularly in times of fiscal instability or crisis, were transferred to the state treasury.⁵⁶ The endowment deed, which was confirmed by the judge in Üsküdar, mentions both fruit-bearing and non-fruit-bearing trees, which were Hasan Efendi's "private [property]" (*mülk*), along with two wells and two waterwheels, suggesting that a considerable area of land was involved. The land on which such *bostāns* were constructed would have then been open to further development, providing the precondition for the emergence of new suburban spaces around Istanbul.

As the practice of re-endowing waqf land became more common, its legal contours seem to have acquired more precision. By the late 17th century such leases could also be revoked. In June 1676, land in Kasım Paşa that was originally endowed to the charitable foundation of Bayezid II and that in 1540/41 had come under the control of the new charitable foundation of one el-Hajj Ahmed was returned to the old sultanic foundation. The administrator of the Bayezid II foundation took back the land by successfully arguing that it was no longer a *bostān* but instead had deteriorated into "white" or unused land (*ārż-ı beyzā*) without planted trees and with few wells.⁵⁷ The administrator also pointed to the large size of the plot in question, namely 48,792 *zīrā'* or around 40,000 m². This example shows that re-endowing produce gardens could depend not only on establishing *bostāns*, but also on maintaining them. The transformation of urban and suburban land into produce gardens, many of which included fruit trees, thus seems to have been a strategy to appropriate and control the land itself.

55 İKS, vol. 10, Üsküdar Mahkemesi 84, fol. 89a.

56 For one of the earliest such transfers of waqf surpluses during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (1451–1481), see Barkan, "Ayasofya Cami'i ve Eyüb Türbesinin", 372.

57 İKS, vol. 18, İstanbul Mahkemesi 18, fol. 130a.

3 Changing Landscapes: Kasım Paşa and Yedikule

At the end of the 16th century, land in other towns surrounding Istanbul was being transformed into irrigation-intensive produce gardens. This had a significant impact not only on the city's economy but also on its landscape and ecosystem. In at least two cases, both from the end of the 16th century, the Imperial Council intervened in disputes related to the establishment of *bostāns* that were disrupting the water supply for state-owned (*mīrī*) watermills. The owners of the new *bostāns* were destroying the dams built for the watermills and using the water for their irrigation, hampering the operation of the mills and affecting Istanbul's flour supply.⁵⁸

Instead of cereal grains and grapevines—which did not require as much irrigation and which had been cultivated in the city in the late Byzantine period—land in and around Istanbul was increasingly used to grow more expensive vegetables, fruit trees, and flowers. The Ottoman official and Istanbul native Evliya Çelebi (b. 1611), describing the area of Kasım Paşa, mentions several market gardens located there as well as fruits that were Kasım Paşa specialties, such as apricots, the *Papa* variety of peach, the *Cem Şah* variety of grape, and *Boşnak Dede* roses.⁵⁹ New complexes of *bostāns* also appeared in areas inside the walled city and on a higher elevation, where accessing underground water required investing in wide and deep wells. The most important example is the complex of *bostāns* that emerged in the 17th century in Yedikule, a neighborhood on the southwestern edge of the city that emerged around the Yedikule fortress built by Sultan Mehmed II. A handful of *bostāns* in Yedikule still exist today, although they are under increasing pressure from real estate development.⁶⁰

In 1734, the Ottoman government drew up a survey of the produce gardeners working in Istanbul's *bostāns*—one of the earliest such surveys (*kefil defteri*), which registered workers from a range of professions, from gardeners to bathhouse workers; only workers with guarantors were registered, giving them official status and excluding others, in a likely attempt to regulate the large number of migrant laborers then in the city.⁶¹ The survey registered 1,381 *bostān* gardeners working within the walled city alone; 323 of these were employed in the 88 *bostāns* in Yedikule.⁶² Yet, in a city view of Istanbul by

58 Shopov, "Cities of Rice", 170.

59 Mantran, *Istanbul*, 501; Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 1, ed. Dankoff, Kahraman, Dağlı, 180.

60 Shopov & Han, "Osmanlı İstanbul'unda", 34–38.

61 BOA, D. BŞM 1841, fols. 24–38.

62 BOA, D. BŞM 1841, fols. 24–38.

Matrakçı Nasuh (d. 1564), while the gardens in Langa are clearly designated with a patch of green dotted with trees within a wall enclosure, the area around the Yedikule fortress, in the lower right, is not depicted as a garden complex (Fig. 11.3). In Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* (1544), too, Langa and Yeni Bağçe are clearly designated within walled enclosures, while the area around the Yedikule fortress, in the upper left, still appears barren (Fig. 11.4). Indeed, Yedikule is not recorded in the first half of the 16th century as the site of any produce gardens.⁶³ The garden complexes in low-lying Langa and Yeni Bağçe could be irrigated with the underground water table along the Bayram Paşa stream; by contrast, the *bostāns* that emerged somewhat later in Yedikule required significant water exploration and the construction of wells that were so wide and deep that their size is even remarked upon in early 18th-century endowment deeds.⁶⁴ For example, a *bostān* located in the Bucak Bağı neighborhood (between the Yedikule fortress and the Marmara Sea), established by a certain el-Hajj Mustafa on land belonging to a charitable foundation, is described in a court record of 1685 as having a "large" well of around 6.5 m in circumference and 13 m in depth.⁶⁵ In addition to a waterwheel and cistern, this well supported 186 "fruit trees" (*eşcār-ı müsmire*) and "some vegetables" (*ba'zı sebzevāt*). A few Ottoman-era wells and cisterns are still preserved in Yedikule today and are usually located at the highest point in the *bostān* so that the water can flow through canals to reach the entire surface of the garden.⁶⁶

The earliest mention of the *bostāns* in Yedikule occurs in the 1635 endowment deed of Bayram Pasha, then viceroy of Istanbul.⁶⁷ Bayram Pasha also endowed several *bostāns* in the upper valley of the Lykus stream (just outside the city walls), on land then controlled by the charitable foundation of Sultan Bayezid II, to which the viceroy's newly created foundation paid annual rents.⁶⁸ The endowed wells, waterwheels, and trees were his private property. Bayram Pasha's large investment in land and direct involvement in growing produce for profit may have been a strategy to mitigate losses from the diminishing value of the Ottoman silver *aķçe* during the rising inflation of the 1620s

63 Shopov & Han, "Osmanlı İstanbul'unda", 35.

64 Ibid., 36.

65 Nine *zīrā'* in circumference and 18 *zīrā'* deep; see İKS, vol. 19, Bâb Mahkemesi 46, fol. 39b–1.

66 On the remaining 17th-century *bostāns* in Istanbul today, which range in size from around 5000 to 10,000 m², see Kaldjian, "Istanbul's Bostans", 284–304; and White, Shopov, & Ostrovich, "An Archaeology of Sustenance".

67 Shopov & Han, "Osmanlı İstanbul'unda", 36.

68 BOA, TT.d. 759, fol. 38.



FIGURE 11.3 Langa *bostān* complex depicted as a rectangular patch of green in the middle-lower right, framed by a wall. View of Istanbul *intra muros*, in Matrakçı Nasuh, *Beyān-ı Menāzil-i Sefer-i Trākeym-i Sultān Süleymān Hān*, opaque watercolor, gold and silver on paper. İÜK, TY 5964, 8v



FIGURE 11.4 Istanbul as depicted in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*, woodcut. Basel, 1544. The Yedikule area is marked with the white frame

and 1630s.⁶⁹ By the mid-17th century, Yedikule *bostāns* were briskly exchanged on Istanbul's real estate market. For example, in 1667, a certain Andriya sold to one Bayezid Beg a *bostān* in Yedikule for 1500 *esed ğürüş* (180,000 *ağçe*). This *bostān* was constructed just outside the city walls near the Yedikule gate, on a plot of land endowed to the sultan's foundation of Ayasofya.⁷⁰ The court record characterizes the trees of the *bostān* as private property, *mülk*, and the land itself as being under the control of the Ayasofya charitable foundation, to which Andriya paid a yearly rent of just 30 *ağçe*. According to both seller and buyer, the annual rent of this *bostān* was 5000 *ağçe*, though Bayezid Beg accused Andriya of falsely promising that the *bostān* would yield 10,000 *ağçe*. In Yedikule, as elsewhere in Istanbul, *bostāns* were attractive investments, and were subleased to people who then organized agricultural production on them.

69 On the rising inflation in this period, see Sahillioğlu, "XVII. Asrın İlk Yarısında", 229.

70 The sale of the *bostān* was disputed by the buyer, who claimed that the market garden he had purchased from Andriya "did not yield anything". See İKS, vol. 17, Bab Mahkemesi 3, fol. 95b–6. The moat of Istanbul city walls was also a site of several *bostāns* by the 18th century; see Han, "İstanbul ve Galata", 35–40.

4 Changing Diets

In the Galenic-Avicennan medicine, plants were characterized as either hot or cold, dry or moist; and depending on these qualities, plants were believed to have different effects on the body and its four humors. One of the earliest Ottoman works on medicine, *Yādigār fi'l-Ṭıbb*, which was written most likely in the early 15th century and made extensive use of Ibn Sina's (d. 1037) and Ibn al-Baytar's (d. 1248) classical works on medicine and pharmacopoeia, would prescribe eating garlic and mint, which are hot and dry in nature, following a meal with cold and moist foods such as cucumbers and squash.⁷¹ In the late 15th and early 16th centuries, works on medicine and documents such as the expenditure records of Istanbul's hospitals show that vegetables and fruits were commonly used in the prevention and treatment of various diseases, including the plague.⁷² Yet the development of urban *bostān* complexes and the specialization of their produce, including the creation of new local cultivars (like the "large" Langa cucumber) with specific qualities (taste, smell, color, texture, size), was related to new tastes that were concerned with much more than just these plants' medicinal benefits or their effect on the body.

By the mid-16th century, when Langa had begun specializing in the cultivation of vegetables, fresh vegetables were also being purchased in significant quantities for members of the growing imperial administration. A list of foods purchased in 1555/56 for the royal pages in the İbrahim Pasha Palace, located next to the Hippodrome, records that 120,949 *ağçe* were spent that year on 64,681 *kıyye* of meat (nearly 200 kg per day),⁷³ while 33,897 *ağçe* were spent on vegetables: onions from the city of İznik, spinach (for which 8400 *ağçe* were spent alone), leeks, chard, cabbages, parsley, purslane, eggplant, squash, garlic, tarragon, carrots, turnips, and more.⁷⁴ The sprawling Süleymaniye mosque complex was completed in 1558 and encompassed a mosque, college, a hospital, a hospice, a bathhouse. That year, 5277 *kıyye* (around 6700 kg) of onions were recorded among the expenses for the mosque complex's soup kitchen, along with parsley, squash, and unripe grapes.⁷⁵ We should remember that 18 *bostāns* in Langa were endowed to the Süleymaniye mosque complex, and that these produce gardens were closely linked to the expanding palace administration.

71 İbn Şerif, *Yādigār-ı İbn Serif*, s.k., Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, 989, fol. 10a.

72 Shopov, "Books on Agriculture", 563. Fruits and vegetables (including their seeds) were used as antidotes for plague in 15th and 16th-century Cairo; see Lewicka, *Food and Foodways*, 287, n. 758; 462, n. 23; and 481, n. 96.

73 One *kıyye* being equal to 1.28 kg.

74 Barkan, *Süleymaniye Cami ve İmareti İnşaatı*, 262–63.

75 Barkan, "Süleymaniye Cami ve İmareti Tesislerine Ait", 122.

Bostāns not only generated income but also supported the dietary regimes of the new elites in the capital.

The consumption of vegetables and the proliferation of *bostāns* in Istanbul occurred within an economic context in which the consumption of other foods was also shifting. In the second half of the 16th century, and particularly in the last two decades of the century, the Ottoman *aķçe* was debased, and inflation spiked dramatically, causing the price of meat to increase. Already in the 1560s, the Ottoman government had begun establishing official rates for sheep arriving in Istanbul from the Balkans, a step likely taken to curb the practice of middlemen buying early in the season in order to inflate prices.⁷⁶ By the beginning of the 17th century, meat was no longer being purchased by the Süleymaniye public kitchen.⁷⁷ During the same period, the sultanic charitable complex of Süleymaniye also eliminated, likely as a cost-cutting strategy, its earlier practice of providing food for students, instead distributing payments for meat and other foods.⁷⁸ Some of the earlier reliance on meat may have been supplemented by fish as well as vegetables. The 1640 price list for the market in Istanbul, drawn up in response to inflation, lists 25 species of fish, many of them fished from the Bosphorus, a crucial waterway and one of the largest fisheries in the world through which fish seasonally migrates between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea.⁷⁹ The same market price list also records, for the first time, two different varieties of lettuce, one specified as bitter, *acı marul*, and the other simply as lettuce, *marul*.⁸⁰ By contrast, in an earlier price list, from 1600—likewise drawn up following the earlier inflation crisis of the 1590s—only one kind of lettuce had been recorded.⁸¹ By the 19th century, the Yedikule *bostān* complex would become locally famous for its juicy variety of lettuce. The process of agricultural specialization in Istanbul that would lead to the creation of “Yedikule lettuce” was already underway in the 17th century. New vegetables were also taking root in the city, such as okra, whose cultivation in Istanbul took off in the 17th century and which was grown in *bostāns* along the Bosphorus.⁸²

76 Greenwood, “Istanbul’s Meat Provisioning”, 140–41.

77 Güran, *Ekonomik ve Malî Yönleriyle Vakıflar*, 45.

78 Güran, *Ekonomik ve Malî Yönleriyle Vakıflar*, 45–46.

79 Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi*, 92–93. For earlier price lists, see Kütükoğlu, “1009 (1600) Tarihli Narh”, 1–86; see also Sahillioğlu, “Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi”, 36–40, 50–53, 54–56.

80 Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi*, 97.

81 Kütükoğlu, “1009 (1600) Tarihli Narh”, 28.

82 Bilgin, *Osmanlı Sarayı Mutfağı*, 259.

By the second half of the 17th century, Istanbul's *bostāns*, as well as those adjacent to the city and those located in the wider Marmara Sea region, were cultivating so many varieties of produce and using so much labor that new trade groups (*ehl-i hîrfet*) were formed around them. In 1682, a total of 62 new trade groups in Istanbul had to be abolished, most likely as a result of opposition from already established guilds whose economic interests were threatened.⁸³ Some of the trade groups banned in 1682 included groups related to particular varieties of produce, such as sellers of spinach, sellers of early cherries, sellers of finger grapes (*parmak üzümü*), sellers of cantaloupes, and sellers of watermelon, as well as produce wholesalers (*biturme-i besâtin*).⁸⁴ The negotiations between the different trade groups for the control of Istanbul's vegetable markets is also reflected in a contract, renewed at the Istanbul court in 1685, between the trade group of vegetable sellers and the sellers at the city's open-air markets. According to the contract, the latter group agreed not to sell squash, eggplant, cabbage, spinach, turnip, carrot, radish, spring onion, garlic, grape leaves, cucumber, lettuce, dill, tarragon, or celery.⁸⁵ The market for vegetables in Istanbul was highly competitive, and the lines were constantly being drawn and re-drawn for who could sell what, and where. The gardeners of the *bostāns* would soon themselves enter into the fray; in 1726/27, Istanbul's *bâğçevân* won permission to sell their produce themselves, adding further complexity to the vegetable market in the city.⁸⁶

5 City and Countryside

The rise of Istanbul's *bostāns* cannot fully be understood without examining related agricultural developments in the countryside, where urbanites were establishing farm estates (*çiftlik*). By the mid-16th century, the usufruct or the "right to use" (*hak-ı taşarruf*) large areas of land surrounding Istanbul was in the hands of new kinds of tenants such as city-based Ottoman officials, merchants, craftsmen, or military personnel, who financed farm estates there. While

83 Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul*, 129–30.

84 Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul*, 269–70.

85 İKS, vol. 19, Bab Mahkemesi 46, fol. 107a–3.

86 This permission was given in response to excessive speculation on the price of vegetables by whole-sellers; see İKS, vol. 21, İstanbul Mahkemesi 24, fol. 11b–2. In earlier periods, all of the produce from the *bostāns* and that arriving from outside the city had to enter the royal vegetable office (*hâşşa sebze hâne*) located along the Golden Horn (*Haliç*) and from there distributed to the palace and to the city's vegetable sellers; see Bilgin, "Osmanlı Dönemi İstanbul Bostanları", 87.

bostāns in the city specialized in vegetables and fruits, the farms in Istanbul's countryside tended to specialize in dairy and livestock production, as well as fodder—some of which was certainly imported in the city to feed the hundreds of horses that powered the waterwheels in the *bostāns*. Like the *bostāns* that emerged within the city walls, many of the farm estates in this district were established on land controlled by sultanic charitable foundations in Istanbul. If the rise of the *bostāns* was connected to new leasing practices for waqf land, the establishment of farm estates in Istanbul's countryside was made possible by the loss of the usufruct over the land by customary tenants or *re'āyā*.

A survey, dated to the summer of 1545, of the lands endowed to the charitable foundation of Sultan Mehmed II in Istanbul (first established 1472), records numerous farms (*çiftlik*) in the countryside of neighboring towns such as Silivri, Çorlu, and Kırkkilise.⁸⁷ In two villages—Yatmalu and Bosna, about 60 km west of Istanbul—nearly all of the land was leased by urbanites. In Yatmalu, there were seven customary peasant-tenants or *re'āyā*, while 20 farms (*çiftlik*) were in the hands of urban elites. Each of these farms is specified in the survey by the name of the person controlling the usufruct and the number of *çift* units it encompassed. The largest ones measured three *çift* units (or approximately 30 hectares) each—that is, they would have been created by combining what three peasant families would have held as the usufruct of land. These farm estates are recorded under names with titles such as *Çelebi*, *Beg*, and *Silāhdār*, indicating members of the Ottoman elite.⁸⁸ The same survey records 12 *çiftliks*—each of them measuring five *çift* units—in the village of Bosna, which received its name from the peasants forcibly moved from Bosnia during the reign of Mehmed II (r. 1453–82).⁸⁹ The Haslar district that bordered Istanbul to the north and west, and which was completely endowed in 1505 to the charitable foundation of sultan Bayezid II, specialized in both viticulture and livestock. A court record shows a sale transaction in 1586 for one such farm estate, in the village of Akpınar in the northern part of the Haslar district. The farm belonged to one Mehmed Çelebi, whose name indicates an elite status. At the time of the sale, it consisted of two houses, a vineyard, a fruit orchard, a well, a furnace, a barn, 10 geese, a chicken coop with 30 chickens, two brick stables housing 32 buffalo, farming implements, large amounts of stored fodder, and the usufruct (*hak-ı taşarruf*) of lands that were controlled by the waqfs of Sultan Mehmed II and Sultan Bayezid II.⁹⁰

87 BOA, TT.d. 240.

88 BOA, TT.d. 240, fol. 117.

89 BOA, TT.d. 240, fol. 118.

90 İKS, vol. 22, Eyüb Mahkemesi (Havass-ı Refia), no. 3, fol. 27b–2.

The *bostāns* reflected a much broader interest in agriculture among Istanbul's ruling class, members of which were also investing in farm estates outside the city as well as increasingly specialized agricultural production further afield. For example, already in the early 16th century, high-ranking Ottoman officials had financed the construction of canals and mills for the lucrative rice production in the Ottoman Balkans, particularly in the region around the city of Filibe (a major source for rice consumed in the capital), endowing these properties to their waqfs in Istanbul.⁹¹ The *bostāns* were thus part of the formation of a much larger imperial agricultural geography, in which shifts in control over land were transforming ecosystems and landscapes. This occurred in tandem with new patterns of consumption and, as we will now see, migration.

6 Migrant Labor

Growing enough vegetables in a *bostān* to make a profit requires significant irrigation and labor. It is thus not surprising that the emergence of Istanbul's *bostāns* coincided with an influx of migrant laborers, who lived and worked in the *bostāns* and whose presence shaped the urban neighborhoods in which the *bostāns* were located. The 1734 survey that, again, registered 1381 gardeners then employed at *bostāns* within the walled city, shows that most of these laborers (whom archival sources interchangeably call *bāğçevān* or *bostāncı*) originated in Ottoman districts in western Macedonia and southern Albania.⁹² It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when this migration pattern, which continued into the early 20th century, first began. However, Ottoman documents related to these regions indicate the flight of peasants and their loss of land already by the end of the 16th century. An order from the Imperial Council sent in 1606 to the inspector of the province of Ohrid, in western Macedonia, summarizes the state of affairs in the province. It states that the *re'āyā* were abandoning their land, having gotten into debt. The peasants had been receiving loans, for which the creditors then forced higher interest rates and took more money and grain than initially agreed upon.⁹³ Already in the 1582 tax survey of Ohrid province, the usufruct of some Christian customary tenant landholdings (*baştina*) and some land controlled by Muslim customary tenants in the province had already been transferred to members of the military class as well as to

91 Barkan & Ayverdi, *İstanbul Vakıfları*, 67–8, 366–7, 428; Shopov, “Cities of Rice”.

92 Shopov & Han, “Osmanlı İstanbul’unda”, 36.

93 Šopova, *Makedonija vo XVI i XVII vek*, 87–88.

prominent Muslim women.⁹⁴ In the first half of the 17th century, urbanites also began establishing commercial farm estates in the countryside of Bitola, a region in western Macedonia some 50 km east of Ohrid and 800 km west of Istanbul.⁹⁵ The waves of migrations that began in the late 16th century and continued into the early 20th century were not due to some magnetic attraction held by the capital, but rather were spurred by a loss of land, as wealthy urbanites appropriated the usufruct of the farmland in the countryside, displacing or competing with small peasant landholdings.⁹⁶ A number of the migrants that left villages in western Macedonia and southern Albania in the early modern period found work in the *bostāns* of Istanbul's neighboring towns, or as grocers, street pavers, or attendants in Istanbul's public baths.⁹⁷

In Istanbul, these migrant agriculturalists, who brought with them myriad agricultural techniques, became part of the social fabric of the city. In 1583, according to an order from the Imperial Council, the Langa gardeners had complained to the Imperial council that, with the opening of an additional gate in the city walls, people were gaining free entrance to their produce gardens,⁹⁸ drinking wine, and taking their vegetables without paying. The Imperial order, which ruled in the favor of the gardeners and directed the Istanbul judge and the *subaşı* (the official in charge of public order) to shut down the gate, calls these interlopers *celeb tā'ifesi* (livestock dealers), an indicator of their rural origin. Indeed, by the second half of the 16th century, contemporary Ottoman writers such as Selaniki (d. 1600) were already discussing the worrisome influx of peasants from the countryside into the city.⁹⁹ Taxation also emerged as an issue for the gardeners working in the city. In 1663, both Muslim and Christian members of the gardeners' guild resolved, in court, a dispute with the supervisor of the guild over a sum collected in the name of a tax, an example of the growing tax burden on workers in *bostāns*, but also of the ability of the

94 Stojanovski, *Makedonija vo Turskoto Srednovekovie*, 109–14.

95 For examples, see the kadi court records of Bitola/Manastir discussed in Sokolovski, *Turski Dokumenti*, 94–95, 156–57; Boškov, *Turski Dokumenti*, 24–25; DARM, BS, no. 18, fol. 49a; DARM, BS, no. 19, fols. 54b–56a.

96 The farm owners in many instances refused to pay their “share” (*tevzī*) of the tax burden that the central government assigned to the district; see McGowan, *Economic Life*, 149 and 162. For a view that sees migration in the Ottoman Balkans after 1600 as unfolding in a “world of choice” that was “open to the enterprising individual and it must not be supposed that movement was always or only triggered by political, environmental or Malthusian crises”, see Murphey, “Population Movements”, 90.

97 Faroqhi, “Migration into Eighteenth Century ‘Greater Istanbul’”, 172–177; Ergin, “The Albanian *Tellak* Connection”, 231–56.

98 BOA, MD 51, fol. 42/133.

99 Selaniki, *Tarih*, ed. İpşirli, 4; see also Kafadar, “Les troubles monétaires”, 395.

gardeners to collectively organize themselves and navigate through the Ottoman legal system.¹⁰⁰

By the early 18th century, there were more than a thousand gardeners in the walled city of Istanbul and several thousands more working in the city's immediate surroundings. There were thousands of wells, cisterns, and waterwheels powered by horses. Even the gardens of the mosques of Sultan Mehmed II and Sultan Ahmed I, buildings that formed part of Istanbul's famous silhouette and are typically associated with the city's urbanization in the early modern period, were leased and tilled in 1734 by groups of migrant laborers.¹⁰¹ Istanbul had become a city of *bostāns*. Indeed, the 16th-century scholar Kınalızade Ali (d. 1571) in his *Ahlāk-ı Alâî* (Exalted Ethics) compared the ideal, virtuous city to a *bostān* tended by the ruler who as a gardener plucks the undesirable weeds (*nevābit*) and throws them outside the city.¹⁰²

7 Conclusion

This article has tried to show that the formation of early modern Istanbul is inseparable from the history of the city's *bostāns*. Already in the first decades following the Ottoman conquest, the Islamic charitable foundation complexes established in Istanbul included gardens where fruits and vegetables were grown and, in many cases, sold in the city's markets. This agricultural revival of Istanbul following the conquest also carried symbolic meanings, demonstrating the city's viability as a capital. During a time when critics of the Ottoman imperial project and its centralizing policies depicted Istanbul as an unsuitable site for a capital ridden with famine, plague and earthquake, defenders of Istanbul could point to its agricultural productivity, showing that it was a "fertile ground" not only for vegetables but also for Ottoman society and empire.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, at a time when fresh fruits and vegetables played an important role in Istanbulites' diets and medical practices, hundreds of *bostāns* were established in Istanbul, particularly in areas of the city that lay in the path of floodwaters and fires and were therefore considered unsafe or unsuitable for building. During this same period, the emergence of life-long

100 The dispute was resolved by a settlement recorded in the court according to which the gardeners absolved the supervisor in return for his voluntary stepping down from his position; see İKS, vol. 16, İstanbul Mahkemesi 12, fol. 57b–4.

101 BOA, D.BŞM 1841, fols. 16, 53.

102 Kınalızade, *Ahlāk-ı Alâî*, ed. Koç, 458.

and inheritable lease contracts for waqf land helped to enable the formation of an urban elite that accumulated wealth by establishing *bostāns* in the city and its immediate surroundings. Istanbul's produce gardens were further leased to short-term entrepreneurial tenants who organized labor and production in such a way as to maximize profit and be able to pay rents. Crucial to this process were the migrants who, displaced from their own agricultural regions, were arriving from western Macedonia and southern Albania and performed nearly all of the work on the *bostāns*. Rather than as marginal or accidental features of the city's layout, Istanbul's *bostāns* should therefore be seen as a fulcrum of the social and ecological formation of the early modern city.

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