

**THE BLACK DEATH IN EARLY OTTOMAN TERRITORIES:
1347-1550**

A Master's Thesis

by

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THE DEPARTMENT OF
HISTORY
BILKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

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The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Bilkent University

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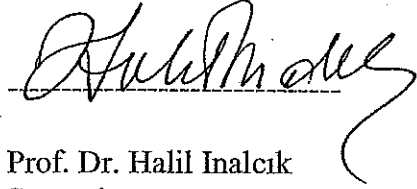
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

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THE DEPARTMENT OF
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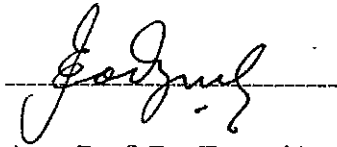
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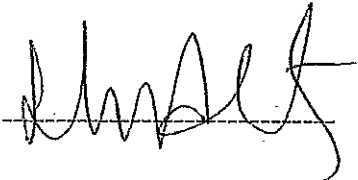
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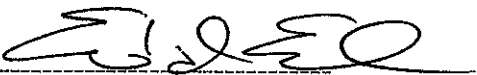
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ABSTRACT

THE BLACK DEATH IN EARLY OTTOMAN TERRITORIES: 1347-1555

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May 2009

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the possible impact of the Black Death on the early Ottoman society. Firstly, a temporal and spatial analysis of the outbreaks was established using contemporary Ottoman, Byzantine and Latin sources. In view of the territorial expansion of the Ottoman state in the period studied, information on the adjacent territories was included.

The response towards plague was then evaluated taking into account the information obtained on the frequency and geographical distribution of the disease and contrasted with certain previous theories on the impact of plague on Ottoman society.

The study reveals that the high frequency of plague outbreaks identified by this study can be linked to a behavior of overall acceptance and to specific actions of an administrative and religious nature.

Keywords: plague, epidemic, Black Death, social response, policy, chronology

ÖZET

KARA ÖLÜM VE ERKEN OSMANLILAR: 1347-1550

Marien, Gisèle

Yuksek Lisans, Tarih Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Halil İNALCIK

Mayıs 2009

Bu tezin amacı Veba'nın erken dönem Osmanlı toplumu üzerindeki muhtelif etkilerini ortaya koymaktır. İlk olarak veba salgınlarının çağdaş Osmanlı, Bizans ve Latin kaynaklarını kullanarak kısa dönemli ve mekansal analizi yapılmıştır. Çalışılan dönemdeki Osmanlı bölgesel genişlemesi göz önünde bulundurularak yeni fethedilen topraklara komşu bölgeler bu çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir.

Veba'nın Osmanlı toplumu üzerindeki etkileriyle ilgili bazı eski teorilerin tutarsızlığı hastalığın görülme sıklığı ve bölgelere göre coğrafi dağılımıyla ilgili eldeki bilgiler dikkate alınarak değerlendirildi.

Bu çalışmanın sonuçları göstermektedir ki Veba salgınlarının görülme sıklığı toplumdaki genel bir kabulleniş kadar idari ve dînî yapı ile de doğrudan bağlantılı bir sonuçtur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Veba, Salgın, Kara Ölüm, Sosyal Tepki, Politika, Kronoloji

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ÖZET	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II A BIOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC VIEW OF PLAGUE	5
2.1. Modern Concepts of Plague	5
2.2. A Historical Overview of the Plague Pandemics	5
CHAPTER III SOURCES OF THE BLACK DEATH IN BYZANTINE AND OTTOMAN TERRITORIES.....	14
3.1. Historiography	14
3.2. Primary Sources	17
3.3. Aspects of Terminology	36
CHAPTER IV THE OUTBREAK AND DIFFUSION OF THE BLACK DEATH	40
4.1. The Arrival of the Black Death in Byzantine and Ottoman Territories ...	40
4.2. Subsequent Outbreaks - Spatial and Temporal Patterns.....	49
CHAPTER V THE RESPONSE TO PLAGUE	60
5.1. Individual and Collective Patterns of Behavior	60
5.2. Religious Response	73
5.3. Policies and Politics with Regard to Plague	81
CHAPTER VI CONCLUSIONS	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY	115
APPENDIX I : TRANSLATION ENTRIES OF SANUDO'S DIARY.....	124

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen a marked increase of interest in the Black Death, the medieval bubonic plague pandemic that arrived in Europe in 1347. Some explanation of this revival can be traced to the 9/11 attacks, which were followed by an anthrax scare and the subsequent avian influenza pandemic, both of which intensified academic interest in lethal epidemics. Both historians and scientists have produced a number of monographs and articles ranging from the academic to the spectacularly popular ¹. In the wake of this activity, some Ottoman scholars have signalled² the lack of studies dealing with the Black Death in the early Ottoman period. Indeed, apart from the efforts of Lowry and Schamiloğlu³ no recent publication was exclusively devoted to plague in early Ottoman history. Both authors claim the paucity of sources to be an obstacle to the study of the disease in that period ⁴. Though the absence of any systematic approach of the

¹ See Susan Scott and Christopher Duncan in *the Return of the Black Death - The World's Greatest Serial Killer* West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2004, passim.

² For example, see Heath Lowry, "Pushing the Stone Uphill: The Impact of Bubonic Plague on Ottoman Urban Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* XXIII (2003): 93-132.

³ Schamiloğlu, Uli "The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: The Black Death in Medieval Anatolia and its Impact on Turkish Civilization." In Negin Yavari, Lawrence G. Potter and Jean-Marc Van Oppenheim, eds., *Views from the Edge: Essays in Honor of Richard W. Bulliet*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

⁴ Indeed, Schamiloğlu goes as far as to claim that "The Black Death is not mentioned in the Ottoman sources." This remark stands in odd contrast to the complaint of Babinger in *Die Aufzeichnungen des Genuesen Iacopo de Promontorio - de Campis über den Osmanenstaat um 1475*. Sitzungsberichte no. 8. München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1957, 5, that except for praise of the ruling dynasty and the brief mentioning of natural disasters

subject is evident, plague has been mentioned in a number of publications as a causative agent in the historical process. However, any assertions concerning the impact of plague epidemics on Ottoman history are hampered by the fact that no studies are available that try to elucidate the patterns of frequency of outbreaks and their exact localisation.

In view of this apparent void, it is the aim of this thesis to bring together a number of data that illustrate the impact of the disease on the early Ottoman society from the first Black Death outbreak to the first half of the 16th century. The relative abundance of sources for the latter half of the 16th and for the 17th century and the territorial expansion of the Ottoman Empire in that period would have widened the scope of this inquiry too much, and made the amount of material too unwieldy to process within the framework of a master's thesis.

The Black Death was not the first pandemic to reach the region under investigation. The Justinian plague pandemic had preceded it, shaping attitudes towards it and providing local populations with some knowledge of the disease. In order to appraise this influence and to understand the interplay of human behavior and the promulgation of the disease, the first chapter and introductory section of this thesis deals with the biological fundamentals of the disease as well as with its place in general human history. The next section then focuses on the Black Death and the Ottomans specifically. Chapter two gives an overview of the historiography of the subject, as well as methodological considerations of the sources. Chapter three analyses the way the epidemic arrived and spread in the Ottoman territory and the occurrence of subsequent outbreaks with a chronology of plague outbreaks in Ottoman territory for the period under consideration.

such as plague and earthquakes, the early Ottoman chronicles offer no information on Ottoman society.

Finally, chapter four considers the response of the Ottoman society and its rulers towards the disease.

In view of the paucity of source material relating to the Ottomans in the 14th century, this study has also included Byzantine and Latin sources of that period in the expectation that the authors might reveal useful information about the influence of the plague epidemics on the Ottomans. Furthermore, as the Byzantine territory morphed into an Ottoman empire, the latter retained an important Greek population with specific attitudes towards the disease that were studied through the Byzantine literature. For the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, the diaries of Marino Sanudo proved very helpful in order to provide insight into the occurrence of plague outbreaks and their impact on the demography of Istanbul.

As a consequence, a variety of primary sources were used. These include travellers' accounts, Ottoman historical works, the correspondance of foreign merchants and finally the registers of the Ottomans and their non-Muslim subjects. In order to study Ottoman attitudes toward plague, a specific kind of medico-theological literature called plague tracts were studied ⁵. As Dols⁶ remarked, the Arabic plague tracts written after the Black Death contained historical information on the prevalence and chronology of the disease. The Ottoman tracts that formed part of the same tradition could therefore reasonably be expected to contribute to the chronological effort. To better understand the practical fieldwork of medicine, a limited number of contemporary medical works of a more general nature were

⁵ When written in Ottoman, the plague tracts were studied in the original language. Those tracts that were originally written in Arabic were investigated by means of later translations into the Ottoman language.

⁶ Michael W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977, 18.

also consulted. In view of this classification of the source material, it has to be remarked that the activities of the early Ottoman scholars defy modern attempts of categorisation and that one single author often wrote works on theology, history and medicine.

When attempting to locate plague outbreaks in time, an obvious difficulty is the question of the identification of the disease. This is problematic at two levels. Firstly, a source might incorrectly describe an epidemic as being plague. Secondly, the denomination of the disease itself can create confusion : a number of different names were given to the disease. In order to obtain a greater degree of certainty, two methods were used. The first consists of not relying exclusively on a secondary source and tracing an identification back to the original observation. The second method consists of identifying cross-references of different sources to a same outbreak. Although it is tempting to assume that the outbreak of plague in one region automatically implies prevalence of the disease in an adjacent one, this approach is methodologically incorrect and might lead to misleading conclusions. Care was therefore taken to clearly identify the afflicted area to which any primary source refers.

In addition to the possible confusion about outbreaks resulting from faulty identifications or etymological ambiguity within the period considered, some current historians⁷ question the validity of the identification of the Black Death as a pandemic caused by the agent of modern-day plague, that is *Yersinia pestis*. The discussion of this argument is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is my opinion that precisely the lack of historical data contributes to the confusion about the

⁷ Scott and Duncan, *Return of the Black Death: The World's Greatest Serial Killer*, 184 .

epidemiology of the Black Death. Furthermore, as Dols noted, whatever the agent causing it, the disease had a long and well-documented history in the Middle-East and was therefore easily identifiable by any physician with a formal training in Arabic medicine.

A final caveat concerns the scope of the material used. Although it was attempted to consult as many of the sources available, a number of them were left uninvestigated because of linguistic incapacity or problems of accessibility. It can be hoped that the effort of this thesis forms a preliminary body onto which subsequent identifications can be grafted.

CHAPTER II

A BIOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL VIEW OF PLAGUE

2.1. Modern Concepts of Plague

In order to evaluate the sociological impact of the plague outbreaks on medieval society, it is important to have a basic knowledge of the epidemiology and ethiology of plague. Different clinical manifestations of the disease caused by the bacteria *Yersinia pestis* are known: bubonic plague, characterized by the appearance of buboes or swellings of the lymph nodes⁸, septicaemic plague⁹ or an overwhelming infection of the bloodstream and primary pneumonic plague, resulting in pneumonia.¹⁰ The latter form is the most fulminant and fatal form of plague. It is also the type that spreads readily from one human to another through

⁸ Buboes can become as big as an orange and develop especially in the armpits, neck and groins.

⁹ In septicaemic plague, the plague bacteria are massively present in the patient's blood. This form has a very acute course with the patient often dying in a matter of hours without developing other symptoms. As with the bubonic form septicaemic plague is insect-borne, but in view of its increased presence in the blood, it is yet more transmissible by fleas -see Hirst, L. Fabian. *The Conquest of Plague: A Study of the Evolution of Epidemiology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953, 29.

¹⁰ For unknown reasons, some bubonic patients can develop secondary pneumonic symptoms, making them directly contagious and creating an epidemic of air-borne primary pneumonic plague. (Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 30). Moreover, Hirst lists other types of plague, such as the cellulocutaneous or carbuncular version, where skin lesions are formed, the tonsillar or anginal form and the vesicular type. The vesicular form is characterized by pustules, called blains in the sources, that are reminiscent of smallpox. The dark-coloured tokens appearing on the skin of patients were yet another symptom of cellulocutaneous plague.

droplet infection by coughing. Epidemics in man usually involve the bubonic form of the disease for which the incubation period is 2 to 5 days, but there is always a small number of patients with primary septicaemic plague. The mortality rate among patients that are not treated with antibiotics ranges from 60 % to 90 %.

In view of the rapid development and extreme mortality of the disease, it is easy to understand the awe and destruction that the plague outbreaks caused. It is no wonder that a whole panoply of drug preparations as well as more esoteric remedies were used to fight the disease. However, mankind had to await the arrival of antibiotics in the 20th century to be able to treat the disease effectively. In spite of modern medicine, the disease has not been eradicated to this day, with sporadic cases reported to the WHO each year wherever reservoirs of wild animals persist. The most recent occurrence of a plague epidemic took place in India during the 1970's.

Plague is essentially a disease of rodents, and especially burrowing rodents. In many parts of the world, the disease has now established itself among this type of mammals and these pockets of presence within the wildlife are called wild foci. Transmission of the disease among the rodents of a colony occurs through cannibalism, wild rodent fleas, and possibly contaminated soil.^{11 12} Direct contagion through coughed droplets of the pneumonic version of the disease is the air-borne way to spread the disease.¹³ Although the primary hosts of plague are rodents, it can spread to infect many other kinds of mammals including man.

¹¹ Also see the *WHO/CDS/CSR/EDC/99.2 Plague Manual pages 11 and passim.*

¹² Wendy Orent *Plague, The Mysterious Past and Terrifying Future of the World's most Dangerous Disease*, New York: Free Press, 2004, 51, describes the observation of French scientists that when an infected marmot dies in its burrow, it decays and the plague bacteria that survive in the suitable moist and cool environment, lie in wait for another animal to come and live in the burrow.

¹³ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 29.

Hunting and flea bites¹⁴ are the most obvious scenario for cross-species transmission. Some mammals are especially vulnerable to the disease, such as the roof rat (*Rattus rattus*), the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) and again man. Due to human travelling, wild foci of plague can now be found around the world on all continents.¹⁵ However, because of climate conditions, certain places do not support reservoirs of wild animals. These include the polar regions, the colder parts of the temperate climate zone, large areas of continuous forest (such as in the tropics) and high mountain ranges. Most importantly, they are absent in Europe.¹⁶

The presence of wild foci is important to understand the historical appearances of plague in human populations. The disease can fester among man for a long time, sometimes regionally, sometimes over continents and then disappear again for some time. However, the presence of infected animals in the wild can at any time kick-start another epidemic. Recently identified wild animal reservoirs that might have played a role in the different pandemics include :

- different rodent species in India,
- gerbils in the Kurdistan and Hamadan area in Iran, between the River Volga and the Ural, in the Transcaucasian lowlands, in the central Asian desert,
- marmots: in the Tian-Shan, a mountainous area of Kazakhstan and Kirgasia, in the Pamir- Altai valley, in Tibet, south of the Himalaya mountain range, in Inner Mongolia.
- susliks in the northwestern Caspian region.¹⁷

¹⁴ However, B. Joseph Hinnebusch furthers that the transmission by fleas is inefficient, possibly due to the recent adaptation of this strategy of transmission by *Yersinia pestis*. See his article *The Evolution of Flea-borne Transmission in Yersinia pestis* in *Yersinia*, Molecular and Cellular Biology, Horizon Bioscience, 2004, 49.

¹⁵ Plague only reached the American continent with ships from Hong Kong during the last pandemic in the 19th century.

¹⁶ according to the *WHO Plague Manual*, pp. 11-12

¹⁷ the list is non-exhaustive - for further documentation see *WHO Plague Manual* pp. 67-84

At present, it is impossible to know when those foci became contaminated with the disease and so it is difficult to assess their possible role with regard to the different pandemics.¹⁸ However, that current wild plague foci are so widespread is not without importance for the interpretation of the historical sources of the plague pandemics.¹⁹

Plague is not only versatile in the way of its transmission and in the variety of animals that it can infect. It also displays a whole range of widely different symptoms, which has led to a categorization of various types of plague, such as bubonic plague, pneumonic plague, and septicaemic plague²⁰. This versatility did not only influence the way it could spread, but also the reactions and perception of those that were confronted with it.

As we saw above, several mechanisms are deployed by the plague bacteria to ensure its spread. These interplay with different human actions. Hunting ensures the first contact with a wild reservoir. Other rodents that live in close proximity with people can also catch the disease and so form a *domesticated* reservoir. Man can spread plague to other communities through travel by means of different mechanisms. Firstly, he can carry the disease himself. He can in turn facilitate the spread of his *domesticated* reservoir through shipping. Fleas that form the vector between individuals can also be transported, either carried by him or his domesticated reservoir or hidden in certain goods, such as cereals, clothes or bales of cotton or cloth. Finally, the bacteria can probably sustain a prolonged survival

¹⁸ Although Mc Neill in *Plagues and People* 1998, New York: Anchor Books, 152, asserts that 'Mongol movements across previously isolating distances in all probability brought the bacillus *Pasteurella pestis* to the rodents of the Eurasian steppe for the first time.'

¹⁹ Several of the authors on plague mention stories by chroniclers which claim that the Black Death started in the land of Cathay or also in India. See for example Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*. Collins, 1969, 13-14.

²⁰ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 29-31.

in certain goods, such as fur from infected animals providing the environmental conditions are adequate.²¹

Hirst emphasizes the great difference in infectiousness between pneumonic and bubonic plague, the first being extremely contagious and the latter almost not.²² Wendy Orent postulates that the passage through different reservoirs yields different types of plague: plague caught from marmots results mostly in pneumonic plague²³, whereas plague caught from rats results in bubonic plague.²⁴ The combination of these two factors would lead to the following pattern of spread: men become infected by marmots and develop pneumonic plague, which being highly contagious, they quickly pass on to others. Simultaneously, rats become also infected.²⁵ This situation leads initially to two waves of plague, a pneumonic one, followed by a bubonic one.²⁶ As the epidemic further spreads, one of the two forms can be more prevalent, according to the way the disease travelled or yet again the season.²⁷ Moreover, unusual meteorological conditions such as exceptionally warm and humid weather have been observed to facilitate the spread of plague in temperate climate zones.²⁸

²¹ This observation has been made in historical sources, but to my knowledge has not been investigated recently. However, two arguments plead for it: firstly, the fact that the bacteria can survive in infected burrows and secondly, that modern epidemiology routinely mentions fur from freshly killed animals as a source of contamination (see WHO *Plague Manual* page 12)

²² Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 29.

²³ They appear to be the only rodents to display this form of the disease.

²⁴ In *Plague, The Mysterious Past and Terrifying Future of the World's most Dangerous Disease*, 2004, 60.

²⁵ In my opinion, a very likely way of spreading the infection to rats would be through exposure to human plague-infected cadavers. The sources clearly show that during major epidemics, disposing of the victims' bodies in an adequate way was near-impossible.

²⁶ Such a pattern was indeed observed by the French surgeon Guy de Chauliac during the first Black Death outbreak in 1348 in Lyons; as quoted by Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 32.

²⁷ According to Hirst, who bases himself both on contemporary and historical evidence, pneumonic plague is more common in winter, whereas bubonic plague thrives mostly in warmer seasons. See Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 32-35. This observation is supported by the fact that fleas are not active during prolonged periods of low temperature.

²⁸ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 26.

Therefore, as Hirst argues, the enigmatic co-existence of a very infectious form of plague and one that is hardly infectious at all could explain the difference in historical attitudes towards public measures such as quarantine.

2.2. A Historical Overview of the Plague Pandemics

Throughout his existence, man has always been confronted with contagious diseases ²⁹ that caused epidemics, sometimes even pandemics. Especially when a new disease reached populations that had not been exposed to it before, the consequences would be devastating. Some past outbreaks can be identified by means of archeological finds, because the disease left its mark on skeletons ³⁰ and mummies. Mostly however, the information about epidemics comes to us through historical sources that recorded the disruption and misery brought about on a community. Interpreting these data is often problematic, especially when it comes to identifying the exact disease behind an outbreak.

Of all diseases causing epidemics, one had such a profound impact that its very name became proverbial for epidemic, indeed a synonym for any disaster that could befall human society. This was the bubonic plague, which had been recorded by man since biblical times. Physicians such as Hippocrates and Galen knew and

²⁹ Kohn mentions bubonic plague, typhus, smallpox, cholera, yellow fever, influenza, scarlet fever, malaria, diphtheria and poliomyelitis - obviously this list is not exhaustive. George C. Kohn, *The Wordsworth Encyclopedia of Plague & Pestilence*. New York: Facts on File Inc, 1995, 360-372.

³⁰ According to Drancourt, it is possible to demonstrate the presence of *Yersinia pestis* bacteria in the dental pulp of skeletons that belong to victims of medieval plague outbreaks. Michel Drancourt, and et al. "*Yersinia pestis* Orientalis in Remains of Ancient Plague Patients." in *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 13(2): 332. 2007.

described the disease and it is possible (though disputed) that the epidemic that struck Athens in the 5th century BC as described by Thucydides was plague.

Today, we know plague to be caused by a bacteria called *Yersinia pestis*, but this knowledge is relatively recent and dates from the latest plague pandemic in the late 19th century, which originated in China and also made a great number of casualties in India. Sent over to the afflicted region, the French researcher Alexandre Yersin isolated the bacteria and identified it as the pathogen that caused the disease.³¹ During this outbreak, it was also established that the disease was carried by rats (and as was described above, a number of other rodents). The Chinese pandemic was the third and until today the last in recorded history and was the first to reach the American continent. The previous pandemics were confined to the Asian, European and African continents.

The first pandemic on record was the Justinianic plague of 542, named after the Byzantine emperor during whose reign the epidemic occurred and who himself contracted and survived the disease.³² The pandemic lingered on with periodical outbreaks until it vanished from the records in the mid-eighth century.³³ As its appearance coincided with the emergence of Islam, the disease was frequently mentioned and commented upon by the Prophet and his followers. This

³¹ Ludwik Gross, "How the plague bacillus and its transmission through fleas were discovered: Reminiscences from my years at the Pasteur Institute", in *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 92: (1995) 7609-7611.

³² For a detailed discussion of the Justinianic plague, see Dionysios Ch. Stathakopoulos. *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire: A Systematic Survey of Subsistence Crises and Epidemics*. Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs. Vol.9. Burlington: Ashgate, 2004, 110-154.

³³ For Constantinople, Biraben lists epidemics for the years 542-543-544 558, 573-574, 599, 618, 640, 697, 700, 717 and 747. See Jean-Noël Biraben. *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol. I, Paris, La Haye: éd. Mouton, 1975, 35-36. Dols enumerates a similar series of outbreaks in the Middle East that also ends in the mid-eighth century. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 305-314.

resulted in an Islamic tradition of the writing of plague treatises, which were studied among others by Dols³⁴.

The second plague pandemic, also called the Black Death, ravaged Europe and the Middle East from 1347 onwards and its effect would be felt in the Ottoman Empire until the middle of the 19th century. Although this brief enumeration creates the impression that the disease disappeared completely between the two first pandemics, it did not. Records exist of outbreaks in Iran, Iraq and the Levant³⁵ and it is suspected that the disease lingered on in local pockets of infection. The periodicity of the outbreaks, a phenomenon that was also observed in the aftermath of the Justinian plague, might have corresponded to the presence of a new generation that had not acquired immunity during a previous outbreak³⁶.

In less than two years, the Black Death spread quickly over large territories of Asia Minor, Europe and the Middle East. According to Biraben, both maritime and land transport made it possible for the disease to progress. Through maritime shipping it quickly covered large distances, which is why the Black Death always spread from the coast towards the interior country. Moreover, the disease moved swifter when the season was favorable and when traveling along the major routes or downstream. The research of Biraben also demonstrates that until the year 1670, plague would be present each year in Europe. Sometimes it would cover vast stretches of land, other years it would erupt in only a few locations. From the year 1640 onwards, however, a steady regression could be observed and in 1720,

³⁴ Arabic plague treatises written after the Black Death often contained a chronology of important plague outbreaks, as documented by Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 373-374. The plague treatises were a literary tradition that used the Hadith literature as source.

³⁵ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 12.

³⁶ That children were especially vulnerable to plague was well-known to the Ottomans. As late as the 18th century, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote in a letter from Pera that "When I have asked them (that is, Ottoman women) how they expected to provide for such a flock as they desire, they answer that the plague will certainly kill half of them, which, indeed, generally happens..." in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Turkish Embassy Letters*. Malcolm Jack, ed. Athens (US): The University of Georgia Press, 1993, 107.

Marseille would be starting-point for the last wide-spread epidemic that lasted until 1722. After that date, only very sporadically would outbreaks be signalled in the vicinity of some ports that had been contaminated by shipping from the Middle East.

As remarked above, plague had been described by the classical physicians, such as Galen and Hippocrates. To these, contemporary physicians added their own observations of the pandemic. As Hirst³⁷ observes, it seems that in the early period of the Black Death pandemic cases of pneumonic plague were most common during winter, whereas the bubonic form struck more in summer. Guy de Chauliac, a surgeon in Avignon at the time of the first outbreak indeed reports in his work on surgery, *La Grande Chirurgie*³⁸ that :

La dite mortalité commenca à nous au mois de Januier, et dura l'espace de sept mois. Elle fust de deux sortes: la première dura deux mois, avec fièvre continuë et crachement de sang; et on en mouroit dans trois jours. La seconde fust tout le reste du temps, aussi avec fièvre continuë, et apostemes et carboncles és parties externes, principalement aux aisselles et aines, et on en mouroit dans cinq jours. Et fut de si grande contagion (specialement celle que estoit avec crachement de sang) que non seulement en sejourant, ains aussi en regardant l'un la prenoit de l'autre...

In spite of this and other seemingly straightforward descriptions of plague symptoms, discrepancies in the descriptions of the medieval outbreaks as compared to those of recent times have lead certain scholars to doubt they were caused by plague. They claim that the Black Death pandemic that was commonly identified as a plague outbreak was in fact caused by other pathogens³⁹. These

³⁷ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 35.

³⁸ As quoted by Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 34.

³⁹ Scott and Duncan, claim the first two pandemics to have been caused by an unidentified virus and thus to be different from the third one, identified as being caused by *Yersinia pestis*. Scott and Duncan, *Return of the Black Death*, 1. Twigg attributes the Black Death to an outbreak of anthrax. See Graham Twigg, *The Black Death: A Biological Reappraisal*. London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1984. Finally, Shrewsbury blames a concordant epidemic of plague and typhus. John, F. D. Shrewsbury. *A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles*. Cambridge, 1970, et passim. A similar dispute has arisen about the nature of the so-called plague of Athens of 430-428 BC, which was extensively documented by Thucydides.

scholars oppose the traditional view with an array of arguments, one of which is based on the absence of the black rat and its fleas in medieval Europe. Another argument is founded upon the alleged discrepancy of historic and current mortality rates of plague ⁴⁰. But, the carnage of the Black Death was clinically identified and described by contemporary physicians as plague, which was not an unknown disease to them. Therefore, it will be presumed throughout this thesis that the Black Death was indeed plague, in the sense of the disease caused by *Yersinia pestis*.

⁴⁰ An overview of the arguments of both sides is given by George Christakos in *Interdisciplinary Public Health Reasoning and Epidemic Modelling: The Case of Black Death*. Stuttgart: Springer, 2006, 112-114.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL SOURCES AND THE BLACK DEATH IN BYZANTINE AND OTTOMAN TERRITORIES

3.1. Historiography

The impact of the Black Death on medieval society being so great, it is unsurprising that a great number of authors have written about the disease throughout the centuries. From the times of the Justinian plague onwards, Arab scholars started writing specialized pamphlets, also called plague treatises or plague tracts. The writings were a combination of different sorts of information, namely medical, theological and often historical, in the form of a listing of previous outbreaks. From the period of the Black Death onwards, this genre also caught on in Europe.⁴¹ Although later centuries saw the publication of volumes that attempted to treat the subject matter more extensively, monographs on plagues which gave a historical overview of European and/or Middle Eastern plague outbreaks really proliferated in the 19th century and early 20th century. Of these,

⁴¹ For a comprehensive overview, see the unpublished PhD thesis of Christiane Nockels Fabbri, *Continuity and Change in Late Medieval Plague Medicine: A Survey of 152 Plague Tracts from 1348 to 1599*. Yale University, 2006.

the works of Alfred von Kremer⁴², who concentrated on plague in the Middle East and of Georg Sticker⁴³, who wrote a chronology of European and to an extent Middle Eastern outbreaks, proved especially popular as source material for more recent authors. Among the most influential can be cited chronologically the work of Fabian Hirst⁴⁴, Ziegler, Biraben, and Dols, who as von Kremer concentrated on the Middle East.⁴⁵ Dols' publication *The Black Death in the Middle East* enumerates certain plague outbreaks in the Byzantine and Ottoman empire and briefly discusses the plague treatises of Ottoman scholars such as Lütfullah at-Tokatı, Taşköprüzade, İdris-i Bitlisi and İlyas ibn İbrahim⁴⁶. However, he gives pride of place to the history of plague among the Arabs. The first (and to this date only) publication to be exclusively dedicated to plague in Ottoman territories was the work of Daniel Panzac *La peste en l'Empire Ottoman 1700-1885*, Leuven 1985. Although this was an important contribution, it is exclusively devoted to the Modern period. Another drawback is its almost exclusive reliance on European consular reports and travellers' accounts. Ottoman scholars have thus not as yet addressed the issue of Ottoman plague in its totality although some have written articles dedicated to the subject. The doyen of Ottoman medical history, Süheyl Ünver, *launched* the subject of plague in two articles.⁴⁷ Of much later date is the

⁴² Alfred von Kremer, *Über die Grossen Seuchen des Orients nach Arabischen Quellen*. Wien, 1880.

⁴³ Georg Sticker, *Abhandlungen aus der Seuchengeschichte und Seuchenlehre*. 2 volumes Giessen, 1908.

⁴⁴ Fabian Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague, A Study of the Evolution of Epidemiology*. Oxford: 1953

⁴⁵ As Dols, a number of other authors investigated the regional history of the disease, such as Benedictow for Scandinavia: Ole Benedictow, *The Black Death: 1346-1353- The Complete History*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004. Likewise, Shrewsbury looked at Britain (*A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles*).

⁴⁶ Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, for Lütfullah at-Tokatı 96, for Taşköprüzade 91, 99, 104, 106, 124 et passim

⁴⁷ The article : "Tâun nedir ? Veba nedir" in *Dirim* 3-4 (1978), 363-366, mainly discusses the difference between the terms *tâun* and *vebâ*. In the article: "Türk tıp tarihi: Türkiyede veba (Taun) tarihçesi üzerine," *Tedavi Kliniği ve Laboratuvarı Mecmuası*, 5 (1935), 70-88, Ünver briefly covers a number of subjects including a chronology of plague outbreaks in Istanbul and Anatolia, mostly

important article of Heath Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*,⁴⁸ which gives an assessment of the chronology of 14th and 15th century outbreaks in Byzantine and Ottoman territories as well as an analysis of shifting attitudes towards plague which will be critically examined in this thesis. Finally, Schamiloğlu wrote an article in which he postulated a number of theses on the possible impact of plague on Ottoman society.⁴⁹

In view of the accumulation of general secondary sources on plague, often including chronologies on plague outbreaks, it was my initial intention to scan this voluminous body of literature in order to distill a chronology for the period 1348-1550) that focused on the situation in the Ottoman territories. However, soon a number of caveats became apparent. The first was that for most, the focus of their research was not primarily Ottoman plague. As a result, any data that coincidentally were gathered, were included in the lists of outbreaks. However, this *peripheral* material evidently was not the result of any systematic screening. The second obstacle were the references to primary sources, or rather the lack of them. Biraben has written a standard work on plague, with an interesting analysis of both plague's possible spread through Europe and prevailing attitudes towards the disease. However, his extensive chronology of plague outbreaks does not refer to any sources, primary or otherwise. Thirdly, most of the contemporary authors (Hirst, Dols, Benedictow) that did mention their sources for the Middle East appeared to have relied on the chronologically conceived volume of Georg Sticker. He in turn relied on the work of the nineteenth-century historian and physician von

without references, and a list of plague treatises some quotes from a number of plague treatises, furthermore comments on quarantine, treatment and mortality.

⁴⁸ Heath W. Lowry. "Pushing the Stone Uphill: the Impact of Bubonic Plague on Ottoman Urban Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries." *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* XXIII, 93-132. Istanbul, 2003. Lowry's arguments will be discussed extensively in this thesis.

⁴⁹ Uli Schamiloğlu. "The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: The Black Death in Medieval Anatolia and its Impact on Turkish Civilization." *Views from the Edge: Essays in Honor of Richard W. Bulliet*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Weber. This author clearly states in his introduction that he had come into the possession of the plague treatise of as-Suyûtî, from which he used the descriptions of historical plague outbreaks to write his work. For the fourteenth and fifteenth century, some authors would use certain Byzantine sources, such as Cantacuzenos, for their chronology, but yet again never systematically.

3.2. Primary Sources

Obviously, as argued above using mostly secondary sources meant that any statement on the prevalence of plague, let alone on the patterns of its spread would be built on accidental evidence. Therefore, I attempted first of all to construct a chronology out of a large number of primary sources. My choice of them was partially inspired by Lowry's article *Pushing the Stone Uphill*⁵⁰, and guided by the numerous recommendations of my thesis supervisor, Halil İnalcık.

Ottoman sources

The sources that were used belong to two categories : the chronicles and the plague treatises. The latter were consulted in the hope that they might continue the tradition of the Arab treatises to start with an overview of historical plague outbreaks. The treatises of Taşköprüzade⁵¹ and the nineteenth-century translation

⁵⁰ Pushing the Stone Uphill in *The Journal of Ottoman Studies XXIII*, pp. 93-132. Istanbul – 2003.

⁵¹ Taşköprüzade, Ahmed. "Risâle-i Ta'ûn ve Vebâ Tercümesi." Ankara: National Library, microfilm collection, Mf 1994 AA1590 and A145, 1959.

of the treatise of İdris-i Bitlisi⁵² were examined, but they contained no information on dates of Ottoman plague outbreaks. The chronicles were consulted not only to extract information on the chronology, but also to test Schamiloğlu's (and to an extent Lowry's) assertion that the Ottomans remained silent on the subject of plague.

The following works were examined⁵³:

1. *Çarhnâme* by Ahmed Fakîh.⁵⁴ Though the author is generally accepted to have lived in the 13th century, that is *before* the Black Death outbreak, this was contested by Zeynep Korkmaz on the basis of the author's presumed description of the Black Death. Scrutiny of the text does not provide supporting elements for this theory: in the *beyit* 'Gözünle neçe gördün e uslu, ki ma'sûmlar kırılmışdur vebâdan'⁵⁵ the word vebâ is used to denote any kind of epidemic. Therefore, this literary work, if it is reflecting a historical reality, merely recorded the prevalence of (a) great epidemic(s) in the 13th century, a fact that other sources confirm.

2. *Tevârih-i Mülûk-i âl-i 'Osmân* by Ahmedî (in the translation and interpretation by Kemal Silay).⁵⁶ The epic poem was written by a scholar who lived in the period of the first plague outbreak (that is 1347/48) and who might have had first-hand experience with the epidemic. Its epic composition with religious overtones does not yield any concrete information on plague epidemics. However, it is interesting that the author cites the Sûretü'l-bakara from the Kur'ân to show what happens to those people who disobey God, in this case give up the holy raid: God punishes

⁵² İdris-i Bitlisi. trans. Mahmud Han "Hisnû'l-vebâ." (translation of Risâletü'l-İbâ an Mevâki'i'l-Vebâ.) Ankara: National Library, microfilm collection, Mf 1994 A2153/A2163.

⁵³ The quotes were taken from their sources without any attempt to standardize or otherwise correct the authors' transliteration of the Ottoman-Arabic alphabet.

⁵⁴ Fakih, Ahmed. *Çarhname*. Mecdut Mansuroğlu, ed. İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları no 684. İstanbul: Pulhan Matbaası, 1956.

⁵⁵ Fakih, *Çarhname*, 7

⁵⁶ Ahmedî. *History of the Kings of the Ottoman Lineage and their Holy Raids against the Infidels*. Cambridge, 2004.

them with an epidemic !⁵⁷ Could it be that the first plague outbreaks in the fourteenth century were interpreted by Ahmedî as a divine punishment for not performing gazâ properly?

3. *Tarihî Takvimler*.⁵⁸ (anonymous) This is a collection of chronicles dating from before the conquest of Istanbul and which consists of two versions of an early Ottoman chronology and two other chronologies written in Seljuk territory. The Ottoman chronicle comprises a matter-of-fact compilation of the major events that happened during the reign of the Ottoman rulers. Although it does mention an earthquake in Bursa during the reign of Mehmed Çelebi, plague is not mentioned until the outbreak of **1429** in Bursa.⁵⁹ The chronicle, which ends with the reign of Murad, reports this one outbreak. The Oxford manuscript of the first chronicle mentions an outbreak of vebâ that possibly took place *before* the 1429 outbreak and that killed Muhammed Çelebi and Dâvûd Çelebi. One of the Seljuk chronicles belongs to the Nurosmaniye collection and was written by a certain Zeyn ül-Müneccim bin Süleyman el-Konevî in Sivas in the month Muharrem of the year 773 hicri. This means that the chronicler was possibly already born during the passing of the first outbreak (1347-48) and certainly during the second great outbreak of 1361. Indeed, the chronicle records the first outbreak accurately for the year 748, that is 1346-47 : "**748** de Süleyman han'ın inhizami, veba, taun ve ölüm."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ahmedî, *History of the Kings of the Ottoman Lineage and their Holy Raids against the Infidels*, 14-16.

⁵⁸ *Tarihî Takvimler*. edited by Osman Turan. Ankara: TTK basımevi, 1984.

⁵⁹ 've **Bursa** şehrinde begayet ölü ve **vebâ** düşelden ve çok halk-ı 'âlem helâk olub Murad han karındaşları ve Emîr Süleyman beg oğlu Orhan Beg ve Emîr Seyyid ve İbrahim Paşa ve Çorak beg ve Vezir Hacı 'İvaz Paşa ve Şeyh Fahreddin Efendi oğulları ve Mevlânâ Şemseddin 'ulemâ-i Sultan Fenâri oğlu vefatlarından berü.' in *Tarihî Takvimler*. 1984. edited by Osman Turan. Ankara: TTK basımevi. page 25. The nine prominent figures that are listed to have died, are also mentioned by Neşrî in his own chronology. So either Neşrî used this chronicle as a source or the two works were based upon the same precursor.

⁶⁰ *Tarihî Takvimler*, 71.

The next big outbreak is also registered succinctly: "764 te umumî ölüm, vebâ ve taun."⁶¹

4. *Behcetü't-Tevârih* by Şükrullah as translated and edited by Atsız⁶². Şükrullah, a fifteenth century member of the *ulemâ* was a long-standing servant of the Ottoman rulers, most probably first of the *şehzâdes* in Bursa. Afterwards, he became a *musahib* of Murad II and he ended his career in the service of Mehmed II, for whom he completed the historical work *Behcetü't-Tevârih* in 1458.⁶³ Much of the material of this world history, which was written in Persian, originated from Ahmedî's *Gazavâtname*.⁶⁴ He lived and died in Bursa, but in spite of the fact that he seemingly spend all his life in that city and must have witnessed several outbreaks, he failed to record any presence of plague except for the summarily observation that : *Yusuf Çelebi ile Mahmud Çelebi yumrucaktan Bursada öldüler*.⁶⁵ As the anonymous *Tarihi Takvimler* he recorded the death of the two brothers of Murad II from plague, but whereas the former work clearly describes their death as part of a great outbreak, Şükrullah did not. He most probably was present during the outbreak in which they died, or at the very least must have had detailed second-hand information about it. Yet as his work is basically an eulogy of the Ottoman rulers, plague only mattered inasfar as it had a direct impact on their dynasty.⁶⁶

⁶¹ *Tarihi Takvimler*, 73.

⁶² Atsız, N.Ç. . *XV. Asır Tarihçisi Şükrullâh. Dokuz Boy Türkleri ve Osmanlı Sultanları Tarihi*. İstanbul: Arkadaş Basımevi, 1939.

⁶³ for a detailed discussion on the author, see Halil İncılık. "Tarihçi Şükrullâh Çelebi (1380? - 1460)" in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* 61 (1-2) (2008), 113-118.

⁶⁴ İncılık, "Tarihçi Şükrullâh Çelebi (1380? - 1460)", 116-117.

⁶⁵ Atsız, *XV. Asır Tarihçisi Şükrullâh. Dokuz Boy Türkleri ve Osmanlı Sultanları Tarihi*, 37.

⁶⁶ In the same vein, no mention is made either of other natural disasters that took place in Bursa, such as the earthquake, which the *Tarihi Takvimler* also registered. 'Sultan Mehmed Han atdan düşüb çok zahmet göreliden ve Bursa'da katı zelzele olub çok yerler harâb olaldan berü yigirmi yedi yıldır.' *Tarihi Takvimler*, 21.

5. *Tevârih-i Al-i Osman* by Aşıkpaşazade.⁶⁷ This fifteenth-century author belonging to an illustrious family of *ulemâ* wrote a detailed history of the house of Osman. Aşıkpaşazade explicitly mentions the brothers (and sisters) of Murad II, explaining their brother treated them well.⁶⁸ However, he does not mention their dying of plague, let alone the outbreak in Bursa. Not a single reference to plague is made in his otherwise detailed description. On the other hand, he does record the earthquake in Bursa during Mehmed Çelebi's reign which the *Tarihi Takvimler* also register.⁶⁹

6. *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*⁷⁰ by the eponymous author is yet another fifteenth-century chronicle. This chronicler was born in Edirne as the son of a trader in silk. It seems fairly certain that he continued to live in Edirne for the rest of his life, since he was well-aware of the coming-and-going of Murad II and Mehmed II, not only of their campaigns, but also of their frequent visits to the *yayla*. His father's profession certainly was one that could easily have provided him with information about outbreaks in cities along the trade routes or even have brought him contact with the disease himself. Could this have been the reason why Oruç Beğ mentions a great plague outbreak in Hicri **838**, that is between 7 August **1434** and 26 July **1435** ?⁷¹ This is the first time that an Ottoman chronicle reports a plague outbreak that had *news value* of its own. It was not linked to the death of members of the Ottoman dynasty nor of other Ottoman grandees. Its sole importance lies in being *a major outbreak*. The other outbreak he records is the one of Hicri **871** (August

⁶⁷ Aşıkpaşazâde. *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*. A. Nihal Atsız (trans.) Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1985.

⁶⁸ 'Sual: Sultan Murad o iki küçük kardeşlerini ve o kızları ne eyledi ? Cevap: O iki kardeşini Tokat'ta hapsedmişti. Getirdi gönül gözlerini açtı. Bursa'da onlara ulûfe tayin etti. Anaları ile birlikte oturdular. Birinin adı Mahmud ve birinin adı Yusuf idi.' *Aşıkpaşaoğlu tarihi*, 102.

⁶⁹ 'Bu Sultan Mehmed zamanında Bursa'da zelzele oldu. Çok evler ve hamamlar yıkıldı ve çok adamlar öldü. *Aşıkpaşaoğlu tarihi*, 91.

⁷⁰ Oruç Beğ. *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*. edited by Atsız. Istanbul: Tercüman (no year of publication)

⁷¹ *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, 85.

1466- August 1467).⁷² There he describes how a major plague epidemic obliged Mehmed II to stay in Filibe.

7. *Târîh-i ebü'l-Feth* by Tursun Bey⁷³. In contrast to the previous authors, Tursun bey was not a descendent of the *ulemâ*, nor of a merchant family, but a member of the *ümerâ*. His family belonged to the inner circles of Murad II and were *timar* holders in the vicinity of Bursa. This meant he would join Mehmed II on several campaigns, such as the conquest of Istanbul, the second Belgrade campaign (1456) and the campaign against Serbia (1458). Tursun Beğ subsequently made career as a *divan kâtip*, his erudition being evident from the literary style of his writings. The *tarih* was written as a way to pay a *minnet borcu* towards Mehmed II⁷⁴ during the author's old age, and reflects according to the editor feelings of nostalgia.⁷⁵

The work indeed invokes the excitement of battle, the *ganimet* to be gained, in short, the good old days. His efforts to portray the events in a positive light even go as far as to describe the sieges of Belgrade in 1456 and of Rhodes in 1480 as victories.⁷⁶ The pleasures of life on campaign included wine and women. When the author tells about the Albanian campaign of 1466, he boastfully describes the *câriye kızlar* he gained as booty.⁷⁷ And whereas Oruç Beğ mentions that Mehmed II had to stay in Filibe because of plague during his Albanian campaign, the eyewitness Tursun beğ admits that although in Filibe the winter was harsh, there

⁷² Oruç Beğ *Tarihi*, 121.

⁷³ Tursun Bey. *Târîh-i ebü'l-Feth*. edited by Mertol Tulum. Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1977.

⁷⁴ 'görülen iyilik ve ni'mete şükr etmekte ifâde edilen güçsüzlük de bir çeşit şükürdür.' - observation by the editor Mertol Tulum. Tursun Bey. *Târîh-i ebü'l-Feth*, XIX.

⁷⁵ Tursun Bey. *Târîh-i ebü'l-Feth*, XVIII.

⁷⁶ Necdet Öztürk. *Fatih Devri Kaynaklarından Düstûrnâme-i Enverî*, Istanbul. page XXX, 2003.

⁷⁷ 'Şu hûriler ki çadırdı görenler / Bedîhî hüküm iderdi kim cinândur /Koyup koynuma yattukça göreydün /Sanaydun bir bedende iki candur.' Tursun Bey. *Târîh-i ebü'l-Feth*, 141.

was plenty of partying going on !⁷⁸ Obviously, there is no room for plague in this narrative.

8. *Düstûrnâme* by Enverî. Enverî finished this work that was composed of manzum verses in 1465. Likewise, there is no mention of plague in this epic poem⁷⁹.

9. *Kitâb-ı Cihan - Nümâ* by Mehmed Neşrî⁸⁰. This important chronicle that was written in the late fifteenth century also yields only two plague outbreaks for the whole period covered, that is from the creation of the world to the reign of Bayezid II. For the first time since the *Tarih Takvimler*, the plague outbreak of **1347/48** appears again in a chronicle, although not it is not reported as an outbreak, but comes to us through the death of Karasi-oğlu, who died of plague two years after being sent to Bursa.⁸¹ The second outbreak mentioned is the one in Bursa in the year **1429**.⁸² As was mentioned above, the famous people that Neşrî reported to have died during this outbreak are the same as those mentioned in the *Tarihi Takvimler*, namely: Emîr Seyyid, the princes Yusuf and Mahmud Çelebi, Emir Süleyman's son Orhan Bey, Ibrahim Paşa and Hacı Ivaz Paşa, Çırak Bey, the sons of Şeyh Fahrettin Efendi and şems ül-'ulemâ Şemsettin ibni Fenarî. Thus, either Neşrî used the *Tarihi Takvimler* as source or the two works have a common precursor. Although Neşrî borrowed extensively from Aşıkpaşazade, this passage is not shared between the two works.

⁷⁸ 'Kur'a-i tedbîr böyle tedvîr gösterdi ki, ol tarafa nev'-i teveccüh gösterile ve Filibe şehrinde kışlana. İttifâk, ol kış gâyet yavuz kış idi; ammâ eyyâm-ı işret ü ayş idi.' Tursun Bey. *Târih-i ebû'l-Feth*, 143.

⁷⁹ Necdet Öztürk. *Fatih Devri Kaynaklarından Düstûrnâme-i Enverî*, Istanbul, 2003.

⁸⁰ Neşrî, Mehmed. *Kitâb-ı Cihan - Nümâ: Neşrî Tarihi*. vol. 1 and 2. edited by Faik Reşit Unat and Mehmed A. Köymen, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1949.

⁸¹ Neşrî, *Kitâb-ı Cihan - Nümâ: Neşrî Tarihi*, 167.

⁸² Neşrî, *Kitâb-ı Cihan - Nümâ: Neşrî Tarihi*, 609.

10. *Târîh-i âl-i Osmân* by Yusuf bin Abdullah.⁸³ Like Oruç Bey, the writer originated from Edirne, where he was a slave in the service of a woman who ensured the boy received a proper education. As a result, he became *kâtip* to the *divan* during the reign of Bayezid II. The narrative starts with the Greek Istanbul/AyaSophia story that was translated and islamified by Yusuf bin Musa in 1479.⁸⁴ In the story, the mythical ruler *Buzantin* and his subjects fall victim to a great plague outbreak.⁸⁵ This is possibly a faint echo of the major plague outbreaks that had struck the city. It seems that in particular the Justinian plague, during which the emperor fell ill, had become part of the collective memory. This same anecdote is also to be found in the *Anonim Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*, but Yusuf bin Abdullah has given it an interesting twist:

'Hakk-teâlâ gayûr bir pâdişâhdır kervânlara bir gün hışm edüb tâûn viridi /
anun gibi tâûn oldu kim şehir ü memleketin rub'ı kalmayub cümle halkı
kırılıb Buzantin dahi ol tâûndan helâk oldu.'⁸⁶

The *Anonim Tevârih-i Al-i Osman* mentions that 'Hakk te'âlâ yine nevrûz günlerinde ana bir hışm gönderdü; tâ'ûn oldu.'⁸⁷

So Yusuf bin Abdullah did not follow Yusuf bin Musa's original text, but adapted it in a way that reflected his own experience: plague is brought into town with the caravans. In his *real* chronology, he resembles Oruç Bey in his recordings of plague outbreaks: he mentions both the plague outbreak of **839**⁸⁸ and the epidemic that obliged Mehmed II to stay in Filibe in Hicri **871 (1466/67)**.⁸⁹ The similarity of

⁸³ Yusuf bin Abdullah. *Bizans Söylenceleriyle. Osmanlı Tarihi*. edited by Efdal Sevinçli. Izmir, 1997.

⁸⁴ According to Stefanos Yerasimos in *Türk Metinlerinde Konstantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, translated by Şirin Tekeli, Istanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 1993, 13-47 as quoted by Sevinçli in *Bizans Söylenceleriyle. Osmanlı Tarihi*, 15.

⁸⁵ Yusuf bin Abdullah, *Bizans Söylenceleriyle. Osmanlı Tarihi*, 45-47.

⁸⁶ Yusuf bin Abdullah, *Bizans Söylenceleriyle. Osmanlı Tarihi*, 45.

⁸⁷ F. Giese. *Anonim Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*. edited by Nihat Azaman, Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi. 1992, 93.

⁸⁸ Yusuf bin Abdullah. *Bizans Söylenceleriyle. Osmanlı Tarihi*, 125. - Oruç Bey gives Hicri 838 as the date.

⁸⁹ Yusuf bin Abdullah. *Bizans Söylenceleriyle. Osmanlı Tarihi*, 175.

the two texts is such that undoubtedly, Yusuf bin Abdullah either copied from Oruç Bey's work or the two works have a common precursor. The author does not mention the place of the outbreak, but as the leaving of Murad II to the *Keşürlük yayla* is linked to the outbreak, it must have struck Edirne.⁹⁰

Finally, we have for the first time a testimony of a plague outbreak in Arabia, Iran and Rumelia in the year **897**, which an author confirms to have heard about himself.⁹¹ It is unfortunate that the information he gives pertains only to the situation in Cairo, and in spite of his assurances that his informant is utterly trustworthy, a total casualty figure of seven hundred seventy three thousand seems a little steep.⁹²

11. *Anonymous tevârih-i Al-i Osman*. These historical works had their roots in a literary tradition that dated from the period of Murad II and started during the reign of Bayezid II. Their starting point is always the arrival of Süleyman Shah in Anatolia, but their end-date differs, presumably according to the period the author was writing in. A first group ends in about the year 900/1492, whereas a second group goes on until the year 957/1550, but the tradition continues until the seventeenth century.⁹³ The collection of chronicles edited by Giese ends in 963. Their content is highly comparable to several other *histories* and is quite similar to that of Yusuf bin Abdullah.⁹⁴ They report the plague outbreak of the year **838**.⁹⁵ Moreover, they mention the outbreak in Edirne in the year **895**, whereas bin

⁹⁰ Furthermore, as mentioned above, both authors originate from Edirne.

⁹¹ 'Ve dahi bu yılda Arab ve Acem ve Rûm vilâyetlerinde tâûn azîm oldu * Şol mertebede Sultân Kaytî Beg kullarından mümtâz kimesne agzından işitdim dir Mısır vilâyetinde mâh-ı receb ve şa'bân ve ramazân-ül-muazzamın içinde beşer günde yigirmiyedişerbin âdem öldi * Ve dahi on gün içinde yigirmiyedişerbin âdem öldi dir * Ve dahi onyedinci gününde otuzüçbin âdem öldi. Ve dahi otuzüç günde Mısır şehrinde tamâm altıyüzbin ve dahi beşbin âdem helâk oldu dirler.' Yusuf bin Abdullah, *Bizans Söylenceleriyle. Osmanlı Tarih*, 245.

⁹² Quite possibly, the last figure of six hundred thousand should be interpreted as sixty thousand.

⁹³ Giese, *Anonim Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*, page XIII.

⁹⁴ As in that chronicle, we also find the *Constantinople/Byzantine* historical myth.

⁹⁵ Giese, *Anonim Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*, 70, in stead of "ve bay-ı ekber olaldan" the sentence should be read "vebâ-ı ekber".

Abdullah dates the outbreak in Iran and Egypt in **897**.⁹⁶ Assuming the dating of both outbreaks to be correct⁹⁷ it could mean that the outbreak spread from Edirne to Iran and the Arab territories. In view of Bayezid II's consecutive wars against the Mamluks in that period, this comes as no surprise.

We can conclude that contradicting the hypothesis that the Ottoman chronicles did not mention plague, a significant number of Ottoman chronicles do indeed contain information about the disease. In total, seven different outbreaks were mentioned: 748, 764, 833, 838/839, 871, 895 and 897. There were valid reasons not to mention plague outbreaks more often.⁹⁸ As Lowry also suggests, the genre has much to do with it: in epic recitals, plague is no *heroic* subject. Whenever plague outbreaks are registered, it is in view of their impact on the Ottoman ruler and his conquests, but not on society as a whole. Large-scale death of their subjects did not fit into a narrative describing the deeds of the Ottoman ruling class. Death was ubiquitous through war, famine, and other diseases - an indescernible background noise. The only way for an outbreak to gain narrative importance was through its link with other events: the departure of the ruler for the *yayla* or the death of prominent members of society. As for the last, it is noteworthy that for the two outbreaks which registered individual deaths, the victims were persons who were in fact prisoners⁹⁹, namely Karasioğlu and Murad's brothers Yusuf and Mahmud. The mentioning of their death seems done apocryphally: it was neither by order of the Ottoman ruler, nor for want of care that they died. Thus, the fact that one outbreak is recorded and another goes unnoticed

⁹⁶ Giese, *Anonim Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*, 128.

⁹⁷ Both chronicles exceptionally give months in addition to years which seems an indication of accuracy *and* the events probably took place during the authors' lifetime.

⁹⁸ Although one has to bear in mind that most chroniclers borrowed heavily from previous works and as information became filtered out in the early history writing, it was then unavailable to subsequent Ottoman historians.

⁹⁹ Of course, there were also the other notables that died in the 1429 outbreak.

is more related to its *narrative value*, than to its severity. This also explains why famine never is mentioned in the chronicles: it basically kills the poor, never the rich and causes no material damage. Great fires and earthquakes, on the other hand, are mentioned, for they always cause destruction of walls, palaces, hammams, even whole cities. The *narrative value* also explains why no death of members of the Ottoman dynasty would ever be registered as plague. A death caused by plague was no heroic death in the eyes of the Ottomans.¹⁰⁰ Finally, although plague in the ranks of the enemy might have given the Ottomans military advantage during siege or battle, there would be no reason to emphasize this fact in an epic chronology.

Fourteenth-Century Byzantine Sources

When the second plague pandemic first appeared in Byzantine territory, the emperor John Cantacuzenos¹⁰¹ and the long-serving Byzantine statesman Demetrius Cydones recorded the devastation in their writings. Cydones, especially, would reflect the psychological impact of the epidemic in his letters.¹⁰² During his long life¹⁰³, he would be the witness of other outbreaks, which are mentioned in his voluminous correspondance. In the exchange of letters between him and the emperor Manuel II Paleologos, the topic of plague is also discussed.

¹⁰⁰ See also the discussion of Selim's death on pages 54-57 .

¹⁰¹ John Cantacuzenos. *The History of John Cantacuzenos (Book IV): Text, Translation, Commentary*. Unpublished PhD thesis by Timothy S. Miller. Washington, D.C. 1975.

¹⁰² Two publications of his oeuvre were used:

Kydones, Demetrios, 1982. *Briefe. Erster Teil, Zweiter Halbband (91 Briefe)*. translated by Franz Tinnefeld.

Demetrios Cydonès. *Correspondance*. vol. II Raymond-J. Loenertz, ed. Città del Vaticano: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1960.

¹⁰³ The exact dates of his birth and death are not known.

The important Byzantine scholar and opponent of the Hesychast movement, Nicephoras Gregoras, is yet another source for the first outbreak of 1347/48.

The Byzantine authors extensively described the first Black Death outbreak in their writings and later outbreaks also appear in their letters. Their information correlates well with the dates recorded for outbreaks in the eastern Mediterranean in the Byzantine Short Chronicles¹⁰⁴ and the Regestes of the Venetian Senate pertaining to *Romania*.¹⁰⁵

Fifteenth-Century Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Greek sources

Lowry claimed that the later Greek sources were more *rigorous* than the Ottoman ones in mentioning plague, enumerating nine outbreaks between 1403 and 1460.¹⁰⁶ However, of these, all but two took place outside the borders of Ottoman territory.¹⁰⁷ Of these two, one is dated 1403, the period of great turmoil and fraternal strife between Bayezid's offspring and the Ottoman chroniclers can be forgiven for concentrating on the important political events of that time. Again, a broad spectrum of sources was consulted to verify the presence or absence of plague.

The History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Kritovoulos.¹⁰⁸ Kritovoulos, who successfully served under Mehmed II, was a member of a prominent Byzantine

¹⁰⁴ Peter Schreiner. *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken (Chronica Byzantina Breviora)*. Vol XII/2. 1977, pp. 271, 290-292, 308, 311, 423, 337, 344, & 361 as quoted by Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 98.

¹⁰⁵ Thiriet, P. 1958. *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie. Tomes premier: 1329-1399*. They will be discussed in the section 'latin sources'.

¹⁰⁶ Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 104 -105

¹⁰⁷ Earlier Byzantine sources were likewise totally mute when outbreaks in *Ottoman* territory were concerned, as will be observed later.

¹⁰⁸ Kritovoulos. 1954. *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*. translated by Charles T. Riggs. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. The subject of plague in the work of Kritovoulos was discussed extensively in Lowry's article, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*.

family who had received an appropriate education. This classical erudition reflects in his description of the plague outbreak in Istanbul, which clearly bears the influence of Thucydides' account of the epidemic (of uncertain nature) that ravaged Athens in the 5th century BC.¹⁰⁹ This should not be surprising in view of the fact that a similar influence on the plague description of the 1347-48 outbreak by the emperor Cantacuzenos has been demonstrated.¹¹⁰ Like Thucydides and Cantacuzenos¹¹¹, Kritovoulos starts by explaining where the disease came from.¹¹² Then he proceeds to the effects it had on the population. Here again, the example of the classical author is obvious.¹¹³ Kritovoulos' clinical description bears resemblance to the early Hellenistic text in a similar way. Both texts claim that the head is afflicted with high fever and redness and that the disease then descends to the chest. This observation is not a common feature of other contemporary descriptions of plague, as it is no obvious clinical symptom of the disease. Both

¹⁰⁹ Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*. translated by Steven Lattimore. Indianapolis: Cambridge, 1998, 97-101.

¹¹⁰ H. Hunger. 1976. "Thukidides bei Johannes Cantacuzenos. Beobachtungen zur Mimesis." *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 25, 1997, 181-193 and A. Vasiliev. *History of the Byzantine Empire. 324-1453*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1952, 626.

¹¹¹ John Cantacuzenos. *The History of John Cantacuzenos (Book IV): Text, Translation, Commentary*. Unpublished PhD thesis by Timothy S. Miller. Washington, D.C., 1975.

¹¹² In fact, Vasiliev also observes that "Kritoboulos, unsuccessfully imitating Thucydides, composed a eulogistic history of Muhammed II, in the years from 1451 to 1467." *History of the Byzantine Empire. 324-1453*. page 693.

¹¹³ Thucydides: ...since even relatives, overcome by the prevailing misery, finally grew tired of the lamentations of the dying.

Kritovoulos: For some ... fled and never came back, not even to care for their nearest relatives, but even turned away from them, although they often appealed to them with pitiful lamentation.

T: And all the funeral customs they had previously observed were thrown into confusion, and they gave burial as each found the means.

K: There were not enough presbyters, or acolytes, or priests for the funerals and burials or the funeral chants and prayers, nor could the dead be properly interred.

T: If they were unwilling, in their fear, to approach to one another, they perished in isolation.

K: There were also some who shut themselves up in their rooms, and would allow no one to come near them. Many of these died,...often with nobody knowing of them.

T: Many of them turned to shameless burial methods...while others put the body they were carrying on top of another (funeral pyre) that was being burned and went away.

K: There were often two or three dead, or even more, buried in a single coffin.

T: What was most terrible in the whole affliction was the despair when someone realized he was sick (for immediately forming the judgment that there was no hope...).

K: Despair and hopelessness dominated the spirits of all. Belief in Providence vanished altogether.

also list diarrhea, delirium and insomnia. The above clearly demonstrates that descriptions of plague in Byzantine literature had become stereotyped, a literary genre that was obeying fixed patterns of style and structure. It is fair to speculate that if Kritovoulos had to report about a plague outbreak at another time, his prose would have been near-identical.

Chronicon minos and *Chronicon maios* by Sphrantzes¹¹⁴. Georgios Sphrantzes was an accomplished diplomat in the service of Manuel II Palaeologus who continued his career loyally in the service of the last Byzantine emperor. Although the *Chronicon minos* are meant to be a history, they are at the time Sphrantzes' personal memoirs, describing what he experienced and heard in his long career. In that respect, he can be considered a Greek counterpart to Tursun Beğ. But whereas the latter could look back to a happy past, Sphrantzes' life was filled with drama. He was captured after Constantinople was taken, became free again, and sought refuge in a monastery in Corfu.¹¹⁵ Although he indeed mentions plague quite often, it is mostly in relationship to the dynasty he loyally served: the death of Manuel II Paleologus' son and the Ottoman hostage Yusuf (unspecified date), the death of the Empress Ann from plague (1417), and Manuel II Paleologus moving to the Peribleptos monastery because of plague (1435). Sometimes plague is mentioned as part of his own experience.¹¹⁶

Finally, a paragraph of Sphrantzes' description of the march of Charati Pasha on the fortresses and villages in the vicinity of Constantinople merits special

¹¹⁴ Sphrantzes. 1980. *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477*. edited by Marios Philippides. Amherst. This work is essentially the *Chronicon minos*. see also: Sphrantzes. 1954. *Die letzten Tage von Konstantinopel. Der auf den Fall Konstantinopels 1453 bezügliche Teil des dem Georgios Sphrantzes zugeschriebenen "Chronicon Maius"*. edited by Endre von Ivanka. Graz: Verlag Styria. This translation comprises the part of the *Chronicon maius* that relates the conquest of Constantinople.

¹¹⁵ Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire. 324-1453*, 691-692.

¹¹⁶ On one of his travels, he has to move out of the castle of Corfu, because it is plague-infested. *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477*. page 89.

attention as it underlines the pitfalls of working with translated and edited material. Where the German adaptation mentions that some of the beleaguered succumbed because of *plague and harsh treatment*, the English text reads that they surrendered because of *hunger and general hardship*.¹¹⁷ The difference is possibly due to the use of different manuscript or to a different interpretation of the translator. It is however a useful illustration that plague outbreaks can get lost in translation.

The writings of the historian Doukas¹¹⁸, who was a contemporary of Mehmed II and a servant of the ruling Gattilusi family of Mytilene, were extensively studied by Lowry. Especially the section where Doukas describes how Mehmed the Conqueror travels from one town to the next, trying to flee a devastating plague outbreak in the Balkans, was discussed in detail by Lowry¹¹⁹. The rather sardonic tone with which Doukas describes this episode can be read as an expression of the animosity he felt for the Ottoman ruler.

We see that the Byzantine and post-Byzantine sources register plague outbreaks more often than their Ottoman counterparts. For this, several reasons can be mentioned. Letters, which are lacking for the Ottoman review, form an important part of the text material. By their very nature, they reveal events that have a direct impact on the writer's life and the devastation caused by plague figures prominently in it. The Byzantine chroniclers, too, had a good reason *not* to downplay plague, for it offered an explanation for Byzantine failure against their

¹¹⁷ "...ein Teil der Leute wurde in die Sklaverei verkauft, einen Teil rafften die Seuche und die schlechte Behandlung hinweg." Sphrantzes. *Die letzten Tage von Konstantinopel. Der auf den Fall Konstantinopels 1453 bezügliche Teil des dem Georgios Sphrantzes zugeschriebenen "Chronicon Maius"*, 44 as compared with:

"Some of those places were enslaved, some surrendered because of hunger and general hardship." in Sphrantzes. *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477*, 101.

¹¹⁸ Dukas. *Bizans Tarihi*, VL Mirmiroğlu. Istanbul: Istanbul Matbaası, 1956.

¹¹⁹ Lowry, *Pushing a Stone Uphill*, 103-104. See also Chapter IV of this thesis, the discussion on flight.

enemy.¹²⁰ In contrast, the Byzantine church showed an almost total lack of interest in the disease, if the *regestes* are a guideline¹²¹. A prayer for the deliverance from the Barbarian invasions, the civil war, famine and plague is the only trace the outbreaks left, mentioning the disease as the last of a depressing list of problems.¹²² Unlike the Venetians, the Byzantine writers were no *Ottoman watchers*.¹²³ Although they had ample opportunity to observe them, they either were indifferent to the condition of their adversaries/allies seemed to have escaped them, or they did not care to record it.

Latin sources

The first category of sources that was examined were the works of early European travellers.¹²⁴ The earliest work consulted, that of Johann Schiltberger¹²⁵, was written by a rather involuntary traveller. As a youth, Schiltberger was captured by the Turks during the battle of Nicopolis in 1394. During the campaign of Timur Lenk, he was captured by the latter during the battle of Ankara in 1402. He then served under different different masters, before finally returning to

¹²⁰ Caroline Finkel makes a similar observation for the description of earthquakes by the Byzantines and the Ottomans. Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923*. London: John Murray, 2005, 16.

¹²¹ The enactments of the Patriarchate of Constantinople for the period 1310-1453 do not mention the outbreak even once - not even indirectly, as a cause of personnel or materials shortage. J. Darrouzès. 1979. *Les registres des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*. Vol. I. Fasc. V, VI, VII.

¹²² *Les registres des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*. page 19.

¹²³ Kritoboulos, although Greek, in fact became a loyal Ottoman subject himself in joining the services of Mehmed II.

¹²⁴ The choice was based upon the listings of such sources as enumerated in Heath Lowry. 2004. *Seyyahların Göziyle Bursa*. Istanbul: Eren. pp. 128-130 and Stephane Yerasimos. *Les Voyageurs dans l'empire Ottoman (XIV-XVI siècles)*. Ankara: Imprimerie de la société turque d'histoire, 1991. 97-134.

¹²⁵ Schiltberger, Johannes. *Als Sklave im Osmanischen Reich und bei den Tataren: 1394- 1427*. edited by Ulrich Schlemmer. Stuttgart: Thienemanns Verlag, 1983.

Germany in 1427, where he subsequently wrote his autobiography.¹²⁶ Although Schiltberger mentions hardship, he nowhere mentions plague outbreaks explicitly, although according to Doukas, plague followed the army of Timur Lenk throughout Anatolia¹²⁷. Likewise, Guillebert de Lannoy¹²⁸, Bertrandon de la Broquière¹²⁹ and Joos van Ghistele¹³⁰ do not mention any encounters with the disease during their visits throughout the fifteenth century. Possibly such details were left out of their narrative because they were not exotic enough, or the travellers had the good sense of embarking on their journeys when no outbreaks were signalled in the countries they wished to visit. However, Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo¹³¹, who went on a diplomatic mission to the court of Timur Lenk in Semerkand and who arrived near Gallipoli in the year 1403, confirms the observation by Doukas that plague was then rampant in Anatolia.¹³² Some thirty years later, Pero Tafur, who left Spain for the Holy Land in 1435 and subsequently visited the Byzantine territories, also encountered plague on its way.¹³³

Another category of sources are the letters and reports of Italian merchants and diplomats. According to Lowry, a Florentine merchant in Pera called Giovanni

¹²⁶ Stephane Yerasimos. 1991. *Les Voyageurs dans l'empire Ottoman (XIV-XVI siècles)*. page 101.

¹²⁷ Doukas. *Decline and Fall of Byzantium the Ottoman Turks by Doukas*. Detroit. p. 112, as quoted in Lowry. 2003. *Pushing the Stone Uphill*. pp. 99-100.

¹²⁸ De Lannoy, Guilbert. *Voyages et ambassades de messire Guillebert de Lannoy, 1399-1450*. C.P. Serrure, ed. Mons. 1840.

¹²⁹ De la Broquière, Bertrandon. *Le voyage d'Outremer de Bertrandon de la Broquière*. Ch. Schefer, ed. Paris: Ernest Leroux. 1892.

¹³⁰ Van Ghistele, Joos. *Voyage naar den lande van belofte*. Antwerpen: Boekengilde Die Poorte.

¹³¹ "A vessel arrived in the port of Tenio, and they sent to ask where she came from. She was from Gallipoli, a place belonging to the Turk, a place belonging to the Turk, but on Grecian land and was bound for Chios with a cargo of wheat, and she brought news that a great pestilence raged at Gallipoli." in Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo. *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand: A.D. 1403*. Clements Robert Markham, ed. London: Hackluyt Society. 1859.

¹³² 26.

de Clavijo also mentions an epidemic that kills several members of his group later on its journey, but it is unclear whether the disease was plague, although the possibility is real. de Clavijo, *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand: A.D. 1403*, 101.

¹³³ Pero Tafur. *Pero Tafur: Travels and Adventures*. edited by Malcolm Letts. London: George Routledge & Sons. 1926. page 138.

di Francesco Maringhi, reported plague in Pera in the summer of 1501.¹³⁴ The outbreak had caused over 25,000 deaths and Lowry observes that as Maringhi called the outbreak "*one of the worst*" of his short stay (four years), this implied plague was present almost continuously.¹³⁵ As we will see from the diary of Marino Sanudo, this was true for almost the whole period of 1497 to 1533. However, a window of eight years without the disease occurred in Istanbul from 1504 to 1512.

The diaries of Marino Sanudo: 1497-1533¹³⁶

Marino Sanudo (22 May 1466-1536)¹³⁷ was a member of an illustrious Venetian family who throughout the greater part of his adult life amassed an impressive collection of letters, reports and personal notes, which he entered in his diary. Although he apparently never left Venice himself, his wide circle of relatives and friends ensured him of information from every place where Venetian merchants went about their business.¹³⁸ Venice had fought a long war with the Ottomans (1463-79) and was going to fight yet another one in 1499, so it was hardly surprising the Venetians kept a watchful eye on their dangerous ally. Managing their relations with the Ottomans for the Venetians also meant

¹³⁴ see G.R.B. Richards. 1932. *Florentine Merchants in the Age of the Medici*. Cambridge. pp. 130, pp. 140-141 and 148 as quoted by Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 125-126.

¹³⁵ Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 126.

¹³⁶ Marino Sanudo. *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*. 58 vols. Venice 1879-1903.

¹³⁷ see *I diarii di Marino Sanuto* vol. 55, col. 209-210.

¹³⁸ Sanudo not only received information from abroad, but was very well informed about the affairs of state of *la Signoria* and its strategical efforts, being an undersecretary of the marine (*savii ai ordini*). see : Frederic C. Lane. 1987. *Studies in Venetian Social and Economic History*. Edited by Benjamin G. Kohl and Reinhold C. Mueller. London: variorum reprints. VIII - page 147.

Moreover, his brother Antonio Sanudo was member of the Council of Ten (*Cao di X*), the senior ruling organ of Venice and he would take his brother's position after the latter's death in 1531.

"In questa matina noto, questa note passata esser morto sier Antonio Sanudo, fo Cao di X, et erra di la Zonta dil ditto Consejo, mio fradello, di anni 71 1/2, stato do mexi e più amalato... io resto, di anni 65 in 66, perhochè naqui 1466 a dì 22 mazo. E più zoveni de mi vivi, che vien a Consejo, numero 14, che prego Dio viva longamente, et a la fin mi doni vita eterna."

safeguarding their vital commercial interests in the eastern Mediterranean, which they had defended against the Genoese by means of their naval supremacy. The Ottomans had become a threat to the remaining Venetian outposts with their powerful fleet. Against this background, it is hardly surprising that the Venetians became avid observers of the Ottomans, not only Marino Sanudo, but also his contemporaries Girolamo Priuli¹³⁹ and Domenico Malipiero¹⁴⁰. In view of Venetian alertness, not only in matters pertaining the Ottomans, but also for plague, which they sought to keep out of their city and galleys, the diaries could be considered a promising source of information on Ottoman plague. Therefore, all fifty seven volumes were systematically checked using as basis the index for Bursa, Edirne and Istanbul.¹⁴¹

The recorded outbreaks for the period 1497 – 1533 were as follows:

winter 1496-1497: (300/day) Istanbul
summer 1497: full epidemic in Istanbul
summer-autumn 1500: presence of plague in Istanbul
winter 1500-1501: full epidemic in Istanbul
summer 1501: full epidemic in Istanbul
autumn 1501: (800/day) in Istanbul
summer 1502: presence of plague in Istanbul
winter 1502-1503: (200/day) in Istanbul (+200/day) in Edirne
summer 1503: full epidemic in Istanbul
winter 1503-1504: full epidemic in Istanbul and the rest of the country
spring 1510: presence of plague in Edirne
autumn 1512: (300/day) in Istanbul
summer 1513: (300/day) total 60 000 in Istanbul
summer 1514: full epidemic in Aleppo
plague in the camp of Selim's army
autumn 1514: start of outbreak in Istanbul
summer 1516: full epidemic in Istanbul and Tessalonica

¹³⁹ Girolamo Priuli. *I diarii di Girolamo Priuli*. ed. by L.A. Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores - Raccolta degli Storici Italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquento*. vol. XXIV - part III. Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1921/1922.

¹⁴⁰ Domenico Malipiero. *Annali veneti dall' anno 1457 al 1500*. edited by Gio, Pietro Vieusseux. Firenze. 1843.

¹⁴¹ It would have been impossible to perform data mining on the whole series of diaries which contain about thirty thousand pages.

summer of 1518: full epidemic in Istanbul
winter 1518-1519: epidemic is abating in Istanbul
winter-spring 1519-1520 : full epidemic in Edirne
summer 1520 : full epidemic in Edirne, low prevalence in Istanbul
summer of 1522: (+1000/day) in Istanbul
summer of 1523: (500/day) in Istanbul
winter of 1523-1524: presence of plague in Istanbul
autumn of 1525: (500/day) in Istanbul
winter of 1525-26: epidemic is abating in Istanbul
summer of 1526: plague in the camp of the Ottoman army
autumn of 1526: presence of plague in Istanbul
winter of 1526-1527: presence of plague in Ragusa and Istanbul
spring of 1527: increasing epidemic in Istanbul
summer of 1527: (200/day) in Istanbul
summer of 1529: end of plague in Istanbul
summer of 1530: full epidemic in Istanbul
spring of 1532: no plague in Istanbul
summer - autumn of 1532: full epidemic in Cluino and its villages
winter-spring 1533: full epidemic in the Morea
summer 1533: full epidemic in the Morea and Ragusa
started in the Ottoman army
(500/day) in Istanbul¹⁴²

In 37 years, there were 17 years of major outbreaks in Istanbul. Important epidemics occurred during four winters, three autumns and ten summers. Mostly, the outbreaks developed anew in winter or autumn after having been absent for a period of one or more seasons, namely in 1496, 1500, 1502, 1512, 1519 and 1525. The disease struck especially hard during summer in 1516, 1522, 1523, 1530 and 1533. The plague-free period in between from 1504 until 1512 does not represent a discontinuation of the sources. Sanudo's diaries still show records of letters sent by both Venetian officials and merchants from Istanbul. In view of Venetian measures such as quarantine and the accordance of *receptos* or health certificates to vessels by Venetian officials it is extremely unlikely that a major outbreak during that period would have gone unnoticed *and* unrecorded. That the plague outbreak which had become a full epidemic at the end of November 1512 continued unabated throughout the winter and spring of 1513 is supported by an

¹⁴² See appendix I for the original texts and translations.

Ottoman document dated in Istanbul on the 25th of May of that year which states that 89 janissaries had died of plague.¹⁴³

3.3. Aspects of Terminology

According to Hirst, the term "Black Death" for the second pandemic did not refer to the black spots that appeared on the skin of certain plague victims, but the term was introduced in the nineteenth century with 'Black' meaning terrible to convey the horror of the event.¹⁴⁴ During the pandemic itself, the disease was often euphemistically referred to in several sources as 'the illness', maybe because the term 'plague' provoked too much anxiety. Until the first half of the nineteenth century, most 'fevers' were not clearly differentiated in western medicine. They were considered to be 'eruptive', 'intermittent' or 'remittent'. The cause of the eruptive type of fever was the putrefaction of the humours whereas the other two were of miasmatic origin. Another way to classify them was in order of increasing severity into putrid, malignant and pestilential fevers.¹⁴⁵ In the eighteenth century, many European physicians (1720) thought that plague was the acute phase of *la fièvre maligne* or malignant fever.¹⁴⁶ Such terminology was also often used to avoid calling an outbreak plague, because the term had by then acquired such a menacing connotation, that physicians who used it would be accused of scare-mongering. Etymologically, the word plague is derived from the latin word

¹⁴³ Document TSMA, nr E. 6155, as quoted from the transcription by Çoşkun and Necdet Yılmaz, eds. *Osmanlılarda Sağlık*. Vol. II - Arşiv Belgeleri. Istanbul: Biofarma, 2006, 35.

¹⁴⁴ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 32.

¹⁴⁵ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 73.

¹⁴⁶ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 58.

plaga meaning stroke which in ancient literature meant any sort of acute epidemic or *pestilence* causing great mortality among men.¹⁴⁷

This former general use of the term plague is analogous to the meaning of the word *vebâ*, which originally was the generic Arabic name for any kind of epidemic. By contrast, its current use in the Turkish language as the name for the disease caused by the bacteria *Yersinia pestis* is very recent. Distinctive from this general term *veba*, to specifically denominate plague the Ottoman and Arabic sources used the word *ta'ûn* - which is derived from the arab verb *ta'ana* that means to strike or to pierce. The plague treatises were careful to point out the difference to the reader: Every *ta'ûn* is a *vebâ*, but not every *vebâ* is a *ta'ûn*.¹⁴⁸ Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalânî correlates the term *ta'ûn* to the pricking by a djinn, making it a more specific terminology than *vebâ*.¹⁴⁹

Ottoman scholars such as İdris-i Bitlisi were very formal on the difference between the two terms and explicitly emphasized that :

Bir hastalık ki halk arasında sari ve müptelâ olanları öldürmeği sebep ola ona istilahta derler. Lâkin taunlar bunun en meşhuru ve şiddetli ve en çok görünenidir. Veba muayyen nevilere munhasır değildir.¹⁵⁰

Ottoman sources used other terms as well to refer to the disease. Apart from the local use of the word *davun*¹⁵¹, that obviously is derived from the arabic *ta'ûn*, the term *kıran*, from the Turkish verb *kırmak* or "kill" was often used. In

¹⁴⁷ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 10.

¹⁴⁸ Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 315.

¹⁴⁹ It was believed that when a djinn pricked a human being with a lance, a bubo would appear where the lance had pierced the person. This islamic belief is reminiscent of the story that in the year 680, angels wandered the streets of Rome and Padua and upon the order of the 'good' angel, the evil one pierced with a spear the doors of those that were to die of plague. As explained by Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 11.

¹⁵⁰ İdris-i Bitlisi as quoted by Süheyl Ünver. "Türkiye'de Veba (Taun) Tarihçesi Üzerine," *Tedavi Kliniği ve Laboratuvarı Mecmuası* 5 (1978), 72.

¹⁵¹ Orhan Kılıç furthers that the term *davun* was used in Denizli, İzmir, Çanakkale, Samsun, Giresun, Artvin, Erzurum and Muğla. Orhan Kılıç. *Genel Hatlarıyla Dünyada ve Osmanlı Devletinde Salgın Hastalıklar*. Tarih Şubesi Yayınları no. 5. Elazığ: Orta-Doğu Araştırmaları Merkezi Yayınları, 2004.

medieval times, plague was such an important health issue that no further explanation was necessary. Referring to the disease as *kıran* or "the killer" is stylistically comparative to the Italian habit of calling the disease with the general term *il morbo*, meaning "the disease", as did Sanudo.

As the Italians, the Byzantines and the Greek population of the Ottoman empire also very often referred to plague as "nosos" or "the disease"¹⁵². In addition, they used the term *thanatos tou boubonos*¹⁵³. Literally, this meant "death of the groin", referring to the swollen lymph nodes, often located in the groin or *boubon*, which were yet another characteristic symptom of the plague.¹⁵⁴ Modern medicine still uses the term "bubonic plague" to distinguish the form of plague characterized by buboes or swollen lymph nodes. Terminology thus also refers to the symptoms of the disease. Likewise, the Ottomans used names that referred to the appearance of buboes, such as the diminutive *yumrucak* or *yumurcak*, *yumru* being the Turkish for swelling or tumour¹⁵⁵. *Veba* being the general term for epidemic disease, the Turkish language used the specifying adjective *hyarcıklı veba* in the case of plague.¹⁵⁶ Locally, different terms were in use. In Sivas, the disease was called *baba*, which also meant tumour.¹⁵⁷

The most distinctive feature of the disease, the buboes or large swellings of the infected lymph nodes, were given various names. In Arabic, they were also

¹⁵² Both Kritovoulos and Mikael Doukas call plague "nosos" in their descriptions of the outbreaks of 1467 and 1456 respectively.

Kritovoulos of Imbros. *Historia*. translated by Irene Sophia Kiapidou. Athens, 2005, 658.

Mikael Doukas. *Bizantino turkiki historia*. translated by Vrasidas Karalis. Athens, 1979, 616.

¹⁵³ Panaretos, as quoted by Franz Babinger. *Beiträge zur Frühgeschichte der Türkenherrschaft in Rumelien (14.15. Jahrhundert)*. Südosteuropäische Arbeiten no 34. Brunn: Rudolf M. Rohrer, 1944, 47.

¹⁵⁴ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 7.

¹⁵⁵ *Yeni Tarama Sözlüğü*. edited by Cem Bilçin. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1983.

¹⁵⁶ Ünver, "Türkiye'de Veba (Taun) Tarihçesi Üzerine", 72.

¹⁵⁷ Ünver, "Türkiye'de Veba (Taun) Tarihçesi Üzerine", 72.

often called *khiyarah*, meaning cucumber.¹⁵⁸ As cited above, *yumru* was a Turkish name for swelling, but the buboes were also called *çıban*, meaning boil, in Turkish manuscripts. The term *yumurcak* was for instance used by Celâlüddin Hızır, also known as Hacı Paşı in his medical work *Müntahab-ı Şifâ*, which dates from the late fourteenth, early fifteenth century. In addition, he also described the buboes as *verem* or swelling or simply as *tâ'ûn*.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Dols, *Plague in the Middle East*, 75.

¹⁵⁹ Hacı Paşa, Celâlüddin Hızır. *Müntahab-ı Şifâ*. edited by Zafer Önler. Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları: 559. Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 1990, 173.

CHAPTER IV

THE OUTBREAK AND THE DIFFUSION OF THE BLACK DEATH

4.1. The Arrival of the Black Death in the Byzantine and Ottoman Territories

Scholars concur that the Black Death pandemic probably originated in the Eurasian steppe.¹⁶⁰ Mc Neill links the progress of the disease both westwards towards Europe and eastwards towards China to the vast Mongol empire that spanned the area in this period. The Mongols' efficient and rapid transportation network then ensured the spreading of the disease beyond their empire where it originated.¹⁶¹ Through the existing trade routes the disease then reached the Black Sea and from there on Anatolia and the Middle East. According to a 19th century

¹⁶⁰ William H. Mc Neill. *Plagues and Peoples*. New York: Anchor Books, 1998, 164. and Ziegler, *The Black Death*, 15, both cite the Russian archaeologist Chwolson who found evidence for mass burials in a Nestorian trading community near Lake Issyk- Koul in central Asia in the years 1338-1339.

¹⁶¹ In fact, Süheyl Ünver also embraced the idea that the Black Death arrived with the Mongols in '1348- Kara veba. Avrupaya Mongollarla intikal etmiş ve merkezi Hindde bulunmuştur. Mongol hükümdarı (Cengiz) zamanında altı sene sürmek üzere Allahabatta zuhura gelmiştir ki bunun veba olduğuna şüphe yoktur. Çünkü farelerden başladığı, boyunda, kasıklarda ve koltuk altındaki bezlerin şiştiği ve yazın tevakkuf ettiği yazılıdır'. Ünver, "Türkiye'de Veba (Taun) Tarihçesi Üzerine", 76.

work on epidemics the effect of the disease was tremendous. Mesopotamia, Syria, and Armenia were covered with the dead; the Kurds fled in vain to the mountains. In Caramania and Caesarea none were left alive ¹⁶². Dols¹⁶³ found no evidence in the Arabic sources that the plague reached the Middle East *before* it had ravaged the Crimea. He concluded that the disease followed "the overland route from Mongolia and northern China through Turkestan to the Black Sea region." This reasoning excludes the two other major trade routes, namely the combined land and sea route connecting China and India via the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Middle East and the sea route from the Far East through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea to Egypt. However, Mc Neill¹⁶⁴ discarded Dols' argument that there is no evidence of plague having visited India beforehand by pointing out that the Indian sources remained virtually unstudied. Mc Neill¹⁶⁵ quoted the contemporary scholar Ibn al-Wardi¹⁶⁶, who believed that :

the disease originated in the 'Land of Darkness' and spread through northern Asia before invading the civilized world, starting with China, and proceeding thence to India and the realm of Islam.

Without referring to the chronology of the events as Dols did, Ziegler¹⁶⁷ found it likely that "the plague should travel with the great caravans". He believed plague followed the route "by way of Baghdad and thence along the Tigris and through Armenia to the entrepôt stations of the Italian merchants in the Crimea." Finally,

¹⁶² Ziegler quotes the work *The Epidemics of the Middle Ages* by J.F.C. Hecker, translated and published in London, 1859, without mentioning the primary source of this claim. Ziegler, *The Black Death*, 15.

¹⁶³ Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 43.

¹⁶⁴ Mc Neill, *Plagues and Peoples*, 196.

¹⁶⁵ Ibn al-Wardi, *Risâlat an-naba' 'an al-waba'* as indirectly quoted by Mc Neill, *Plagues and Peoples*, 163.

¹⁶⁶ Ibn al-Wardi was himself to die of plague in Aleppo in 1349.

¹⁶⁷ Ziegler, *The Black Death*, 14.

Scott and Duncan¹⁶⁸ who claimed that the medieval pandemics were in fact not bubonic plague, argued that an unknown virus arrived in the Levant out of Africa.

Although the exact itinerary of the disease remains disputed, fact is that historical sources mention that it had its origin somewhere in the Asian steppe rather than in Africa. Sometimes the epidemic was linked to catastrophic events that had happened in these lands, such as drought, or floodings or phenomena of a supernatural nature. For example, the Chronicler of Este described "that between Cathay and Persia there rained a vast rain of fire ... and then arose vast masses of smoke and whosoever beheld this died within the space of half a day"¹⁶⁹. The pandemic thus covered a vast area straddling the Eurasian continent, and made its entry into European history writing through the port of Caffa. Gabriele de Mussis of Piacenza, although no eyewitness to the event, recorded how the Genoese colony at the Black Sea was struck by plague during a siege by the Tatars in 1346.¹⁷⁰ From there, Genoese galleys brought the disease to Messina in Sicily, according to the account of the Franciscan friar Michael of Piazza.¹⁷¹ This implied that as a harbour on this route, Constantinople and the adjacent Genoese colony of Pera would not stay uninfected. Indeed, the Byzantine contemporary sources show that it did not. John Cantacuzenos, who lost his son during the outbreak described in detail the plague's visitation, taking stylistical inspiration from Thucydides'

¹⁶⁸ Scott and Duncan, *Return of the Black Death*, 232.

¹⁶⁹ For the complete text, see Muratori, *Chronicon Estense* in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 15, III. pp. 159-164 as cited by Ziegler, *The Black Death*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ During the siege the Tartars reportedly catapulted the bodies of plague-struck victims over the city walls. If true, the psychological impact on the population should have been considerable because of the sight, and especially the stench. Some scholars, such as Scott and Duncan (*Return of the Black Death*, 240) even go as far as to call it an act of biological warfare, although it is doubtful whether this really would have been a conscious attempt to infect the besieged. Moreover, no other sources confirm that the event actually took place.

¹⁷¹ Even though the exactness of this account, which was written 10 years after the event, is questioned by scholars such as Ole Benedictow *The Black Death: 1346-1353 - The Complete History*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004, 70, it nevertheless describes one extremely likely trajectory of plague towards Europe.

description of the Plague of Athens. Other recordings were provided by Nicephoras Gregoras and Demetrius Cydones.

How plague was able to decimate the population of two continents remains unclear even today. However, a closer look at conditions in Byzantine society reveals they were extremely favorable for any epidemic to occur. In the middle of the fourteenth century Matthaïos, the Archbishop of Ephesos, described in a letter his life in the small Byzantine town of Brysis. Living conditions in the town where he had been recently appointed bishop were dismal.¹⁷²

The air is corrupted by the abundant rainfall that has started too early, in summer. This has caused an epidemic which started by destroying the labour of man and the fruit of the earth... Therefore the farmers lament that they have lost all hope, because they had intended to compensate last year with this year's harvest. Now that they have lost also this harvest they prefer an agreeable death to this miserable life. Then, the evil snatched away women and children, in other words the more tender age and weaker sex, who are more vulnerable to the climatic condition. Now it is starting to make the men ill, killing most of them...¹⁷³

The bishop blamed the corrupted air or miasma for the epidemic, which was the mainstream explanation for outbreaks based upon the theories of Hippocrates and Galen.¹⁷⁴ Yet, his writings also describe the occurrence of famine that very often formed the prelude to epidemics of plague, and presumably of other contagious diseases as well. On the verge of starvation, people had very little resistance to any kind of disease. Even when people were not actually starving, a poor diet meant a reduced intake of vitamins. Although still able to find food, the bishop was far from thrilled about it: "If you only knew how we stay alive and with what we feed

¹⁷² *Die Briefe des Matthaïos von Ephesos im Codex Vindobonensis Theol. Gr. 174*. Berlin: Verlag Nikolaus Mielke. translated by Diether Reinsch, 1974, 378-383. The letter is addressed to the Grosschartophylax and described the eventful journey to Brysis in the end of June and the life of the bishop in this town

¹⁷³ Reinsch, *Die Briefe des Matthaïos von Ephesos*, Berlin: Verlag Nikolaus Mielke. 1974. 380.

¹⁷⁴ This theory was held to be valid until the latter part of the 19th century.

our body..."¹⁷⁵ In addition, a life of poverty led to poor personal hygiene. As Matthaïos was accustomed to live in a city with all contemporary amenities, he complained bitterly that it was impossible to go to the thermal baths, because no such facilities existed. Moreover, the tradition of bathing formed no part of local mores. According to the bishop, the people of Brysis contented themselves with washing their heads. Only one thing could be found in abundance, namely vermin.

"What can we not all say about flies, fleas and mosquitoes ? The hands do not suffice in warding off their attack... If I have to find a characteristic for this land, I could not find anything else but these repulsive insects."¹⁷⁶

Finally, this letter also mentions a phenomenon that was very common in Byzantium in the fourteenth century and that would aggravate the existing precarious situation of cities and towns, namely the arrival of refugees.

"Bad news has arrived from far that the Myser and the Scythians are uniting to take our land. In the wake of this news, people are arriving from suburbs and villages: women with their men, children, cow, horse, dog and pig who are on the run, bringing along their entire household. Who could bear the chaos created by this ? Even before the enemy is here ... we find ourselves so to speak in a situation of siege and war, because we are so tightly packed together in a narrow space."¹⁷⁷

In view of the abovementioned situation, it was no wonder that an epidemic gained foothold in the Byzantine community of Brysis. The writings of Matthaïos of Ephesos are situated around the middle of the fourteenth century, that is around the time of the Black Death. Although the editor of the letters asserts that none of the letters can with certainty be dated after 1341, another scholar interprets at least one of the letters as referring to the palamist movement and dates it around 1351¹⁷⁸. According to Reinsch¹⁷⁹ Matthaïos stayed in Brysis from 1322 to probably 1337, during which time he wrote the letter. Matthaïos did not explicitly describe the

¹⁷⁵ Reinsch, *Die Briefe des Matthaïos von Ephesos*, 381.

¹⁷⁶ Reinsch, *Die Briefe des Matthaïos von Ephesos*, 381.

¹⁷⁷ Reinsch, *Die Briefe des Matthaïos von Ephesos*, 382

¹⁷⁸ For a detailed discussion, see Reinsch, *Die Briefe des Matthaïos von Ephesos*, 54.

¹⁷⁹ Reinsch, *Die Briefe des Matthaïos von Ephesos*, 6.

symptoms of the outbreak. As the bishop himself admitted "he was not capable to diagnose and to treat unfamiliar diseases", even when, as he complained in his letters, his community expected him to do just that.

With Constantinople visited by the plague and the region in the condition as described by the bisschop Matthaïos, it could reasonably be expected that Anatolia would also succumb to the disease. And indeed, the Florentine merchant Giovanni Villani, who himself was to become a victim of the Black Death, also mentions Turkey as one of the areas afflicted by the first outbreak:

Having grown in vigour in Turkey and Greece and having spread thence over the whole Levant and Mesopotamia and Syria and Chaldea and Cyprus and Rhodes and all the islands of the Greek archipelago...¹⁸⁰

Thus, the geographical area that included Ottoman territories was not free from plague, but were the Ottomans themselves struck with the disease ? As for most questions pertaining to the earliest period of their rule, evidence is scarce. However, in view of the intensive contacts between the Ottomans and those who suffered greatly from the plague, such as the Genoese and the Byzantines, it is obvious to which extent the Ottomans must have been exposed to the outbreak.

As Balard¹⁸¹ demonstrates, the Black Sea region and its trade were of the highest importance to the Genoese during the 13th throughout the 15th century. A network formed by their colonies and trade posts ensured the transit of luxury goods such as Chinese silk and Russian furs towards European markets. Furthermore, centres as Caffa, Tana and Kilia traded in locally produced

¹⁸⁰ Schevill, F. 1961. *History of Florence*. New York:Ungar, pp. 239-40 as cited by Benedictow, *The Black Death: 1346-1353 - The Complete History* (2004), 69.

¹⁸¹ Michel Balard. *La mer Noire et la Romanie génoise (XIII - XV siècles)*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1989, 31-54.

"commodities", such as grain, fish, wax, honey, slaves ¹⁸² and alum¹⁸³ for which there was always a high demand in the Mediterranean basin and Constantinople. In order to protect their vested interests in the region, the Genoese carefully entertained good relations with the Ottomans. İnalçık (1998: 418-420) argues that "the Genoese-Ottoman alliance, which was to last up until the Ottoman occupation of Pera in 1453, was to become of great importance for both sides". The Genoese provided their allies with reliable shipping facilities to cross the Straits, which enabled the Ottomans to establish their rule on the two continents. In return, the Ottomans protected Pera¹⁸⁴ against the Byzantines and the Venetians and they also granted the Genoese commercial privileges in their territories. Barely four years after the plague epidemic had made its entry, Pera was besieged by the Byzantine-Venetian coalition and the Ottoman ruler Orhan provided aid as a result of negotiations held by Genoese envoys sent from Pera.¹⁸⁵ These diplomatic contacts were intensified during the battle of the Bosphorus in 1352, when the Genoese sent a constant stream of envoys and presents to their allies and in return were brought news about the positions of their enemies.¹⁸⁶ It can be assumed that regular contacts were entertained between Pera and Bursa from at least 1348 onwards, when tensions rose between Genoa and its competitors. In view of the rapid spread of the disease elsewhere, a transmission of the disease through this channel is highly probable. Moreover, the Ottomans were not only political allies, they were

¹⁸² In fact, grain, furs and humans are thought to have facilitated the transport of contaminated rats and fleas, thus contributing to the propagation of the disease.

¹⁸³ According to Kate Fleet, the alum mined in Şebīn-Karahisar in the Black Sea region was of the best quality and was in demand for the thriving textile industry of Western Europe. Kate Fleet. *European and Islamic Trade in the early Ottoman State: the Merchants of Genoa and Turkey*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), 85.

¹⁸⁴ The harbour on the Bosphorus was indispensable for the trade with the Black Sea. Ships wanting to sail into the Black Sea often had to wait for the southern winds that would carry them through the Bosphorus against the heavy current flowing southwards.

¹⁸⁵ Halil İnalçık. 'The Question of the Closing of the Black Sea.' *Essays in Ottoman History*. Istanbul: Eren. 1998, 419-420.

¹⁸⁶ Balard, *La mer Noire et la Roumanie g noise (XIII - XV si cles)*, 444.

also trade partners. During the abovementioned battle, Orhan allowed the Genoese commander Paganino Doria to cross to Turkey with 30 galleys in order to load grain. Apart from trading in cereals, the Ottomans sold slaves that the Genoese sent to Alexandria and the West. The Ottoman slave trade was the result of the increasingly lucrative activity of booty raids.¹⁸⁷ Here, the plague epidemic exerted an indirect influence: the Black Death had caused a scarcity in labour that was reflected in rising prices of slaves,¹⁸⁸ which found eager buyers in Mamluk Egypt as well as in the Southern European countries. However, besides being very profitable, this trade was fraught with danger. The contact with slaves, who had often been captured under the hygienically inadequate conditions of war and siege, held the risk of becoming infected with plague as well.¹⁸⁹ That slaves were known to spread plague is demonstrated by the letter that Francesco Datini wrote to his wife in 1393: "I hear that... few slaves will be coming from Roumania, for they say that in that country many are dead and dying from the plague, and those who come die on board. It would be bringing the plague into our own homes."¹⁹⁰

After the trade with Inner Asia decreased in the mid-fourteenth century, Pera would become increasingly dependent for its economic survival on its commercial exchanges with Bursa that had become an emporium for luxury goods coming

¹⁸⁷ Halil İnalcık. 'The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State.' *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 2 (1980) 75.

¹⁸⁸ Fleet (1999: 49) states that "while it is true that the Black Death wiped out slave owners as well as slaves, thus reducing the number of potential buyers, the plague must have carried off a higher proportion of the weaker and undernourished members of the society, including slaves." According to Balard (1989: 44) as well, slaves became more expensive: "La traite est stimulée par le besoin de main-d'oeuvre que connaît l'Occident après les ravages de la Peste Noire, qui provoque un brutal renchérissement du prix des esclaves." In Fleet. *European and Islamic Trade in the early Ottoman State: the Merchants of Genoa and Turkey*, 49.

¹⁸⁹ Although the Turks were engaged in trading as well, their activity pales in comparison with traders such as the Genoese. However, the Turks assured continuing fresh supply through their military and raiding activities, a fact much attested for by the chronicles.

¹⁹⁰ Iris Origo. "The Domestic Enemy: Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Speculum* 30 (3) 1955, 321-366, page 331.

from Iran and Syria.¹⁹¹ But not only the contact with the Genoese meant possible exposure to plague for the Ottomans. The maritime activities of the newly-conquered emirate of Karesi on the Turkish coast might also have put the Ottomans at risk. Indeed, according to Ibn Khâtimah, Christian merchants that returned to Almeria after the first outbreak reported plague along the Turkish coast.¹⁹² It seems indeed logical that the Turkish principalities on the coast, such as Karesi, Saruhan, Aydın, Menteşe, Tekke and Karaman would have transmitted the epidemic to one another through their maritime activities, which in the late Middle Ages still involved mostly coastline shipping.¹⁹³ Schamiloğlu¹⁹⁴ suggests that "the Turkish principalities that were the rivals of the Ottomans were devastated by the Black Death." This at least was reported to be the case for Karaman, a major rival of the Ottomans according to İnalçık.¹⁹⁵ As the Turkish coast was hit by the plague during the 1348 outbreak, the disease must have been disruptive to the coastal towns of the other principalities, which could have conferred a military advantage to the Ottomans if their armies had been spared. Not only the Ottomans, but also the Byzantines, who were embroiled in dynastic strife, might have benefited from the epidemic's effect on the maritime emirates as well: Caroline Finkel¹⁹⁶ argues that not only the Ottomans and Bulgars were a threat to Byzantium. The emirate of Karesi was almost as close to Constantinople as Bythinia and had access to the sea, which it used to control the Dardanelles

¹⁹¹ İnalçık, 'The Question of the Closing of the Black Sea,' 313.

¹⁹² Ibn Khâtimah lived in Almeria, Spain at the time of the first outbreak of the Black Death and wrote a plague treatise from which this information is taken (fol. 53a) as quoted by Dols (1977: 62).

¹⁹³ Benedictow (2006: 229) asserts that ship technology had not sufficiently been developed to enable sailing on the open sea or sailing against the wind. Therefore, ships did not sail at night and usually sailed along the coast.

¹⁹⁴ Schamiloğlu, "The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: The Black Death in Medieval Anatolia and its Impact on Turkish Civilization.", 271.

¹⁹⁵ İnalçık. (2003: 14).

¹⁹⁶ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 14.

Straits. The emirate also raided the Byzantine possessions in Thrace before the crusaders destroyed its fleet. In the same vein, it seems logical that any upheaval brought about by plague in the other maritime *beyliks* such as those of Saruhan or Aydın would have reduced those *beyliks'* negative influence on Byzantine trade.

Whether or not the plague epidemic conveyed a strategic advantage to the Ottomans against the remaining maritime emirates, fact is that the only record in the Ottoman chronicles of the 1347-48 plague outbreak was directly linked to the Ottoman conquest of the Karesi emirate in the previous years.

Rivâyet olunur ki, çünkü Karasi vilâyeti Orhan Gazi'ye müsellemlendi, Karasi-oğlunu dahi hisardan âmânla çıkarub, Bursa'ya gönderdiler. İki yıl diri olub, âhir tâ'undan vefat itdi.¹⁹⁷

Two years after Demirhan Bey, the unfortunate Karesi-oğlu, was sent to Bursa, he died of plague there. From this statement it is clear that the Ottoman capital Bursa was visited by the outbreak. As no other information is available, we can only guess at the impact of the disease and the reaction of the local population when the epidemic first struck. Insofar as the Turkish settlers had retained a pastoral lifestyle, it would have protected them to a certain degree against the disease. Contemporary chroniclers had observed that a nomadic lifestyle reduced the risk of infection. The Iberian scholar Ibn al-Khâtib recorded that North African nomads had been spared the disease¹⁹⁸ and similar observations had been made for the Bedouins. Unfortunately, the sources do not provide us with any clues as to how the Ottoman Turks responded to plague when faced with it for the first time in their history.

¹⁹⁷ The quote is taken from Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihan-Nümâ*, 167. The same event is described in several other chronicles as well.

¹⁹⁸ Benedictow attributes this phenomenon to the exposure of peasants and citydwellers to rats and rat fleas, which nomads avoided through their migrations. Benedictow, *The Black Death: 1346-1353- The Complete History*, 67.

4.2 Subsequent Outbreaks in Ottoman Territory

In 1348, the Black Death had arrived in Ottoman territory to stay. By the 19th century, it would still periodically erupt in some part of the empire. Taking into account that the third plague pandemic arrived in Izmir at the end of the 19th century, this meant that the Ottoman empire never became completely plague-free. Why the epidemics continued unabated in the empire whereas their frequency was greatly reduced on the European continent after 1722 is not known. A possible explanation is that no wild rodent species in Europe is known to form a permanent reservoir for the plague. In other words, once the chain of human transmission was broken in Europe, the only way for the disease to reappear was through import from endemic areas. In time, this became less likely because of the efforts by the European state to impose quarantine and other protective measures. By contrast, as demonstrated above, the Ottoman territory was located next to important plague foci. Through human contact with contaminated animals, the disease could periodically resurface and then quickly spread to the major urban centers. When reaching the Middle Eastern ports¹⁹⁹, maritime trade turned it into a permanent threat for the European nations.

After the first outbreak of 1347/1348, the unstable political conditions and internecine strife in the Ottoman territory during the rest of the 14th and the 15th century offered plenty of opportunity for plague outbreaks to flourish. In the *Tarihi*

¹⁹⁹ Biraben. *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol. I, 109.

Takvimler, the Nurosmaniye chronicle indicates that the Ottomans could have been suffering as well from the second plague outbreak of the Black Death in 1361/62. The laconic entry for the year 764 states : "764'de umumi ölüm, vebâ ve taun." ²⁰⁰ Even without this succinct statement, there can be no doubt that the Ottomans had again been exposed to the pandemic. Fourteen years after the epidemic had first struck, Europe as well as the Middle Eastern countries of Syria and Egypt were once more badly hit. That the whole region had severely suffered was clear from several sources. The Byzantine Short Chronicles or Brachea Chronika mentions that the whole of the Byzantine empire was suffering from plague in the years 1361/1362.²⁰¹ The same chronicle also reports the death of Orhan in March 1362 ²⁰² and the stylistical coherence with the notice that described the plague leads Schreiner to presume that the Ottoman ruler might have been a victim of the plague too. An additional argument in favour of this thesis consists of the fact that as the Ottomans had besieged Edirne in 1361, chances of becoming infected were indeed high. For the city had most likely suffered from the general plague epidemic of 1361/1362 as recorded by the Brachea Chronika also existed in Edirne ²⁰³. Although the Ottoman chronicles do not allow to vindicate this thesis, it is just possible that the Ottoman chroniclers preferred to depict Orhan Ghazi's death from grief caused by the mourning over the loss of his heroic son. Such a death would befit one of the founders of the Ottoman dynasty rather than being one of the myriad victims of an epidemic.

²⁰⁰ Turan, *Tarihi Takvimler*, 73.

²⁰¹ Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 290.

²⁰² The death of Orhan is likewise dated 763 AH or 1362 in the Nurosmaniye chronicle. Turan, *Tarihi Takvimler*, 73.

²⁰³ Apparently, Panaretos mentions the plague outbreak as having struck Edirne in early 1362. As quoted by Franz Babinger. *Beiträge zur Frühgeschichte der Türkenherrschaft in Rumelien (14.15. Jahrhundert)*. Südosteuropäische Arbeiten no 34. Brünn: Rudolf M. Rohrer, 1944, 47.

Plague appeared again in Pera in 1381/82 according to the Byzantine Short Chronicles.²⁰⁴ Further information on the Ottomans is lacking, but in view of the commercial contacts described above, it is likely that the Ottoman territory also suffered outbreaks those years. Although their recorded impact was more limited, subsequent plague outbreaks would recur in the Byzantine and Ottoman territories with the regularity that was also observed elsewhere. In addition to the outbreak of 1381/82 in Pera²⁰⁵, The Brachea Chronika recorded outbreaks in 1365 occurring in Crete,²⁰⁶ in 1374 in Arta,²⁰⁷ 1376 again in Crete,²⁰⁸ and 1388/89 once more in Crete.²⁰⁹ That the Brachea Chronika did not systematically record all the outbreaks, is shown by the letters of Demetrius Cydones that mention plague outbreaks in Valachia in the autumn of 1386²¹⁰. Furthermore, in his letters to his friend Ioanni Lascari, he alludes to an outbreak in Constantinople during the winter of 1386-87 and the following summer²¹¹. About both of these outbreaks, the Short Chronicles remain silent.

The outbreak of 1390/1391²¹² had been experienced firsthand by Manuel II Palaeologos in Constantinople before he left the city to join battle as an Ottoman vassal. This is clearly in a letter he wrote to Cydones in Constantinople during the winter of 1391. On a campaign against the emir of Isfendiyar as the vassal of Bayezid, he wrote : "...seeing someone from home was very important for many reasons, but particularly because of the pestilence which was taking such a terrible

²⁰⁴ Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 324.

²⁰⁵ These outbreaks were also extensively mentioned in the letters by Cydones that will be discussed in chapter IV.

²⁰⁶ Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 292.

²⁰⁷ Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 308.

²⁰⁸ Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 311.

²⁰⁹ Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 337.

²¹⁰ Demetrius Cydonès. *Correspondance* ed. by Raymond-J. Loenertz O.P. (Vatican – Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1960), 272-273.

²¹¹ Cydonès, *Correspondance*, 263 and 285.

²¹² The outbreak is mentioned in an exchange of letters between the emperor and Cydones, as well as in the Brachea Chronika. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 344.

toll in our city, while I was among you."²¹³ Obviously his army had brought the disease with them, for in another letter he wrote to Cydones, he wrote: "It is not, of course, an easy matter to bear such things, nor to bear the scarcity of provisions, and the strong wintry weather, and the disease which, since it has taken hold of many of my men, has also - as you can imagine- stricken my soul."²¹⁴ In view of the fact that Manuel II Palaeologos with his men had left Constantinople while the plague was still raging there, that his soldiers were dying from the illness *en route* and that he was marching alongside Bayezid and his army, there can be no doubt that the Ottomans were also exposed to this outbreak. Constantinople had barely time to recover from the epidemic before it became plague-stricken once more, for in 1396, the ships of the Crusaders brought plague back to the city²¹⁵. The outbreak in the Peloponnesus in 1398/1399 would be the last one to be recorded in the area in the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century, the chain of outbreaks would continue, in Europe as well as in the Ottoman territory. A series of minor outbreaks would occasionally be followed by a major epidemic.

One of these took place in the year 1409/1410 as described in the Byzantine Short Chronicles²¹⁶. According to the chronicle, ten thousand people died in Constantinople²¹⁷ among whom Theodoros Cantacuzenos, a scion of the imperial dynastic family and member of the Senate. If we are to believe Sphrantzes, it was in the same outbreak that Yusuf, the son of the Ottoman ruler

²¹³ Letter 21 to Cydones (Constantinople) from Asia Minor, winter 1391-92, in reply to the letter 431 of Cydones in which he bewails the pestilence in the capital. As edited by George T. Dennis, *The Letters of Manuel II Paleologus*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1977, 839.

²¹⁴ from the letter of Manuel II Paleologos to Cydones, as cited in John W. Barker. *Manuel II Paleologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969, 92.

²¹⁵ Biraben. *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, vol II, 94.

²¹⁶ Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 394.

²¹⁷ Schreiner warns that this figure of casualties is not verifiable. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 394.

Yıldırım (Thunderbolt) Bayezid, fell victim to the plague. Yusuf had been handed over as a hostage to the emperor Manuel after his father's defeat in the battle of Ankara, and eventually died of plague in Constantinople. Doukas also described the death from plague of the Ottoman prince, but he correlated the event with the demise of the Russian princess Ann, the child-bride of John Paleologus, which would in that case situate Yusuf's death during the outbreak of 1417/18.²¹⁸ As Lowry (2003: 101) points out it is Bayezid's son Yusuf that is the first member of the Ottoman dynasty whose death was unequivocally recorded as being caused by plague. It is no surprise that Yusuf was not mentioned in the Ottoman chronicles. The Byzantine chroniclers describe that against the emperor's misgivings, upon Yusuf's insistence to become a Christian, he was baptized and received the name of Demetrius shortly before he died of plague.²¹⁹ That Demetrius also was the name of a saint, who was venerated for his miraculous curing of the plague²²⁰, is surely more than just coincidence.

A 15th century example of how dire conditions prepared the field for plague in the sphere of influence of the Ottomans is given by the siege of Patras by the despot Lord Constantine in the spring of 1429. The Byzantine chronicler Sphrantzes who took part in the siege as the despot's trusted servant was taken prisoner, brought to Patras and locked up. The conditions of his imprisonment provide a ready explanation for the way the disease could spread. Sphrantzes (1980: 37) described that :

I was thrown into the dark tower of a house, full of ants, weevils, *and mice*, as it was located in front of the grain storage.²²¹

²¹⁸ Dukas, 1956. *Bizans Tarihi*, edited by VL Mirmiroğlu. Istanbul: Istanbul Matbaası, 59-60.

²¹⁹ Doukas writes that knowing how much this matter was objectionable to the Ottomans, the emperor Manuel had previously rejected his wish to be baptised.

²²⁰ Stathakopoulos (2004: 324)

²²¹ Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477*, 46.

After Sphrantzes was freed, his master sent him as an ambassador to Murad. Although other sources mention plague in Anatolia at that time, he does not make any mention of an outbreak. In 1430, the Ottomans took Thessalonica from the Venetians by war and the despot Constantine took possession of the tower of Patras, *as its defenders had suffered greatly by hunger and hardship*.²²² Quite predictably, Sphrantzes reports for 1431 that : "the plague claimed numerous victims at Patras." In this case, it seems quite likely that the Ottoman army brought the disease with them from Anatolia, where it had raged in the years 1428/29. The scenario seems to have repeated itself during the siege of Constantinople by Mehmed the Conqueror in 1453. Sphrantzes reports that :

"Even before the Sultan had arrived, the fortresses and castles in the vicinity of the city that were spread in the villages and over the fields and to which people had fled in the wake of the sudden approach of the enemy were taken after a short siege. Some of the people were sold as slaves, others succumbed to plague and bad treatment."²²³

Later in the 15th century, yet another siege by the Ottomans was accompanied by a plague outbreak. In 1456, Mehmed undertook the siege of Belgrade - and failed to take the stronghold. Here again, the siege ended and plague started: John Hunyadi, the commander of the fortress, died of plague soon after the siege of Belgrade.²²⁴ The crusader army which had come to support the defenders likely took plague back home, for in 1456 and 1457, North and Central Italy were once again experiencing a plague epidemic.²²⁵ The disease had been brought along by the Ottomans who had suffered from a bad outbreak in 1455 as documented by Doukas. The outbreaks continued to take their toll in the Ottoman

²²² Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477*, 45.

²²³ see Sphrantzes, *Die letzten Tagen von Konstantinople*, 44.

²²⁴ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 59.

²²⁵ Luigi Capasso and Arnaldo Capelli. *Le Epidemie di Peste in Abruzzo dal 1348 al 1702*. Cerchio Aquila: Adelmo Polla Editore, 1993, 45.

empire in the second half of the fifteenth century, much to the discontent of Mehmed the Conqueror, who delivered an *uphill struggle* to repopulate his newly conquered capital Istanbul after each outbreak.²²⁶ At the close of the century, Bursa would suffer a major outbreak that lasted for several years and which left its trace in the judicial records of the city²²⁷. Likewise, the diaries of Marino Sanudo show that Istanbul knew several outbreaks in that period as well. Though plague treatises commonly warned about the causative effect of earthquakes, the great earthquake that destroyed much of Istanbul in 1509 was not followed by an outbreak. In the year 1513, however, there would be again a devastating plague outbreak in Istanbul, killing that year no less than sixty thousand people according to the Venetian Baylo. A special case of presumed plague death would be that of the Ottoman ruler Selim in 1520. Selim's sudden death on the way between Edirne and Istanbul caused turmoil all over Europe. Sanudo records that when the news was read in public in Venice that Selim had died, there was a great turmoil.²²⁸ The excitement was not caused by the fact that he apparently had died of plague - the Venetians were quite accustomed that the disease took the lives of their citizens, both prominent and common - but that it seemed too good to be true. Selim's aggressive and expansionary policy had been a great cause of concern for the Venetians.²²⁹ Of course, a single message could not be relied upon. The death of

²²⁶ See also the discussion of the evidence concerning Mehmed's repopulation efforts as treated by Lowry in Chapter IV, policies and politics.

²²⁷ Osman Çetin. *Bursa mahkeme sicillerine göre: ilk Osmanlı hastanesi*. Istanbul. 2006, page 134. See also the entries of the Bursa judicial records of death of *devşirme* of plague as transcribed in Çoşkun and Necdet Yılmaz, eds. *Osmanlılarda Sağlık*. Vol. II - Arşiv Belgeleri. Istanbul: Biofarma, 2006, 26 et passim.

²²⁸ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 29, col. 303

“A di 21, Domenega. La matina se intese queste lettere contener la morte del Signor turco da peste apresso Andernopoli, e la terra fo piena.”

²²⁹ It was a great relief when the new *Signor Turco*, Süleyman was reported to be a studious scholar, - and most importantly, peaceful.

Sanudo, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 29, col. 392

Di Constantinopoli, dil Baylo nostro, date in Pera, a di 15 Octubrio.

Turkish rulers had been wrongly announced before, such as Bayezid's death in June 1502 ²³⁰ and Sanudo himself often remained sceptical about the veracity of such announcements. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Venetian chronicler recorded all available sources of this important news. That Selim had died of plague seemed in fact a very plausible explanation. For in his previous messages dated the 24th of August and the 1st of September, the Venetian Baylo, sir Tomà Contarini, had already reported that a great epidemic had struck both Edirne and Istanbul.²³¹ And then arrived news from Ragusa : a messenger from Edirne had confirmed that Selim had died in a place called Ogras, situated between Istanbul and Edirne.²³² According to the writer of the letter, this was the very location where Selim had fought his father. Some of those who heard this announcement might have remembered the news that had been read to them announcing the malediction of Selim's dying father Bayezid eight years earlier. If his sons were to fight among each other, they would be cursed !²³³ Evidently, it took much longer for a letter to

“... se dice esser savio Signor, à piacer di studio, tutti sperano bene del suo governo.”

Sanudo, vol. 29, col. 490

I lettere dil Bailo nostro di Constantinopoli, di 3 Novembrio.

“Come il Signor era homo pacifico ...”

²³⁰ Sanudo, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 4, col. 267

Da Constantinopoli.

“Come è molti zorni il signor turco non ha tenuto Porta, ne è persona la habbi veduto; et si giudichava fusse morto...”

²³¹ Sanudo, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 28, col. 304

Di sier Tomà Contarini baylo nostro a Constantinopoli, date in Pera a di primo Septembrio.

“Come, a di 12 Avosto scrisse da poi parti il Signor con la corte per Andernopoli per star questa invernata de li, e lui Baylo convegnirà andarvi licet quel aere li sia contrario, dove se intende à gran morbo...”

Sanudo, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 29, col. 595.

E lettere di Baylo di Constantinopoli, di 24 dil passato a questo rezimento.

“... Et per avisi particular in merchadanti, si à da Constantinopoli come de li è il morbo grande The plague epidemic in Edirne was so massive and the air of the city so bad that the Baylo was not too keen on joining Selim there, although to fulfil his duties he intended to go.”

²³² Sanudo, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 29, col. 306.

Poi fo lete nove di Ragusi, di 11...

“Come, per uno messo parti di Andernopoli a di 23 Septembrio, si havea la morte dil Signor turco tra Andernopoli e Constantinopoli in uno locho ditto Ogras, dove fu il conflito con il padre... “

²³³ Marino Sanudo had indeed recorded the following claim in his diary in the year 1512: Sanuto, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 14, col. 578.

arrive from Istanbul than from Ragusa. Therefore, the letter of the Venetian Baylo in Istanbul with news of Selim being seriously ill, arrived *after* the announcement of his death. As was the habit for letters that carried news of great importance, it was encoded.²³⁴ He wrote that Selim was in the countryside and had been suffering of two *carboni* and a *jandusa al scaro*²³⁵ for the last twelve days. The ruler was still in great pain and to his physical discomfort was added the agony that some had arrived in his campsite who were from a plague-bearing nation. No one had access to the wooden house he had ordered to be built for him, but his physicians and his own subjects. The Baylo ended his report with the observation that Selim most certainly feared for his life.

But the news of Selim's sudden death was not to cause excitement with the Venetians only. As soon as the King of Hungary,²³⁶ was informed by some Venetians, he called the Venetian *orator* to give him the good news. For in his opinion, Selim's successor would not be a threat to him, nor to any Christians.²³⁷ In

Da Constantinopoli, vene letere di sier Lunardo Justinian baylo, l'ultime di 12 luio..

E se intese, la morte dil Signor turcho, qual mori a dì 3 luio in camino, ... Havia lassà il suo casandar di danari ai fioli, ducati 60 milia a l'anno, con questo chi li deva la maledition si tra loro fevano guerra...

²³⁴ Sanuto, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 29, col. 322.

Dil Baylo di Constantinopoli, date in Pera, a dì 17 Septembrio. Dil dito, pur di 17, era in zifra.

“Come a dì primo scrisse el Signor havia auto do carboni e una jandusa al scaro, et era in campagna, et come l'era risanato zà 12 zorni: hora avisa aver inteso è restè molto dolente; si ha fato far lì in campagna una casa di legnami in la qual non vi entra si non li medici et quelli il governa, et par sopra la spala li sia venuto una nasion o peste, che ha fato gran piaga, sichè si dubita molto di la sua vita, ...”

²³⁵ These are indeed typical plague symptoms. The baylo sir Piero Bragadin, who had been ill with plague but recovered, also described himself as suffering from a *carboni*, which he described as being a sort of *giandusa*.

Sanuto, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 41, col. 525-534

Sumario di la relatione di sier Piero Bragadin venuto Baylo di Constantinopoli, fatta in Pregadi a dì 9 Zugno 1526.

“Ha portà grandissima fatica et pericolo di vita per la peste, che mai si ha riguardato esso Baylo, si che miracolose si pol dir sia preservato, et sl li vene un carbon, ch' è specie di giandusa, et varite.”

²³⁶ The king himself had decided to return to Buda, because there was a great plague outbreak in Bohemia.

²³⁷ Sanuto, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 29, col. 340

Di Hongaria, di sier Lorenzo Orio el dottor orator nostro, in Possonia, a dì 7 Octubrio.

November, another confirmation of Selim's death reached the Venetians from their *orators* in Edirne. Their letters had arrived in Ragusa, confirming that Selim had died of plague on the 22nd of September.²³⁸ Finally, in December, the official declaration of the Porte reached Venice. In a short letter, the new ruler, Suleyman, announced his father's death and availed of the opportunity to express his wish for peace and friendship.²³⁹ Evidently, no mention of Selim's cause of death was made in the letter, as this was a formal announcement from a head of state.

Some Ottoman chroniclers would simply register Selim's death as caused by *şir pence*, literally meaning lion's claw.²⁴⁰ The *Anonim Tevârih-i Al-i Osman* mentions that a sort of boil appeared after the ruler's visit to the hammam²⁴¹ and in concordance with the Venetians' report his death in the place where had confronted his father. Unlike the Venetians, who were unhesitant to report anyone's death of plague²⁴², Ottomans might have displayed a certain reticence and *pudeur* towards the disease when it came to describing the death of their rulers.

“Soa Maestà mandò per esso orator dicendoli in quel momento aver auto nove vere et infalibel che il Signor turco era morto di peste nel loco dove fu il conflitto col padre...dicendo debi scriver bona nova a la Signoria, perché succederia persona non daria molestia ni a Soa Maestà, ni a cristiani.”

²³⁸ Sanuto, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 29, col. 341

Fo leto una letera di la comunità di Ragusi, sotoscrita divotissimi servitori, rectores consilium et comunitas civitatis Ragusii, data in Ragusi, a dì 21.

“Come, haveano auto letere di soi oratori di Andernopoli di 5 Ottobre, che li avisa avano a dì 22.”
Septembrio morite Selim signor, di peste, ...

²³⁹ Sanuto, , *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 29, col. 395-396

Copia di la letera dil Signor turco Suliman, scritta a la Signoria nostra, portata per il suo ambasator,...

“Sia noto a la Vostra Serenità, come el beato nostro padre è morto, et è fatto beato ...”

²⁴⁰ According to the Redhouse Turkish and English Lexicon. Istanbul, 1890, this means a large carbuncle or boil, thus in fact confirming the Baylo's report. Of course, some other disease, such as anthrax, might have provoked this symptom.

²⁴¹ see Giese, *Anonim Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*, 139.

²⁴² Marino Sanudo regularly mentions the death from plague of important merchants as indeed of the unfortunate Baylo Priuli. With a sense for detail, and without making any distinction, he matter-of-factly records any cause of death, be it plague, colics, fevre terziana, flusso etc.

CHAPTER V

THE RESPONSE TO PLAGUE

5.1. Individual and Collective Behavior

In the Byzantine society, the arrival of the plague epidemics had a profound influence on people's psychology as well as on social life. Demetrius Cydones, a highly educated man who served under several emperors, witnessed the outbreaks of both 1347/48 and 1361/62 in Constantinople. In a letter to a friend, he deplored the changing behaviour of his fellow-townsmen and the erosion of social ties: "What hurts the most is that people avoid each other, because they fear the contact with the disease." He also expressed his concern for the condition of Constantinople that risks losing its status as an imperial city:

The worst of all is that every day the Great City (Constantinople) becomes emptier and the number of graves shows that the Greatest is becoming a small town... I, who have to live in this terror and have to watch how the City is in danger to lose that name, feel deep fear in my soul.²⁴³

During the second outbreak of 1361, he again worried about the fate of Constantinople:

²⁴³ Cydones had obtained a high position from Cantacuzenos in 1347 and arrived in Constantinople from Thessalonika shortly before the outbreak started. Kydones, *Briefe*, 179.

... The survivors do not seem to suffice to bury the death. Each day the evil gets worse; there is no hope to see an end to it and the danger exists that the city which has created all, will absorb all and become our mutual grave.²⁴⁴

Moreover he had to suffer the loss of his mother and two of his three sisters. His letters reflect the intense psychological shock that people endured who lived in constant fear of death and experienced the loss of their family and friends :

The surviving sister ... seems still alive. However, she has not stopped mourning for her sisters, but sits looking at their grave, crying, as if she is witnessing once more their struggle with death... He who has an eye for reality will say that I, while alive, am not more fortunate than those that have died. Because it is already a year that I suffer from dizziness in the head, that I feel as if my heart is bursting through my chest. I also suffer from breathlessness, as if I would suffocate and of insomnia, which drives me almost insane. All this creates a feeling of constant impotence.²⁴⁵

Since the first outbreak, his opinion about physicians had not improved: "My fear is of physicians is stronger than any illness ... they do not even notice that their learned dietary prescriptions sustain or even aggravate the illness."²⁴⁶

Flight

Flight and isolation from the plague outbreaks doubtlessly improved a person's prospects of staying alive. In the Byzantine empire, people sought to safeguard themselves from plague in monasteries, and would continue to do so in the centuries to come. Their emperors displayed the same behavior. According to Sphrantzes, the emperor Manuel temporarily transferred his court to the Monastery of Peribleptos on account of the plague in 1420. Islands too could provide isolation

²⁴⁴ Kydones, *Briefe*, 281.

²⁴⁵ Kydones, *Briefe*, 316.

²⁴⁶ Kydones, *Briefe*, 317.

and a safehaven.²⁴⁷ Asanes Konstantinos, a friend of Demetrius Cydones obviously chose this strategy, for Cydones wrote to him rather ironically:

So go on to travel from one island to the next, have a look at their harbours, sing with the ores and feed yourself with rye bread and garlic. May good fortune bring you back here, once God has been appeased.²⁴⁸

Cydones obviously did not appreciate that in addition to all the hardship he suffered, he had to part with the company of good friends. In a letter dated 1347/48 he criticised his friend Georgios, a physician, for having left the city without informing him first. Sardonicly, he added that his friend apparently did not think much of his own medical capacities.²⁴⁹ It is clear from the remaining sources that whoever had the means tried to put at much distance between him and the disease as possible. Indeed, the emperors again did not behave differently. Demetrius Cydones not only berated his friends, but also his emperor John V Paleologos for intending to leave the city during the outbreak of 1361/62: "*The people have been taken away (by the plague), those who are responsible for the state go, so it seems, elsewhere.*"²⁵⁰

This was no different from what happened in Western and Southern Europe, where rulers likewise preferred to put as much distance between them and the disease as possible. Among others, Pierre III fled from Barcelona to Teruel during the outbreak of 1348. Soon afterwards the plague caught up with him, forcing him to leave for Saragossa²⁵¹. Those who had the means to do so would follow their example: Boccaccio eloquently described the flight of well-to-do

²⁴⁷ A few centuries later, this was still a popular strategy for those who had the means to do so. As Lowry, recalls, Oghier de Busbecq wished to leave plague-stricken Istanbul for the island of Prinkipio in the Sea of Marmara. Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 127.

²⁴⁸ Kydones, *Briefe*, 281.

²⁴⁹ Kydones, *Briefe*, 179.

²⁵⁰ Kydones, *Briefe*, 281. According to the editor, Franz Tinnefeld, this passage alludes to the intentions of settling the imperial court outside the city in the wake of the plague outbreak.

²⁵¹ Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol I : 161.

citizens from plague. Western plague treatises of the 14th century considered flight the best protection against the disease: times and again the writings would recommend "cito, longe fugas et tarde redeas" or flee fast and far and return slowly. Alfonso of Cordoba also cannily observed that "plague did not pursue those who fled."²⁵² But probably people needed no encouragement from plague treatises to leave the horrors of a plague-stricken environment. The breakdown of daily life and the general atmosphere of suffering and despair should have been sufficient to make people wish for other surroundings. Yet the flight of the prominent members of society left the poor and ill especially vulnerable and ill-equipped to handle the situation. Therefore, since the earliest outbreaks, certain cities forbade to leave the territory. According to Biraben²⁵³, the first to do so was Udine in 1382, followed by Florence the next year. In order to impose such an unpopular measure, taxes were taken from those who did not return immediately. Unsurprisingly, more than half of those who fled preferred to pay.

The response of the early Ottoman Turks is less easily deducible from the sources consulted. In theory, Islamic theology frowned upon leaving a place once it had become infected. This rule, although disadvantageous for the individual, was to the advantage of the larger community, for it protected against the spread of the disease to other areas. It would also prevent that the richer part of a society would leave the more vulnerable elements to cope with the consequences of the disease.

²⁵² Nockels Fabbri, Christiane. "Continuity and Change in Late Medieval Plague Medicine: A Survey of 152 Plague Tracts from 1348 to 1599." Unpublished PhD thesis. Yale University, (2006), 60.

²⁵³ Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, Vol II, 164-165.

As we discussed above, the European cities were enforcing similar measures and combining a sentiment of Christian solidarity²⁵⁴ with practical concerns.

The Ottoman sources indicate that some Ottoman Turks indeed *did not* leave. For the 1428/29 outbreak in Bursa, it is recorded that many notables died during the outbreak. The *Tarihi Takvimler* as edited by Osman Turan (1984: 25) mention that "... Bursa şehrinde begayet ölüt ve vebâ düşelden ve çok halk-ı 'âlem helâk olub." Assuming that the notables of a society dispose of the financial means to leave a city, this means that they either did not wish to go or that they were prevented to leave. In the case of the brothers and cousin of Murad, who succumbed to plague, their freedom of movement might well have been restricted. Prominent urban Turks would belong either to the 'ilmiyye or the 'askeriyye class. The first would in principle adhere to the standard Islamic rule of remaining in an area once it had become infected. The latter probably had some military assignment, such as protecting the city, or they were involved in its management. Leaving the duty assigned to them would have been a serious crime: doubtlessly most preferred being exposed to plague than to the anger of the Ottoman ruler.

An indication that its inhabitants left Istanbul in times of outbreaks after the city became the capital of the Ottoman empire is given by the chronicler Kritovoulos. The great plague outbreak of 1466 was not the first one after the city had been conquered by Mehmed, but it was the first of which a detailed description is available. Kritovoulos, who was an eyewitness of the epidemic, reports that

"Some, fearing the plague, fled and never came back, not even to care for their nearest relatives, but even turned away from them, although they often

²⁵⁴ According to Biraben, (*Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens* Vol II, 84), one of the most highly esteemed charitable deeds was the care for plague-sufferers.

appealed to them with pitiful lamentation, yet they abandoned the sick uncared-for and the dead unburied".²⁵⁵

Obviously, Kritovoulos did not specify who fled. Was this flight a general phenomenon, or was it something only the Christian population resorted to ? For the city of Trabzon, it is clear that at least in the sixteenth century, large-scale flight of the population took place, creating great financial loss of income for the hamams, which were deprived of customers.²⁵⁶ But here again, we do not know whether the various populations displayed a different response.

It is also not clear from the sources what response, if any, the earliest Ottoman rulers showed to the pandemic during the first decades after it made its appearance in the region. Did they, accustomed as they were to a less sedentary lifestyle, already adopt the policy of leaving their capitals in times of plague as their successors did during the fifteenth century ? It seems most likely. Moreover, if their travelling around formed part of an old tradition, there would be no reason for the earliest chronicles to mention them specifically. After all, the recordings in the *Tarihi Takvimler* are a mirror of what were considered to be extraordinary events, which did not include the run-of-the mill annual transhumance movements. For their successors, there is no doubt that they indeed left plague-infested areas for healthier surroundings. The first indication of flight coincides with the terrible outbreak in Bursa in the first half of the fifteenth century that killed three brothers of Murad II, namely Yusuf, Mahmud and Ahmed. Their cousin Orhan Bey, the son of Emir Süleyman, also succumbed to the disease during the same outbreak as did many other notables.

The *Kemal Selâtin-nâme* described the death of the princes poetically:

Ki sultânın beş oğlu olmuşdı

²⁵⁵ Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 220-221.

²⁵⁶ Jennings, *Studies on Ottoman Social History in the 16th and 17th Century*, 669 et passim.

Hudâ emrine üçü varmışdı
Biri Ahmed bir Mahmûd Yusuf Han
Ta'ûndan gitdi bunlar bilgil iy can²⁵⁷

Neşri also described the outbreak which caused the death of so many notables, but omits to mention the brother Ahmed as plague victim²⁵⁸:

Ve dahi ol yılda Bursa'da tâ'un-ı ekber olup. Emîr Seyyid hazretleri müteveffa oldu...Ve dahi ol ta'unda Sultan Murad'ın karındaşları Yusuf ve Mahmud Çelebi müteveffa oldu. Ve Emir Süleyman'ın oğlu Orhan Bey ve İbrahim Paşa ve Hacı İvaz Paşa, ki Sultan gözlerine mil çektiydi, müteveffa oldular. Ve Çırak Bey ve Şeyh Fahret-tin Efendi oğulları şems ül-'ulemâ Şemsettin ibni Fenârî bu mecmu'u müteveffa oldular...²⁵⁹

This outbreak, which took place in 1429 is further confirmed by Yılmaz Öztuna (1996), who in his overview of the Ottoman dynasty mentions that Orhan Çelebi died in 1429 during the plague epidemic and was buried in Bursa in the Murad Hudâvendigâr Türbe.²⁶⁰ In view of the seriousness of the outbreak it is very well possible that the disease did not disappear completely in Bursa in the following years. Oruç Beğ reports that in the years 834 and 835²⁶¹ Murad did not go on a campaign but spent his time on the Çöke yaylası and the Sakar yaylası respectively. This might have been to avoid staying in a plague-ridden city. The Ottoman chroniclers explicitly praised the qualities of the air in the yaylas of the Balkans²⁶² - an appraisal quite in concordance with the prevailing theory of miasma or bad air provoking plague. Of course, it is conceivable that the Ottoman

²⁵⁷ Öztürk, Necdet. XV. yüzyıl tarihçilerinden Kemal Selâtin-nâme (1299-1490), 2001.

²⁵⁸ Şükrullah also describes only Yusuf and Mahmud as having died of plague, saying explicitly that Ahmed died while his father was still alive. Atsız, XV. Asır Tarihçisi Şükrullâh. Dokuz Boy Türkleri ve Osmanlı Sultanları Tarihi, 37.

²⁵⁹ Neşri, Kitâb-ı Cihan-Nümâ, 609.

²⁶⁰ Yılmaz Öztuna. Devletler ve Hânedanlar: Türkiye (1074-1990.) - vol. 2. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları no. 1101. Kaynak Eserler Dizisi no. 18 Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1996, 118.

²⁶¹ The years 834 and 835 correspond to the spring and summer seasons of 1431 and 1432 respectively. Oruç Beğ Tarihi, 84.

²⁶² "Mora bir hoş memlekettür... Ve yaylaklar ve kışlaklar vardır ki, letâfet ü mülâyemet-i âb u havâlarından kuvvet-i musavvireye şol mertebe hâsıl olur ki, ervâh-ı latîfeye sûret virüp, hacle-i ıyânda cilve-ger kılar." in Tursun Bey. 1977. Târih-i Ebû'l-Feth. edited by Mertol Tulum. İstanbul: Baha Matbaası. page 92

rulers went to the *yayla* whenever they were not campaigning. But if it was an established habit, why did the chroniclers bother to mention it explicitly for those years ? Late spring and summer was the time to go to war or to the *yayla* - it was also the moment when plague outbreaks were often most fulgurous. It might be that the great outbreak in Bursa that had taken the lives of so many of the Ottomans' most prominent men, had spoiled Murad's appetite to spend more time in that city. Plague might have been a reason why the Ottoman ruler changed his residence to Edirne, but it did not become less of a problem for the outbreaks struck that city as well. Every city to become the capital of the Ottoman empire would as a result be confronted with an influx of settlers, voluntary or as a result of *sürgün*²⁶³ and with increased visits of soldiers, merchants and envoys, all of them potential carriers of the disease. In addition to the events of 834 and 835, Yusuf bin Abdullah describes how :

Ol senede Murâd Han Edrene'de karâr edüb **Keşürlük** yaylasına çıkdı azîm tâûn olmış idi hicretin sekizyüz otuzdokuz senesinde.²⁶⁴

The chronicler clearly links Murad's leaving for the *yayla* with the occurrence of a major plague outbreak in the year 839. The same event was recorded by Oruç Beğ,²⁶⁵ who also claimed that Murad went to the Keşerlik *yayla*, but who described the event to have happened one year earlier, in 838.

So unlike Lowry suggested,²⁶⁶ Mehmed the Conqueror was not the first Ottoman ruler who fled from the plague. Although Mehmed also made sure to avoid the outbreaks by avoiding plague-stricken areas, as was described by

²⁶³ The efforts to repopulate Istanbul by Mehmed II are extensively examined by Lowry in *Pushing the Stone Uphill*. pp.111-125.

²⁶⁴ Yusuf bin Abdullah, *Bizans Söylenceleriyle Osmanlı Tarihi; Târih-i âl-i Osmân*, 123-124. 839 AH corresponds to August 1435- July 1436.

²⁶⁵ Oruç Beğ , *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, 85.

²⁶⁶ Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 103.

Doukas, he did not limit his itinerary to one place, but continued his wanderings in search of a plague-free environment. The chronicler Doukas was an eyewitness to the devastating outbreak of 1455, for as a notable in the service of the ruling family of Mytilene he was sent in that year on a mission to the Ottoman court. His travels also allowed him to become a witness to the movements of Mehmed at that time:

He was sent by Dominiko Gateluzo from Mytilene to Edirne on the first of August, 1455 in order to pay the tribute of the island to the Ottoman ruler. Upon arriving in Edirne, he was received in audience by Mehmed. Then, as he was informed by the vizirs that the new ruler of Mytilene, Dominiko Gateluzo had to present himself to the Sultan, he returned immediately to the island and set off again with the ruler and a small delegation of notables. They first arrived in Gallipoli and went from there to Edirne. Doukas noted that in Gallipoli and Thrace, the plague had so much *increased* in intensity that the dead were no longer buried, but thrown into the streets. The Sultan was going from one city to another because of the plague. They learned that the Sultan was staying in Filibe, so they went there too. As the disease had been starting to get a foothold there, the Sultan had left two days before our arrival. The delegation left Filibe, passed through the mountains and arrived after three days in a place the Bulgarians call İzladı. There they found the Sultan and the *army*. After a few days discussing the amount of the new tribute, the delegation left and arrived after thirteen days back in Mytilene.²⁶⁷

Doukas clearly interpreted the Sultan's wanderings as flight from plague. If this interpretation is correct and not the result of anti-Ottoman bias, the question arises why Mehmed had decided to have his army with him in İzladı. It is logical that the Ottoman ruler would be accompanied by some military units who served as guards and assured his personal protection wherever he went. But it seems he was in İzladı with a campaigning-force army, so he might have wanted to shield his army as well from the epidemic or maybe he had planned all along to go on a campaign. The presence of his army is confirmed by Biraben who states that : "In 1456, the Dalmatian ports Ragusa, Spalato, Zara and Castelnuevo for the first time receive

²⁶⁷ Harry J. Magoulas. *Decline and Fall of Byzantium by the Ottoman Turks by Doukas*. Detroit, 1975, p. 112, as quoted in Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 103, 129.

plague, not from shipping but from Herzegovina where it was spread by the Turkish troops."²⁶⁸

In 1464, plague would again arrive from Central Asia according to the testimony of Hasan-ı Rumlu for the year 868 (1463-64) : "Yine bu yılda Semerkand beldesinde çıkan taun yüzünden kalabalık bir topluluk hayatını kaybetti."²⁶⁹ Plague then followed the Ottoman army on the way to the siege of Ragusa. According to Biraben, the Ottomans refused to enter the city at the end of the siege, knowing it was infected by the disease. Maybe as the continuation of the previous one, yet another outbreak took place in 1466. This outbreak coincided with the campaign that Mehmed undertook against Kroues in today's Albania, and which was reported upon by Kritovoulos. The chronicler described that after an unsuccessful siege, Mehmed disbanded the troops and left for the capital. However, upon receiving news that plague was rampant everywhere in Thrace and Macedonia and that even Istanbul had not been spared, he changed his mind and spent the autumn in the area around Nikopolis and Vidin. In order to remain informed, messengers arrived almost every day with reports on the situation in the capital.²⁷⁰ In his article *Pushing the Stone Uphill*²⁷¹, Lowry interprets this event as a proof of the less pious and more pragmatic attitude of the Ottoman ruler, which he contrasts to the "more traditional Islamic views on the subject that had come to prevail in the Ottoman capital as well" under the rule of Süleyman. However, it has to be considered that the example of Mehmed pitching camp in Vidin is in observance with one of the major tenets of the traditional Islamic view

²⁶⁸ Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, Vol. 1, 108. The author does not mention the original source of this information.

²⁶⁹ Hasan-ı Rumlu, *Ahsenü't-tevârih*, 418.

²⁷⁰ Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 222, as quoted by Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 110.

²⁷¹ Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 130-131.

on plague : that Muslims should not enter any area infested with plague. Therefore, Mehmed II's behaviour was hardly at odds with orthodox Islamic principles. As Lowry observed, the ruler travelled to the highlands of the Balkans to escape from plague on several other occasions, namely in 1471, 1472, and 1475.²⁷² However, Mehmed II did *not* leave whenever important matters required his presence. In 1469, the merchant Piero Dolfino observes in his letter that 'the Ottoman fleet is being prepared in Constantinople and in spite of the danger created by the plague outbreak, the Turkish ruler has arrived in person to follow up his affairs.'²⁷³ Three years later, in the summer of 1472, plague was again rampant in Istanbul and Mehmed and his court went to Sweet Waters at the north-eastern side of the Golden Horn. However, the ruler returned to the city in August to supervise the building of a wooden dock at Beşiktaş.²⁷⁴

Mehmed's son and successor Bayezid II would continue the habit of moving his court whenever an outbreak was imminent. Hasan-ı Rumlu reports in his chronicle *Ahsenü't-Tevârih* that in the year 895 (1489-90) Bayezid II wanted to leave on a campaign against the Mamluks. After his emirs successfully persuaded him to abandon the idea because winter was approaching, and having heard that the Mamluks had retreated from the Karaman region he decided to leave for Edirne as in Istanbul a plague outbreak had started.²⁷⁵ This story is repeated by the anonymous chronicles :

Bu vak'adan sonra irtesi Sultan Bâyezid dahi Beşiktaş'a kondı. Cümle begler ulular anda hâzır olup tanışık itdiler. Sultan Bâyezid'i Anadolu'ya geçmege komadılar. "Bi-vaktdür, ol taraf kızıklıdır. Şimdiki halde leşkere revâ de bulunmaz" didiler. Bu aralıkda Arab leşkери de dahi dönüp gitdi. Sultan Bayezid *dahi yaylaka* vardı. Yayladan gezerek Edrene'ye vardı. *Ol*

²⁷² Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 103.

²⁷³ Domenico Malipiero. *Annali Veneti dall' anno 1457 al 1500*. edited by Gio, Pietro Vieuzeux (Firenze, 1843), pp. 44-45.

²⁷⁴ Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his time*, 309.

²⁷⁵ Hasan-ı Rumlu. *Ahsenü't-tevârih*. Mürsel Öztürk. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006, 591.

*tarafklar gâyet de tâûn idi. Tâûn olduğı sebebeden bir yire karâr idemeyüp İpsala'ya vardı. Ol taraflarda hacılar bayramın eyledi, hicretün 895 yılında. Andan gine Edrene'ye vardı. Edrene'de bir hafta karâr itdi. Heman azm-i Kostantiniyye eyledi, hicretün 896 yılında muharremün evvelinde. Safer aynun âhirinde Kostantiniyye'de karâr eyledi.*²⁷⁶

It appears that in spite of all precautions the Ottoman army became infected, for Biraben reports that in 1490, the Ottoman troops brought plague to the Veneto.²⁷⁷ After the Ottoman-Venetian war came to an end, the Venetian merchants that resumed trading with the Ottoman empire and whose letters and reports Marino Sanudo and Domenico Malipiero discussed extensively in their diaries, reported in their correspondence Bayezid's absence due to plague. In December of 1497 Alvise Sagondino, the Venetian Secretary, returned to Venice and reported that 300 died daily in Istanbul.²⁷⁸ Letters from Corfu, dated the 26th of December 1500 and January 1501, preserved in Sanudo's diary explicitly made the link between the absence of Bayezid and the plague. Sanudo summarized that : "The Turkish ruler is in Edirne, because there is a great plague epidemic in Constantinople."²⁷⁹ But the disease was already present a full year earlier. A letter from the merchant Alvise Manenti from Istanbul, dated February 1499 and copied in the diary of Domenico Malipiero stated that "A la Porta ne son morti 100 000 da peste."²⁸⁰ The outbreak was widespread. On the Italian mainland, the Northern and Central regions were also suffering from outbreaks from 1499 onwards.²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ Giese, *Anonim Tevârîh-i âl-i Osman*, 128.

²⁷⁷ Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol. I, 108.

²⁷⁸ Domenico Malipiero. *Annali veneti dall' anno 1457 al 1500*. edited by Gio, Pietro Vieusseux. Firenze. 1843., page 153.

²⁷⁹ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol 3, Col. 1347.

²⁸⁰ Malipiero. *Annali veneti dall' anno 1457 al 1500*, page 196.

²⁸¹ Capasso, *Le Epidemie di Peste in Abruzzo dal 1348 al 1702*, 45.

Furthermore, the disease was also present in Ragusa, which according to Biraben became infected in the year 1500 with a shipload of wheat coming from Sicily.²⁸²

Following the example set by his ancestors Murad, Mehmed II and Bayezid, Selim would also seek refuge in the mountain pastures in times of epidemics, or was at the very least presumed to be doing so by the Venetians, who were watching his every move and trying to make sense out of it, which they admitted was a difficult task. Sanudo's entry in his diary mentions a great plague outbreak in the Ottoman empire in the summer of 1513.

From the dragoman..., it was heard that the ruler is in the vicinity of Edirne, at 10 miles and it is said that he will stay there a few days. It is not known where he will stay for the winter. There are those that think in Edirne and those that think he will not, because of the plague which there was and is, but that he will ride to Philippopoli. Others believe he will go to stay for the winter in Skopje, close to Hungary and at 8 days from Ragusa.²⁸³

Selim's demise on the road showed that trying to outfox death sometimes proved futile. Yet what response to plague could have been more logical for an Ottoman ruler than to go and spend time on the *yayla* ? Plague treatises indeed recommended fresh air and water as the most important prevention against plague; two commodities that could be found in abundance in the mountains. And of course, these excursions were at the same time hunting expeditions. Moreover, flight from plague-infested areas was a common reaction of rulers as the relocation of the Serbian Despot George Brankovic to the mountains near Belgrade shows.²⁸⁴ Fleeing to the countryside had been a wide-spread, common phenomenon in Europe from the very start of the Black Death epidemic as Boccaccio's Decamerone attests.

²⁸² Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol. I, 108. The author does not mention the original source.

²⁸³ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol 17, Col. 159-160.

²⁸⁴ Lachmann, Renate, transl. *Memoiren eines Janitscharen oder Türkische Chronik*. Graz: Verlag Styria, 1975, 115.

Süleyman's rule was to form a breaking-point with the yayla-going tradition. The first outbreak that was reported on by Sanudo after the sultan had ascended the throne, took place in the summer of 1522 and killed no less than 23 thousand inhabitants of Istanbul in as little as 22 days. A letter dated the 21st of July 1522 described the dreadful condition in the capital and mentioned that Süleyman had left the city on the 11th of July - on a campaign against Rhodes.²⁸⁵ The next summer, the plague would hit Istanbul hard once more and even cause the sudden death of the Baylo, sir Andrea di Prioli.²⁸⁶ In spite of this obviously dangerous epidemic, the Venetian Orator had been received in audience by Süleyman, who not only had stayed in Istanbul, but moreover carried on with meeting envoys as usual. This stoic behavior was evidently not without danger; for the Orator had supped with the Baylo on Monday, who got ill the next day and died on Wednesday ! A great plague epidemic once more occurred in the winter of 1525-26 and again Süleyman preferred to stay at home and supervise the outfitting of his fleet.²⁸⁷ Likewise, Süleyman stayed in Istanbul when the disease reappeared the next summer.²⁸⁸ In July of 1530, once again during a great outbreak, Süleyman even held great public festivities that continued for three days. Not satisfied to have organized the event, the sultan, mounted on a splendidly caparisoned horse, participated personally in the parade of Ottoman dignitaries.²⁸⁹ Yet according to the Venetians, the Ottoman ruler and Ibrahim pasha left Istanbul for Beykoz out of fear for plague during the great outbreak in the summer of

²⁸⁵ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 33, Col. 422.

²⁸⁶ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 34, Col. 384.

²⁸⁷ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 40, 689.

²⁸⁸ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 45, Col. 620.

²⁸⁹ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 53, 454.

1533.²⁹⁰ Unfortunately, the diaries end that year, so it is not clear whether Süleyman continued to do so in the years to follow.

5.2. Religious response

In times of plague mankind often turned to religion for protection and spiritual salvation and to try to make sense of the calamity that befell on them. One view of plague was as a punishment from God. In the ancient Greek culture, plague was believed to be the punishment of the God Apollo, who aimed his deadly plague-arrows at those who had incurred his wrath.²⁹¹ Not unsimilar the biblical view, Apollo both was the creator of the disease and the one who could cure it. That the Byzantine population would equally entertain the idea of divine punishment was understandable, as the bible contains several stories about how the people of Israel as well as the Phillistines were struck with plague for being disobedient²⁹². Therefore, when the outbreak finally abated in the Byzantine empire, Justinian issued a law euphemistically declaring that 'the education of the Lord God according to his philanthropy was terminated'.²⁹³ His successor, the emperor John Cantacuzenos would be dealt a hard blow during the second plague pandemic in 1347 with the death of his young son Andronikos.²⁹⁴ Adding insult to

²⁹⁰ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 58, 697-699.

²⁹¹ Interestingly, the image of plague being provoked by Divine arrows continued in Christianity, with Saint Sebastian routinely depicted pierced by plague-arrows. Likewise, in Islam, plague was believed to be caused by djinn that pierced a person with a lance. A bubo would then appear where the lance had struck.

²⁹² Sticker. *Abhandlungen aus der Seuchengeschichte und Seuchenlehre*. 17-18.

²⁹³ Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire*, 116.

²⁹⁴ Dols, (*The Black Death in the Middle East*, 53) unfortunately misquotes Ziegler, (*The Black Death*, 16) when asserting that Cantacuzenos believed the plague to be "a special punishment from

injury, Nicephorus Gregoras²⁹⁵ wrote the emperor a letter in which he bitterly reproached him for having supported the Hesychast movement of the archbishop of Thessalonica, Gregorius Palamas. In the letter Gregoras blamed the death of Andronikos on the emperor's godlessness, which had caused great unrest in the church and had provoked the anger of God.²⁹⁶

You kept to the doctrine of Palamas and gave him total freedom to unseat unrightfully and without any grounded reason a number of the Bishops and to rob them of all power in order to replace them with others, from whom he had requested and obtained a written confession of their godlessness. Therefore, I have warned you as a friend and asserted times and again that you would not escape from the wrath of God, but that you would experience suffering by way of the dearest you possess, that is punishment with the loss of one of your children. It is not extraordinary that I was able to foretell the events to come from what had happened, because I knew the magnitude of your godlessness. In a short time, my prophesy became fulfilled and your youngest son died after a short period of illness.

Gregoras represented the disease as an instrument with which God could afflict punishment for heresy, but the Hesychast movement which he so virulently opposed must have offered spiritual comfort to the terrified population . "Hesychast means 'he who lives quiet' and it was the name given to the men whose goal was unity with God and who chose as the only way to its attainment complete seclusion from the world... Not only is the Hesychast entirely cut off from outward impressions, but he ... loses consciousness of himself, being wholly absorbed in the contemplation of God."²⁹⁷ . That a seclusive lifestyle also offered protection against plague is obvious and when Hesychasts survived where others

God on his people and the Genoese for their previously helping the Muslims capture the city of Romanais from fellow Christians." This quote was specified by Ziegler as being from an unspecified chronicler. Maybe the text upon which these assertions is based is the letter from Nicephorus Gregoras to Cantacuzenos, which criticizes the emperor's help to the Turks in the capture of Romanais.

²⁹⁵ Nicephorus Gregoras. *Rhomainische Geschichte = Historia Rhomaike*. 5 vols. Jean-Louis Van Dieten, ed. Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann. 1994, 70- 72.

²⁹⁶ The letter of Gregoras, *Rhomainische Geschichte = Historia Rhomaike*, 71, will be discussed in more detail in the chapter "Plague and the ruled"

²⁹⁷ Vasiliev. *A History of the Byzantine Empire. 324-1453*. 1952, 666-667.

perished might have contributed to the success of the movement. Hesychasm became the dominant doctrine and received support from the emperors.

Interestingly, the abbé Boileau²⁹⁸ interprets the writings of Nicephorus Gregoras as referring to the Flagellants whose activities had spread into the Byzantine Empire. The ephemeral movement of the Flagellants came into being in Europe as a response to the epidemic. Devotion, penitence in the form of flagellation and occasional violence against presumed instigators of the epidemic, such as lepers or Jewish citizens were the main characteristics of this hysterical reaction to the calamity of the Black Death. Before those excesses took upperhand, the movement had been well-disciplined. Abstinence from all worldly comfort as well as total obedience to the Master were required and their leaders took pride in being independent from any ecclesiastical institution. Unlike the Hesychasts, the Flagellant movement would not be endorsed by the authorities, who saw them as a source of local unrest and acted against them.²⁹⁹

Whether in mainstream religion or otherwise, one religious response was to pray to God directly or to request his favour through the intervention of a saint. The Byzantine patriarch could compose new prayers to this end. At the start of his patriarchate around the year 1380, the Greek patriarch Nil wrote a prayer to end the invasion of the barbarians, the civil war, the famine and the plague.³⁰⁰ As in Europe, where saints such as the Virgin Mary, St Sebastian and St Roch were worshipped for their healing qualities in times of plague, certain Orthodox saints were specially venerated. Their churches and relics were visited and the faithful

²⁹⁸ abbé Boileau. *Histoire des flagellants*, 259. op. cit in Biraben *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. vol. I, 70.

²⁹⁹ Ziegler, *The Black Death*, 87-98.

³⁰⁰ This list of supplications, quoted from *regestes des actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, Vol I, 19, also shows that although plague was indeed a matter of preoccupation, it only came last on a well-supplied list of scourges.

were anointed with oils emanating from their preserved bodies. The cult of a "plague saint" started after he had performed certain miracles relating to the healing of the disease. The cult of the Virgin Mary was well-established in Constantinople and even before the days of the Emperor Maurice³⁰¹ (582-602) who was recorded to have attended them in person, great processions were held in her honour that departed from the church at Blachernes, which held a shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary³⁰². The religious custom of seeking the protection of the Virgin Mary dated from the first pandemic³⁰³ and therefore predated the schism between Orthodox and Latin Christians. Both churches carried on with this tradition throughout the successive pandemics. The Virgin Mary was still revered for her miraculous interventions in times of plague by the Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire in the 18th century.³⁰⁴

Other saints were held in high esteem by the Byzantines for their protective qualities. One of them was St Artemios³⁰⁵, who miraculously cured the young girl Euphemia that had been afflicted by the disease. St Demetrius of Thessalonika was also venerated by the Byzantines as a plague-saint and we saw above that the Ottoman prince Yusuf, who converted to christianity shortly before his death of plague, chose to be baptised as Demetrius. In Constantinople, an

³⁰¹ A plague outbreak visited Constantinople during his reign in 599, according to Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire: A Systematic Survey of Subsistence Crises and Epidemics*, 119.

³⁰² Magdalino, Paul. *Constantinople médiévale. Etudes sur l'évolution des structures urbaines*. Paris: De Boccard, 1996, 74-75.

³⁰³ La Vierge Marie semble être invoquée la première, dès le 6e siècle, parce que c'est au chant du Regina Coeli, ... que, d'après la légende, la peste cesse à Rome en 590. De plus, au 14e siècle, la "Chronique de Tournai" déclare que l'on a vu l'image de la Vierge pleurer le 16 août 1348, par compassion pour les souffrances des humains. Biraben *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol II, 75.

³⁰⁴ In addition to the Virgin Mary, Daniel Panzac reports other saints to have been patrons against plague. Daniel Panzac. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Veba. 1700-1850*. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1997, 162.

³⁰⁵ The plague outbreak described in the Miracles of St. Artemios has been dated by Stathakopoulos to have taken place in the year 618-19. Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire*, 342.

imperial convent dedicated to this saint was erected near the Jewish gate at the Sea of Marmara. This convent and the vial with 'myrrh' that had emanated from his body³⁰⁶ was visited by Stephen of Novgorod during his pilgrimage to Constantinople in 1349³⁰⁷. Constantinople was an important pilgrimage center for the Orthodox believers and many of its relics were believed to bestow health on the ill. The faithful would kiss the relics, be anointed with the holy oil from the saints' bodies or even have the preserved bodies laid on top of them, as Stephen of Novgorod and Ignatius of Smolensk vividly described (Majeska, 1984: 28-72). The church of St. Sophia harboured a number of objects with miraculous curative properties. Ignatius of Smolensk described the miraculous icon of the All-pure Mother of God near the great doors. Above the imperial doors hung the icon of the Savior, which healed many sick according to the anonymous description of Constantinople.^{308 309} Moreover, relics were sealed into the major columns and arches of the St. Sophia church when it was built. Stephen of Novgorod mentions porphyry columns that people rubbed to be cured. An earlier traveler, Anthony of Novgorod, described columns that were covered with brass and which the believers kissed and rubbed to cure their illness.³¹⁰ The collective handling of the relics and icons probably formed an effective channel of transmission for the

³⁰⁶ Which was kept in the Studius Monastery of St. Theodore according to Stephen of Novgorod. George, P. Majeska : *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*. Washington D.C., 1984, 164.

³⁰⁷ Majeska asserts that Stephen of Novgorod's visit must have taken place either in 1348 or 1349, but quotes Sevchenko who believes 1349 to be more likely. In view of the fact that no mention whatever is made of the plague epidemic, 1349 seems indeed more plausible. Majeska, : *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 17.

³⁰⁸ Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 206, 210.

³⁰⁹ The writer of the Russian anonymous description of Constantinople also asserts that he saw "awesome wonders - how an icon of the most holy Mother of God works miracles, granting healing to the sick." from Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 128.

³¹⁰ Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 214. Again according to Majeska, the column at the described location is still partially clad with brass plates, and Turkish people reportedly claim the column to weep and to use that fluid to cure diseases.

plague bacteria. Especially pneumonic plague, the most contagious of the clinical plague manifestations, could easily be passed on this way. At the end of the 18th century, this belief in the healing capacities of saints and the miraculous properties of relics remained as vivid as it had been during medieval times. Panzac (1997: 162) relates how during a plague epidemic in 1784, the French consul in Izmir reported that a relic of the Holy Mother Mary had been brought over from Monte Santo and was visited by droves of faithful. Moreover, those suffering from the disease were settled into the church in the hope that they would be cured.³¹¹

It cannot be deduced from the investigated sources whether the Ottomans also sought the protection of saints against the plague. However, a passage in Neşri's history of the Ottomans (1987- 2nd volume, 641-642), described how the holy body of Ali Dede was buried and how the graves became a site of pilgrimage for people seeking to restore their health:

Ve Sivri Hisar halkı dahi, Karaman oğlu'nun gittiğini görüp, kaleden çıkıp, Ali Dede'nin namazını kılıp, mübarek cesedini alıp , hisar altında defn edip, anın-dahi üzerine türbe yapıp, ziyâret-gâh ettiler... I'tikad ile türbesine ziyâret gelen hasta sıhhat ve şifa bulup gider.

Whether Ali Dede's powers were sufficient to remediate plague is not clear, but it seems likely that the OttomanTurks would address themselves to their saints for this disease as they did for others. Moreover, Islam provided the Ottomans with a religious explanation for the appearance of plague. According to orthodox Islamic theology, plague was believed to be a divine punishment inflicted upon the Christians and therefore not something to be feared by a righteous Muslim. The *Hadith* also pointed out that one should not leave a plague-stricken place, nor go to

³¹¹ Apart from the Virgin Mary, Panzac also mentions St. Veneranda, St. Haralambos and St. Vissarion as being thought effective in times of plague. Panzac, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Veba, 162.

an area where plague was present. These principles are quite similar to modern epidemiological recommendations.

Although plague is not mentioned specifically, the anonymous chronicles contain a story about a Divine intervention in favour of the Ottomans that can be interpreted as indirectly reflecting the occurrence of the Black Death. The event takes place during the siege of Bolayır by the troops of Süleyman Pasha:

Hak te'âlâ'nun fazlı yitişüp kâfirler ol ova içinde şöyle kırıldılar kim, demet gibi döküldiler, helâk oldılar... Ve illâ bunları kıranları hiç müslümanlar görmediler. Çün gâziler dahi kâfirleri bu halde böyle gördile, seğirdim idüp tıraşlamaga başladılar. Toyum olup gine Bolayır'a gelüp karar itdiler. "Acabâ bu kâfirleri kim kırdı" diyü biraz söyleşdiler.³¹²

Stylistically, this narrative is very similar to one which describes the siege of Bolaniyye by Murad. Unable to take the fortress, Murad says to himself while sitting under a huge, old tree: 'Meger bunu Tanrı yıka'. No sooner as he spoken these words when a messenger tells him : 'Sultanum devletinde hisarun bir tarafi yıkıldı.'³¹³ In both tales a desperate situation in battle is remediated by Divine intervention. The second narrative obviously describes an earthquake that enabled the Ottomans to conquer the besieged city. If we interpret the death of the enemy in the first narrative as the result of a plague outbreak, then both tales reflect Ottoman chroniclers' explanation of natural disaster as a form of divine support in battle. As Caroline Finkel³¹⁴ remarks, the Byzantine chroniclers underlined the importance of the earthquake for the Byzantine defeat, whereas the Ottomans downplayed its significance by not mentioning it explicitly. The Ottoman chroniclers' reticence towards mentioning plague or other natural disasters is only evident when they epically described battle. Otherwise, they recorded the occurrence of major natural disasters such as plague, but they never interpreted the

³¹² Giese, *Anonim Tevârih-i âl-i Osman* 20.

³¹³ Giese, *Anonim Tevârih-i âl-i Osman* 27.

³¹⁴ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 16.

disease to be a punishment from God upon them as the Byzantines did ³¹⁵. Nevertheless, the Ottomans did see the need to address God in mass-prayer. Evliya Çelebi describes how during the reign of Selim II, a particularly vicious plague outbreak claimed up to three thousand lives a day. Thereupon the ruler let heralds announce that a communal prayer would be held in the Aya Sofya mosque. Not surprisingly, Evliya Çelebi mentions that the mosque had turned into a sea of humans.³¹⁶

We discussed above that flight was a common response to plague outbreaks. Doubtlessly, it was especially in the beginning much a spontaneous reaction shown by a terrified population. But from the start, there were theoretical considerations such as the effect of miasma or corrupted air, as well as religious convictions that played a role as well. Religious leaders were well-read and educated persons and often offered practical as well as spiritual considerations when elaborating on the subject of plague. In the sixteenth century, for instance, Cardinal Wolsey recommended escape into clean air as the sole effective safeguard against plague infection. But theological arguments would also be on the order of the day. Whether a Christian ought to fly from plague or whether his duty was to remain and trust in God as did the Muslims was a question much discussed by clerics of the Reformation period, including Martin Luther.³¹⁷ Added to the debate was the consideration of Christian charity and the duty to remain and care for one's fellow townsmen.

³¹⁵ The recording of the death of Karesioğlu from plague in the Ottoman chronicles invalidates the argument of Schamiloğlu (2004: 273) that the chroniclers had not preserved a memory of the first Black Death outbreak. And contrary to Schamiloğlu's reasoning that the subject was taboo, the fact that bubonic plague was part and parcel of their daily life might be exactly the reason why they wrote little about them - it was just business as usual.

³¹⁶ Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyâhatnâmesi*. Vol. 1. Edited by Zuhuri Danişman. Istanbul: Yayılcık Matbaası. 1969, 131.

³¹⁷ Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague*, 45.

5.3. Policies and Politics with regard to plague

Preventive measures

No preventive measures in the form of quarantine or isolation of the plague-stricken were described in the sources consulted for the period under investigation. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that such measures were implemented at one time or another. Plague could arrive in the major Ottoman cities, such as Bursa, Istanbul or Edirne through a variety of channels. It could arrive overland via the trade routes from Iran or by way of pilgrimage groups.³¹⁸ On the other hand, it is abundantly clear that maritime transport promoted the spreading of the disease, perhaps because close personal contact was unavoidable on board of the crowded vessels then in use. It therefore made sense for a state as Venice, for which maritime transport was the *only* option available to implement draconian quarantine rules. If *la Serenissima* could protect itself more or less³¹⁹, this was certainly not the case for the numerous islands in the Aegean, such as Negroponte, or Crete where plague continued to fester. It is an interesting question why the Ottoman state, who created an elaborate system of tax levying on goods of the international trade, did not combine this structure with the kind of

³¹⁸ However, according to Mc Neill, camel trains were an ineffective mode of transmitting plague at least in the Arabian lands.

³¹⁹ The city of Venice was still suffering from serious outbreaks in spite of all the efforts undertaken. For information on outbreaks in Venice, see Comune di Venezia, Assessorato alla Cultura e Belle Arti. *Venezia e la Peste*. Venezia: Marsilio Editori.

quarantine policy *en vogue* in Europe. The answer might lie with the institution of tax farming or *mukataa*, or "privatisation" of the tax-collecting, which implied that maximum taxes, not safety were the sole concern . As mentioned above, it is possible that the Ottoman archives might yield some information that confirms the existence of quarantine measures during the period here under consideration. Indeed, it is recorded in the Mühimme defter of 1565-66 that Christian merchants who arrived on Sakiz island (Chios) from infected places had to spend 25 days in prison and pay a daily fine in addition. Moreover, it was not allowed to use the same premises to keep Muslim merchants imprisoned.³²⁰ This measure can effectively be considered to be a kind of quarantine. As it was a centrally ordered measure, it can be understood that Ottoman authorities reacted in response to the fact that plague was raging in other parts of the Ottoman empire, such as Trabzon.³²¹ Moreover, the seventeenth-century traveller Evliya Celebi describes how the castle of *Yedi Kule* was used in Byzantine times to keep individuals coming from plague-stricken places for seven days under quarantine. They were not allowed entry into the city otherwise.³²² However, none of the travellers' accounts consulted mention such a procedure for the period under investigation. The diary of Marino Sanudo, which spans the period of 1497 to 1533 and deals extensively with the maritime contacts between Venice and Istanbul does not reveal its existence, either. It does, however, records an event that probably was the result of an administrative decision, namely the closing of all inns (*hans*) in the

³²⁰ T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Mühimme defteri no 5 (973/ 1565-1566). Ankara, 1994, page 215, entry 1334.

³²¹ Plague was present in Trabzon in 1565-1566, as documented by Ronald C. Jennings. *Studies on Ottoman Social History in the 16th and 17th Century*. Istanbul: The Isis Press. 1999, 669 et passim.

³²² Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnamesi*, Vol. 2, 92. Interestingly, Evliya Çelebi reports that after the conquest, Mehmed the Conqueror moved the slaughterhouses and tanneries to this area. The stench and pollution produced by these activities was traditionally considered to be a hazard for plague according to the miasma theory.

Istanbul. A letter from the Venetian baylo from Constantinople, dated 25 July and 6 August 1513 reports that :

*The ruler is in the countryside, but here there such an outbreak of plague that the inns (presumably hans) are closed and it is incredible how many die.*³²³

It is understandable that the plague epidemics would cause considerable loss for the hans, bozahaneler, hammans and other establishments open to the public, either because they were obliged to close for religious or preventive reasons or because their customers simply would stay away. In that case, an official request was made for a reduction of the taxes due. The measure of closing inns might have been due to a prohibition of wine-drinking. Although this can be interpreted in Islamic religious terms, a more prozaic motive might be underlying. For during the first outbreak in Venice in 1348, the quarrels and homicides increased so much that the authorities likewise forbade the public sales of wine.³²⁴

Funeral arrangements

From the first pandemic onwards, the huge number of casualties would put a huge burden on the authorities, who were ill-prepared to cope with the situation. As Procopius attested³²⁵ it was Justinian himself who coordinated the relief operations for the disaster. He sent soldiers from the palace to provide assistance, paid money so that the dead would be buried and appointed one of his courtiers, Theodorus as a coordinator of these funeral services. Formal rituals often had to be

³²³ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 17, Col. 37 and 38

³²⁴ Biraben, Jean-Noel. *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol. II, *Les hommes face à la peste*, 117.

³²⁵ Prokopius. *İstanbul'da İsyân ve Veba*. Adil Calap, trans. Istanbul: Lir Yayınevi, 2002, 467.

abandoned and at the start of the second pandemic in Constantinople bodies were disposed of by throwing them into the sea. Muslim believers confronted with the Black Death, had to address the same kind of problems. In normal times, a muslim who died was supposed to be prepared for burial according to the Islamic ritual, which required washing, swathing, whereafter the body was put on a bier and covered with shrouds. The expenses of such preparations were usually met for by the family. However, a very severe outbreak could kill several persons of a family at one time, straining the financial resources of those who survived. For those that had arrived as travellers, or that died leaving no heirs, the public treasury was in principle responsible for the funeral. In times of a serious outbreak, the accumulated cost must have been considerable. Shrouds for the death were in great demand and thus commanding high prices. This in turn incited less scrupulous individuals to steal them out of the graveyards, as is illustrated by İbn İyas, who explained that during the plague outbreak of 1498 in Cairo, such a thief was caught and underwent a horrible punishment. In the end, the local authorities had no choice but to order the gravediggers to recover the shrouds. According to Espéronnier, the clothes of the deceased were greatly valued by the Mamluks, not only for their material, but also spiritual value : "*Les vêtements que l'on considérait comme empreints des qualités de celui qui les portait.*" ³²⁶ The Ottomans also attached great importance to clothes, which reflected the social position of the wearer and were genuine stores of wealth for their owner. Therefore, those who performed the ritual preparation of the bodies received the deceased person's clothes as a form of payment.³²⁷ Although at least one Islamic plague treatise made a clear link between handling contaminated clothes and

³²⁶ Veinstein, Gilles. *Les Ottomans et la Mort. Permanences et mutations.* The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage - vol. 9. Leiden: E.J. Brill. 1996, 176.

³²⁷ Raphaëla Lewis. *Everyday Life in Ottoman Turkey.* New York, 105.

contracting plague, this was not a mainstream opinion in the Islamic world. In fact, this attitude would not change in the course of the following centuries, in marked contrast to the prevailing reaction in Western and Southern Europe, where the authorities ordered the burning of the clothes of plague victims.³²⁸ However, not only the Ottomans were indifferent to or ignorant about the possibility of contamination. The Hungarians, whose territory they had conquered, shared their indifference. A good illustration of this attitude is the horrified reaction of the Habsburg envoy Ogier de Busbecq and his companions, who travelled with a group of Hungarians and their voyvoda. When he saw how the Hungarian retinue of the voyvoda, who had died of plague during the journey, divided his clothes among them, de Busbecq's physician begged them :

in heaven's name not to touch the clothing, since the infection would involve certain death; but his words fell on deaf ears. As a result, on the second day after our departure from Adrianople these same men besieged my physician with prayers for a remedy against symptoms ... which they suspected to be the beginning of the plague.³²⁹

As was shown before, several hundred, sometimes thousand people would die daily in the major Ottoman cities when an outbreak was at its highest. From a humanitarian and religious, but especially from a hygienic point of view, it was important to dispose of their bodies in an adequate way. That this was not always the case is clear from the observations of Doukas, who reported that on the way from Gallipoli to Edirne the bodies were left lying in the streets.³³⁰ We know from modern epidemiology that such a situation will only aggravate the epidemic. Contagion was a contested concept and remained so until the second half of the

³²⁸ As was ordered in the French city of Troyes. Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol. 2, Les hommes face à la peste, 104.

³²⁹ Ogier Ghiselin De Busbecq. *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople (1554-1562)*. 1968, 68-69.

³³⁰ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, 203.

19th century. But even according to the mainstream theory of miasma or bad air causing disease, it was important to avoid decaying bodies lingering about as their putrid odours were believed to propagate the illness. In fact, European travellers visiting the Ottoman Empire and especially Istanbul, reported that the graveyards were all located outside the city walls and the 17th century traveller Thevenot added that "they were usually situated along the important roads, so that passers-by could pray for the deceased".³³¹ It was also noted that the surface covered by the cimeteries was considerable, because it was strictly forbidden to re-use a grave.³³² Therefore, as later travellers noted, the surface covered by the cimeteries that surrounded Istanbul were larger than the city itself.³³³ Veinstein argued "that in a state such as the Ottoman Empire, where central bureaucracy played such an important role, it is hard to imagine that anarchy would have ruled when it came to the administration and development of burial sites."³³⁴ If this reason is valid for times of "normal" demise, it should be all the more so in times of epidemics. The number of newly authorized burial sites around Istanbul greatly fluctuated with time: between 1453 and 1512, 167 new sites were put into use; between 1513 and 1595, 110; between 1596 and 1754 only 74.³³⁵ It seems that these figures reflect the high mortality afflicted by the numerous great plague outbreaks that took place until the end of the sixteenth century, whereas the next one-and-half century saw less casualties .

³³¹ Veinstein (1996: 158) cites the testimonies of Théodore Spandouyn Cantacassin, as well as that of Luigi Bassano and Giovan Antonio Menavino, who all lived in the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the 16th century. Veinstein, *Les Ottomans et la Mort. Permanences et mutations*, 158.

³³² The regulation that a burial site could not be used for anything else, which is among others reflected in certain fetvas of Ebû-s-Su'ûd Efendî, was only valid for Muslims. Veinstein, *Les Ottomans et la Mort. Permanences et mutations*, 163.

³³³ A statement by Lady Mary Montagu as cited in Veinstein, *Les Ottomans et la Mort. Permanences et mutations*, 163.

³³⁴ Veinstein, *Les Ottomans et la Mort. Permanences et mutations*, 157.

³³⁵ Veinstein, *Les Ottomans et la Mort. Permanences et mutations*, 163.

Ottoman gravestones and burial monuments display a variety of information and the cause of death is sometimes one of them. No particular reticence exists about mentioning plague as a cause of death. An example is a stone sarcophagus of Ahi Hasan oğlu Ahi Paşa that mentions that he died of plague in the month of Şaban of the year 792 (1389)³³⁶. But neither was it an obligatory statement to make for each plague victim. Plenty of gravestones and sarcophagi of people who are known to have died from plague do not carry any reference to the disease. For instance, Çırağ Bey, who was a servant of Murad II, is described by Neşri to have died of plague in Bursa during the great outbreak of 832 (1428/29):

"Ve dahi ol yılda Bursa'da tâ'un-ı ekber olup... Ve Çırak Bey ve Şeyh Fahret-tin Efendi oğulları şems ül-'ulemâ Şemsettin ibn- i Fenarî bu mecmu'u müteveffa oldular..."³³⁷

However, his headstone only mentions: "Bu cami-i şerifi yaptıran Çırağ Bey merhumun ruhuna fatiha."³³⁸

Administrative formalities

In spite of the enormous pressure that great epidemics must have caused upon the Ottoman bureaucracy, the latter tried to preserve a degree of normality. Inheritance was an important and complicated issue when whole families succumbed to the disease. Moreover, the epidemics did not only affect life in the Ottoman cities, but also was present in its villages, where the sudden death of a great many *acemi* janissaries required registration in the judiciary records. For the

³³⁶ Demet Karaçağ, *Bursa'daki 14. - 15. Yüzyıl Mezartaşları* Ankara , 1994, 27.

³³⁷ Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihan-Nümâ*, 609.

³³⁸ Karaçağ, *Bursa'daki 14. - 15. Yüzyıl Mezartaşları* , 139.

farmers, who had received the boys in their care, were afraid of being held legally responsible for their death and therefore presented themselves at the *kadı* courts with witnesses to register that the cause of death of their protégés was plague. The following document illustrates the standardized composition of the documents.

Ve şühûd-ı mezkûrûn şehâdet idüp ayıtdılar ki Yenice köyden Ahmed bin Balaban elinde olan Nasûh nâm buğday enlü, ala gözlü, orta boylu, yalın yüzlü Ulgariyyü'l-asl oğlan tâ'ûn zahmetinden vefât itdi didiler. 17 Cumâde'l-ûlâ 897.³³⁹

These entries in the judicial registers also provide an insight into the prevalence of the disease. It is clear from the registers of the period 1490-1515 that plague never completely disappeared in the area of Bursa, but that it lingered on until it erupted once again as a large-scale epidemic.³⁴⁰ From the documents it can also be derived that as for the outbreaks in Istanbul that were recorded by Sanudo, plague was prevalent in Bursa during every season. For instance, the examples for the years 1491 and 1492 from the Bursa judicial records show that cases of plague death were reported in December, but also in March, as well as in July.³⁴¹ Whether the boys brought the disease with them or whether they were contaminated during their journey or caught the disease in the village is unclear.

The plague outbreaks would cause a sudden and often dramatic decrease in the population of a location, because the inhabitants had died or fled. The disruption of economic activity was its natural consequence. This situation would result in a loss of revenue for individuals, vakıfs, or the Ottoman state itself and again required if not intervention, then at least the recording by the Ottoman bureaucracy. That this situation of *force majeure* was taken into consideration is

³³⁹ Çoşkun and Necdet Yılmaz, *Osmanlılarda Sağlık*. Vol. II, 28.

³⁴⁰ Osman Çetin, *Bursa mahkeme sicillerine göre: ilk Osmanlı hastanesi*, 134.

³⁴¹ Assuming that the deaths of the boys were reported not too long after their demise. Based upon the transcription of the entries of the Bursa judiciary records as edited by Çoşkun and Necdet Yılmaz, *Osmanlılarda Sağlık*. Vol. II, 28.

illustrated by the official reply to the *bozahaneler* in Bursa who had requested a reduction of their rent. Their request was considered favorably by the authorities and recorded in the judicial records of Bursa :

Sebebi tahrîr oldur ki, beylik bozahâneleri dutan bozacılar gelüp tâ'ûn olduğı ecilden bozahâneler işlemez oldu, ziyân itdük diyü şikâyet itdiklerinden sonra bozahânenin birinin evvelki hâsılı ile şimdiki hâsılının mâ-beynini görüp ma'lûm idinmek için kâtib ve emîn irsâl olunup hâsılı zabt olundıkda vâkı'a ziyânları var idüğü ma'lûm olıcak imdi her birinüzden birer mikdâr akçe indirdüm diye bozahâne emîni ikdâm itdikden sonra her birinden birer mikdâr akçe indirdi, berin mûceb ki zıkr olunur.³⁴²

That plague was bad for a *bozahane*'s business is understandable. In addition to the customers it lost through their succumbing to the disease, there were undoubtedly quite a few of its regular visitors who suddenly abandoned alcohol to escape divine retribution. But as is clear from the middle-16th-century judicial records from Trabzon, other businesses, such as *hamams*, suffered as well and they too demanded and received a lowering of their taxes due.³⁴³

Repopulation

The Ottoman state's treasury suffered from the outbreaks too. Together with the need to have a sufficiently large population for defence, this must have been an important reason to repopulate Istanbul with inhabitants of other parts of the empire. This strategy was not a new one. In the aftermath of the plague epidemic that reached the city in 746-48, the Byzantine emperor Constantine V sought to restore its population by bringing Slavs from Greece to the capital.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Osman Çetin, *Bursa mahkeme sicillerine göre: ilk Osmanlı hastanesi*, 134.

³⁴³ Various examples of judicial records are cited by Jennings, *Studies on Ottoman Social History in the 16th and 17th Century*, 670.

³⁴⁴ George C. Kohn . *The Wordsworth Encyclopedia of Plague & Pestilence*. 1995: 65, New York: Facts on File Inc, 1995.

As is clear from Lowry's article³⁴⁵, Mehmed II resettled his newly conquered capital with non-Muslims among others. İnalcık also illustrates that the Greek population was encouraged to stay.³⁴⁶ This effort to repopulate the city continues in the years to follow. Lowry (2003;115) specifically mentions that : "In so doing, Kritovoulos (1954; 105) reports that he was particularly targeting Christians." Lowry subsequently describes other examples of repopulation: "Stated differently, Muslims, Romaniot Jews, Orthodox Greek Christians, Gregorian Armenian Christians, and those Latin Catholics brought previously from Galata and the two Foças, were now joined by yet another group of *sürgined* Latin Catholics." Lowry³⁴⁷ attributes these continuing efforts of repopulation in the decade after the conquest of Constantinople to the plague outbreaks that decimated the city's population. However, plague would continue to decimate the population of the capital with every new outbreak. Halil İnalcık³⁴⁸ estimated the population of Istanbul in the late fifteenth century at approximately hundred thousand. The turn of the century would again be marked by a major outbreak. As pointed out by Lowry³⁴⁹ Giovanni di Francesco Maringhi referred to twenty five thousand deaths in the outbreak of 1501. The following year was probably as disastrous for a Venetian letter mentions 800 deaths a day in March 1502.³⁵⁰

Another terrible epidemic started in the winter of 1512 and lasted throughout the summer of 1513. In September, the Venetian Baylo would report

³⁴⁵ Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 111-125.

³⁴⁶ From Halil İnalcık's article, "The Policy of Mehmed II Toward the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings" in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vols. 23-24 (1969-1970) pp. 231-249 we learn that the Greek population of Istanbul was given incentives to stay.

³⁴⁷ Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 124.

³⁴⁸ Halil İnalcık. "Istanbul," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd edition. IV: 224-248. Leiden: Brill. 1978, 238-239.

³⁴⁹ Lowry, *Pushing the Stone Uphill*, 125.

³⁵⁰ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 4, Col. 242.

that no less than **sixty thousand** people had died in one year in Istanbul ³⁵¹. Even if we assume that the population lost because of the outbreaks at the turn of the century had somehow been replaced, this means that more than half the population of the city had perished. From Sanudo's diary, it can be understood that Selim tried to apply the approach of his ancestor and ordered *sürgün*, that is to forcibly move the population of conquered areas to Istanbul. A letter from the Baylo in Istanbul³⁵² mentions that : "It is said that the Ruler sends 500 households of families from Cairo here to Constantinople." Another letter,³⁵³ from sier Dimitri Columbardo , master of a vessel reports this same intention to have at least the notables of Cairo transferred. While in Alexandria "he saw with his own eyes" that " masters of households ... of which is said that they number 1500 and are the richest that were to be found in Cairo, are said to be wanted to be sent to Constantinople with all their wealth." People who were ordered to go paid a great deal of money to be able to stay in Cairo: "In Cairo, two Venetian masters are present, one named Joan Andrea and the other missier Simplicio Rizo, who are merchants in jewellery. And those mentioned have spent 300 ducates so as not to go to Constantinople." A Jewish man, named Malen Jacob, is likewise reported to have spent a great deal of money in order to stay in Cairo. A third letter³⁵⁴ (24, 604) again confirms the forced transportation of the prominent families of Cairo to Constantinople. Although from this single source it is impossible to know how

³⁵¹ The Baylo furthermore describes how the outbreak had brought commerce to a complete standstill, for many of the notables of the city had died too and furthermore the court, an important customer of luxury goods, had fled the city. Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol.17 , Col. 159-160.

³⁵² Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 24, Col. 506.

³⁵³ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 24, Col. 599.

³⁵⁴ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 24, Col. 604.

many, if any of those wealthy citizens of Cairo eventually ended up in Cairo, this transfer of merchants and craftsmen by Selim is confirmed by İnalçık³⁵⁵

War

To which extent the Ottomans' successes were due to a weakening of their enemies through the epidemic is a matter of debate. However, there can be no doubt that the pandemic must at some times have conveyed the Ottomans a tactical advantage, which they skillfully exploited. As İnalçık³⁵⁶ explained, "the Ottoman expansion began with the seasonal movements of Turcoman nomadic groups into the Byzantine coastal plains." The depopulation caused by the Black Death should be considered as a powerful "pull factor" for this migration pattern in addition to the "push factor" of Mongol pressures on the Turcoman population as described by İnalçık³⁵⁷. Quite possibly, this might explain some of the Ottomans' successes in the year 1352, when Süleyman Pasha conquered a number of fortresses on the European side of the Dardanelles. Aşıkpaşazade's narrative asserts that:

Süleyman Pasha sent word to his father saying 'o fortunate one, with your miraculous care now Rumeli has been conquered by us. The infidels here became extremely weak. So, let it be known that we need here many men of Muslim faith to make secure and prosperous the lands and fortresses which have been conquered ... Orkhan Ghâzi agreed and sent *those dark skinned Arab nomad families (Kara göçer Arab-evleri)*, which had previously migrated over to Karesi-ili. These Arabs stayed for some time in the environs of Gelibolu. Süleyman Pasha then continued his onslaught and reached the coasts of Tekvur-Daghi, on the way he took the above-mentioned fortresses... In the mean time, new settlers arrived day after day from Karesi-ili"³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ İnalçık, *Süleyman the Lawgiver*

³⁵⁶ İnalçık, *The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State*, 74.

³⁵⁷ İnalçık, *The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State*, 74.

³⁵⁸ İnalçık, *Essays in Ottoman History*, 393

By locating "Arab" settlements on the Asiatic side of the Dardanelis in early Ottoman history, İnalçık³⁵⁹ argues convincingly that this statement was not a flight of fancy from Aşıkpaşazade, but that it reflected a historical reality. Süleyman Pasha's claim that "the infidels became extremely weak" seems justified, not only in the light of his military achievements, but also of the loss in population that the region had suffered in 1347-1348. Aşıkpaşazade emphasises that the Arab nomads were summoned from Karesi-ili, where they had previously migrated, thus indicating that they had moved into its fertile rural areas quite recently and most likely after the region had been depopulated by the Black Death.

Moreover, the plague outbreak was used by the Byzantines to condemn their emperor's foreign policy with regard to the Ottomans, which was a bone of contention that deeply divided the population. An unidentified source seemingly referred to the participation of Cantacuzenos in battle as a support to the Ottomans, when it believed the plague to be "a special punishment from God on his people and the Genoese for their previously helping the Muslims capture the city of Romanais from fellow Christians."³⁶⁰

Although historians usually focus on the first outbreak of the Black Death pandemic, which took place in 1347/48, the next major plague outbreak in 1361 again spread over most of Europe and Anatolia. The Brachea Chronika mentions that plague was rampant in the whole of the Byzantine empire in the years 1361/1362.³⁶¹ According to Charanis³⁶² this outbreak was also confirmed by the

³⁵⁹ İnalçık, *Essays in Ottoman History*, 393-394

³⁶⁰ Dols (1977: 53) unfortunately misquotes Ziegler (1982: 16) when asserting that Cantacuzenos believed the plague to be "a special punishment from God on his people and the Genoese for their previously helping the Muslims capture the city of Romanais from fellow Christians." This quote was specified by Ziegler as being from an unspecified chronicler. Maybe the text upon which these assertions are based is the letter from Nicephoras Gregoras to the emperor Cantacuzenos, which also criticizes the emperor's help to the Turks in the capture of Romanais.

³⁶¹ Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 290.

Chronicle of Panaretus. Babinger³⁶³ also quotes Panaretos as stating that Edirne still was a Byzantine possession at the time of the second bubonic plague (thanatos tou boubounos). This leads Babinger to suggest that the widespread epidemic made it easier for the Ottomans to conquer several Thracian cities.

In fact, it would not have been the first time in Byzantine history that Turkish conquest might have been facilitated by the outbreak of a serious epidemic. Likewise, a great plague epidemic took place in 1077-78³⁶⁴ and simultaneously, attacks by *barbarians* destabilized the empire. An anonymous Byzantine chronicle describes the rule of the emperor Michael Parapinakes (1071-78) as follows:

Under this emperor almost the whole world, on land and sea, occupied by the
impious barbarians, has been destroyed and has become empty of
population,
for all Christians have been slain by them and all houses and settlements
with
their churches have been devastated by them in the whole East, completely
crushed and reduced to nothing."³⁶⁵

This bleak description of the Byzantine Empire would find its echo in the lament of Manuel Paleologus while on campaign for Bayezid in 1391:

Certainly the Romans had a name for the small plain where we are now when they lived and ruled here... There are many cities here, but they lack what constitutes the true splendour of a city, that is human beings. Most now lie in ruins... not even the names have survived.

³⁶² Charanis, Peter. "Les BPAXEA XRONIKA comme source historique, an Important Short Chronicle of the Fourteenth Century," *Byzantion* (13) 335-362. 1938, 318.

³⁶³ Babinger, *Beiträge zur Frühgeschichte der Türkenherrschaft in Rumelien (14.15. Jahrhundert)*, 47.

³⁶⁴ described in the Syrianic source of Bar Hebraeus or Gregory Abû'l-Farac. Bar Hebraeus. *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l-Faraj, 1225-1286*. ed. by Ernest A. Wallis Budge. Amsterdam: Apa-Philo Press. 1976, 328.

³⁶⁵ Vasiliev (1952: 355) who quotes this paragraph from the work *Anonumon Synopsis Chronikon* Sathas, *Bibliotheca Graeca Medii Aevi*, VII, 169. While describing the impact of the incursions of the Seljuks into Byzantine territory, Vasiliev omits to give any information on the devastating plague epidemic that was rampant in the empire in 1077-78.

Both in the 11th and the 14th century, Turkish conquest was accompanied by the outbreak of a very serious epidemic that ravaged Constantinople, if the Syriac chronicler Gregory Abû'l-Farac (Bar Hebraeus) ³⁶⁶ (199:328) is to be believed, who records for 1077/8 that the Byzantine strategus Nicephorus Botaniates besieged Constantinople for four months. The siege resulted in shortages with sharp increases in food prices. The shortages were followed by a plague ³⁶⁷ that must have mirrored the Justinian plague in magnitude if the testimony of an eyewitness is to be believed ³⁶⁸, who claimed to have earned 160 000 obolus (one obolus for each corpse) during four months, for having transported the plague victims' bodies for their 'burial' ³⁶⁹. This would bring the death toll to 160 000 or about 1300 cases daily.³⁷⁰ That the epidemic actually took place is supported by the evidence that a major epidemic (wabâ' 'azim) of unspecified nature struck Syria in 1076/77, as shown by Dols.³⁷¹ In addition to the outbreaks of 1077/78 and 1347, Dols also considers the Justinian pandemic to have created a similar situation, whereby the reduced Byzantine army was unable to defend the borders and invasions of Slavs, Lombards and Berber took place.³⁷²

Ever since its appearance, plague entertained a complex relationship with warfare. As we illustrated above, a plague-stricken region could be an easy target

³⁶⁶ (199:328)

³⁶⁷ Although the translator, Doğrul (1999:328) uses the word 'veba' we cannot be sure that the epidemic was the same disease that caused the Justinian plague and the Black Death.

³⁶⁸ Bar Hebraeus himself was disinclined to believe the testimony of the man. The numbers do indeed seem inflated, for if the man personally carried away the deceased, he would have had to transport more than thousand bodies daily in order to earn the money he claimed. Conceivably, he might have coordinated a crew of grave 'diggers'.

³⁶⁹ After the burial places (grave yard) of the church was filled, the man opened the door of the church and threw the bodies into the adjacent sea.

³⁷⁰ Arık "Selçuklular Zamanında Anadolu'da Veba Salgınları," *DTCF T.A.D.* 15 (26): 27-57. page 43; also comments on the event as reported by Bar Hebraeus.

³⁷¹ Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 32.

³⁷² Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 17.

for a campaign, especially when the urban population had evacuated its town to flee the disease or when the death rate had been very high. Of course, invading a contaminated area might turn into a pyrrhus victory when the invaders became infected in turn. Conversely, armies could facilitate the spread of plague in a region through the movements of troops and slaves, the concentration of refugees in overcrowded cities under siege and the penury as a result of looting or the destruction of harvests. The plague treatises of the Middle Ages attributed a causative role to war too. According to the miasma theory they believed in, plague was produced by the foul emanations of the decaying bodies of men and horses on the battlefield. But as remarked above, attacking armies often brought the plague with them or they became infected during long-during sieges. Such a fate befell the Tatars while laying siege on Caffa in 1346. In turn, the besieged Genoese colony became infected (according to de Mussis because the Tatars threw infected corpses over the city walls). From Caffa onwards, the first Black Death epidemic spread relentlessly over Asia Minor. The devastation caused by the civil war in the years 1341-1347 between John V Paleologus and John VI Cantacuzenos might have rendered Thrace and Macedonia vulnerable to the epidemic.

A century later, during the unsuccessful siege of Belgrade by Murad in 1440, losses in the Ottoman army were partly due to plague according to Doukas:

Belgrad'ı altı ay karadan ve nehirden muhasara ettiği halde, hiç bir şey kazanamadı. Bilâkis çok zararlara düşer oldu. Vezirlerden ve kullarından bir çoklarını vaba hastalığından ve kaleden makinalarla atılan mermi isabetinden kaybetti.³⁷³

According to Biraben, the Ottoman army were also to have brought plague along during the siege by Murad's successor Mehmed II of Ragusa in 1464. But the victorious Ottomans behaved cautiously and avoided to enter the defeated city,

³⁷³ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, 128.

which by that time had also become infected.³⁷⁴ Whether reports of the siege were fabricated or not, fact is that plague was a common scourge for any army or navy. According to a note in the diary of Malipiero, the Ottoman fleet suffered from plague too. It was reported to have left Istanbul for the Black Sea on the 20th May of 1475, badly equipped and *amorbada* or plague-stricken.³⁷⁵ The following year, in 1476, Mehmed the Conqueror reportedly had to end the siege of Boğdan because of the many losses in his army due to plague.³⁷⁶ His successors would have to cope with the same problem. During Selim's campaign in the year 1514, a prisoner interrogated by the Master of Rhodes informed that Selim's army had suffered great losses through famine and plague.³⁷⁷ And the campaigns of Süleyman would not be spared the disease, either. A letter in Sanudo's diary³⁷⁸ describes the conditions of the Ottomans preparing for war with the Hungarians : the Ottoman camp was reported to have suffered badly from plague and *fluxo*.³⁷⁹

It can be assumed that the adversaries were also aware of the threats that plague epidemics brought with them and acted accordingly. In the 15th century, the Venetians were indeed apprehensive that the garrisons of their overseas possessions had to be kept up at all cost in order to be ready for a Turkish incursion. This was not an easy task when plague was rampant, as testifies the

³⁷⁴ Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, Vol. 1, 140 and 145. The source of this story is not indicated by the author. However, Babinger's authoritative work on Mehmed the Conqueror, claims this report of an enormous Ottoman army threatening a siege of the city by ambassadors from Ragusa was fabricated. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time*. Edited by William C. Hickman. New Jersey : Princeton University Press. 1978.

³⁷⁵ Malipiero, *Annali veneti dall' anno 1457 al 1500*, 111.

³⁷⁶ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Vol II, 4. edition, Ankara, 1983, page 80, as quoted by Kılıç, Orhan. *Genel Hatlarıyla Dünya ve Osmanlı Devletinde Salgın Hastalıklar*, 100-101.

³⁷⁷ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 19, Col. 377.

³⁷⁸ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 42, Col. 653.

³⁷⁹ I could not identify the latter disease. *Fluxo*, that is *flusso* or flow, could possibly be indicating some kind of contagious intestinal infection such as dysentery.

following entry in the recordings of the deliberations of the Venetian Senate for May 1449 :

The recent plague in Negroponte has killed most of the soldiers, which were replaced by the Greeks. In order to reestablish security, we order the new Baylo, Giovanni Malipiero, to constitute two companies and to take them with him to Negroponte. The old companies will be disbanded and the Greek soldiers sent back.³⁸⁰

At the start of the sixteenth century, plague in turn created security-related problems for the Ottomans. The Ahkam Defter of 1501 relates that :

Şimdiki hâlde Dergâh-ı mu'allâma mektûb ve âdem gönderüp Yukaru Şark diyârına gönderilen âdemden biri gelüp: "Sûfî tâifesi Kür suyunun öte kenârında oturup Şirvan vilâyetinün ekin yörür ovalarında ta'ûn hastalığı vâkı' olup Akkoyunlu bu cânibde oturup memerrleri hıfz iderler " diyü bildürmiş, ma'lûm oldu.³⁸¹

The outbreak of plague caused the migration of populations on the eastern border of the empire, putting pressure on the local population and disturbing the balance of power. In the same period, plague would also contribute to religiously-inspired social unrest (see above, religious response).

Diplomacy

Plague would also have an impact on the relations between countries in less bellicose ways. The Venetians for one were careful to display good diplomatic manners towards the Ottomans when they themselves were struck with the disease. Therefore, when the doge received an invitation by Mehmed II to attend

³⁸⁰ P. Thiriet. *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie*. Tome troisième: 1431-1463. Paris: Mouton & Co. 1958, 150.

³⁸¹ İlhan Şahin and Feridun Emecen. 1994. *Osmanlılarda Divân - Bürokrasi - Ahkâm. II. Bâyezid Dönemine Ait 906/ 1501 Tarihli Ahkâm Defteri*. Istanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı. document nr 906

his sons' circumcision in March 1457, he did not send an envoy to represent him. The doge excused himself blaming the "temporis pestiferi", that is the times of plague and the "inabilitatem viarem" or impossibility to travel. He was represented instead by the baylo, who was already staying in Constantinople.³⁸² Whether the concern was genuine or merely a ruse to avoid giving expensive presents, fact is that the North and Centre of Italy was indeed suffering from a plague outbreak in those days.³⁸³ Istanbul had been visited by an epidemic in 1455 and was apparently plague-free, so that public celebrations could be held in an appropriately festive atmosphere.

In the above example, the Venetians were careful not to transmit the epidemic to the Ottomans. However, as Maria Pia Pedani³⁸⁴ points out, they were eager to protect their republic from any traveller that could bring the epidemic to them, be he a nobleman or a beggar. Whenever the Ottomans sent their envoy called a *çavuş* or *dragoman* accompanied by other members of the central Ottoman bureaucracy, they had to endure the same procedure as anybody else. From 1423 onwards, it became a regular practice that those arriving from an infected area were denied immediate access to the city. Whether nobleman, merchant, pilgrim or vagabond, the rule was applied indiscriminately that they had to stay for a certain period in the plague hospital, the Lazzaretto Vecchio. In 1468, this policy was improved upon when the Lazzaretto Nuovo came into use. In this hospital would stay those that were only suspected of plague without showing any

³⁸² Maria Pia Pedani. *In Nome del Gran Signore. Inviati Ottomani a Venezia dalla Caduta di Costantinopoli alla Guerra di Candia*. Venezia: Deputazione Editrice. 1994, 142- 143. Another invitation was sent by Mehmed II in 1479 for the circumcision of a grandson. Pedani does not mention that the doge refused again, but as it happens there was again plague in North and Central Italy ! For the plague outbreaks in Italy, see Capasso and Capelli, *Le Epidemie di Peste in Abruzzo dal 1348 al 1702*, page 46.

³⁸³ Capasso and Capelli *Le Epidemie di Peste in Abruzzo dal 1348 al 1702*, page 64 give a chronological overview of regional outbreaks without specifying the source or the cities concerned.

³⁸⁴ Maria Pia Pedani. *In Nome del Gran Signore. Inviati Ottomani a Venezia dalla Caduta di Costantinopoli alla Guerra di Candia*, 57.

of its symptoms. The period anyone had to stay in this lazaretto was about forty days (quarantine) whenever cases were reported on board of his vessel or when the ship had visited a harbour that was contaminated. When this was not the case, the waiting period was only two weeks. The Ottoman diplomats underwent the same treatment as everyone else. However, in order to minimize their discomfort, and especially in the 16th century, they could undergo this period of isolation in any harbour of the Venetian Dalmatian coast.³⁸⁵ Proof that they had completed the period of isolation was delivered in the form of the *fede di sanità*, a document that had to be presented upon arrival. He who could not produce this document had to spend the proscribed days in the lazaretto. A similar procedure is described in a letter from Syo to the Venetian senate, dated August 1518, which mentions that : *In Constantinople and Pera there is plague, and ships coming from there are not given recepto.*³⁸⁶

Plague was a concern to the Ottomans when they were travelling on official business. But it also made life difficult for those of them who were leaving the empire in a less official manner. The unfortunate Cem sultan is the best-known of all the prominent Ottomans who left the empire as a result of dynastic strife. His journey into exile first brought him to the island of Sicily and then to city of Nice on the coast of southern France, where he was greeted by a plague outbreak:

Andan sonra Nitse şehrinde ve tarafında tâ'ûn olduğu ecilden seb' ve semânîn ve semânemi'e zî'l-hiccesinün yegirm yedinci gün çahârşenbe günü birer aksak sakat gemi kuyuksuz tavarlara bindirüb göçüb Elespere nâm şehirde konuldu hâtibzâdeyi anda getürdiler.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ From the 17th century onwards, it was preferred that they would pass through the Venetian lazaretto.

³⁸⁶ Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Vol. 26, Co. 133-134.

³⁸⁷ Nicolas Vatin. Sultan Djem. Un prince ottoman dans l'Europe du XVe siècle d'après deux sources contemporaines: *Vâkı'ât-ı Sultan Cem*, Oeuvres de Guillaume Caoursin. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu. 1997, 157.

Cem was thus obliged to move in order to stay away from the outbreak. It must have been cold comfort that his brother Bayezid was obliged to do likewise because of the recurrent plague outbreaks in the capital. Cem's forced wanderings about Europe did not infect him with the disease, but his mother was less fortunate. She lived in exile in Cairo, where Cem had initially sought refuge with his family and died there herself during a plague outbreak.³⁸⁸

Bayezid' successor Selim would not treat his family any different. Fearing to become victim of the Ottoman ruler's suspicions, his cousins Süleyman Çelebi and 'Alâ al-dîn 'Alî also found refuge in Egypt. Unfortunately, the same wave of plague which struck Istanbul in 1513 would also wash over the Mamluk territories. The two brothers would both succumb to the disease, first Süleyman and a short while later his brother. They were buried with all the pomp befitting a state funeral, and with the mamluk Sultan al-Gawrî leading the ceremony. The convoy of Süleyman's funeral was preceded by almsgivers, paid for by the Sultan. Süleyman's horses passed in front, their tails cut, and the saddles turned upside down. His turban was placed on top of the bier, as well as his bows, which had been broken according to Ottoman custom.³⁸⁹

Trade

As was the case for war, international trade would both be a means of promulgating the disease and at the same time be profoundly reshaped because of it. Some of its effects were indirect: disruption of the trade in commodities like grain would lead to famine, so undermining people's resistance towards disease in

³⁸⁸ Yılmaz Öztuna. *Devletler ve Hânedanlar: Türkiye (1074-1990.)* - vol. 2. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları no. 1101. Kaynak Eserler Dizisi no. 18 Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları.1996, 137.

³⁸⁹ Veinstein, *Les Ottomans et la Mort. Permanences et mutations*, 180.

general and making populations receptive to outbreaks. In 1347, just before the first pandemic arrived in Europe, Venice was suffering from severe shortages of cereals as a result of the Tatars' blockage of the Black Sea trade. This is illustrated by the entry of 24 April 1347 of the Venetian Senate's deliberations :

Le Sénat avait interdit en février 1344 tout commerce avec les régions soumises à Zanibeck; devant la pénurie de blé, il autorise à présent les marchands vénitiens à se rendre là-bas pour charger des céréales.³⁹⁰

A subsequent entry of 23 August 1347 shows that the situation in Venice had not improved by the summer of 1347 and that the Senate was desperately looking for grain supplies, wheat being the staple food of their population :

Ordre au baile de Constantinople de faire tout son possible pour accélérer et développer les achats de blé partout où il le peut et d'emprunter tout l'argent nécessaire; le comte de Raguse est chargé d'envoyer un courrier à Constantinople pour porter cet ordre et l'on envoie de Venise un navire à Constantinople, par Coron.³⁹¹

Trade had an influence on the appearance of outbreaks, conversely plague stood in relation to the availability of wheat and other food supplies. When an outbreak struck the rural population of a wheat-producing region, it killed or caused the flight of the rural labour force. Accordingly, harvests could not be made, which lead to shortages in supply. The local authorities understood this situation well and they tried to prevent shortages by buying elsewhere. The recordings of the deliberations of the Venetian Senate once again provide an example of this situation. The entry for the 29th of March, 1457 recorded the measure taking to prevent famine after plague had struck:

As the plague has made most *parèques* (peasants who had no obligation to remain on their land) flee from Modon, we have to prepare for a bad

³⁹⁰ Thiriet, Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie. tome premier: 1329-1399, 60.

³⁹¹ Thiriet, Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie. tome premier: 1329-1399, 61.

harvest: we order the provéditeurs of wheat to send 500 staia of wheat (about 417 hl).³⁹²

It is clear from the diaries of Sanudo that wheat shortages continued in Venice into the beginning of the 16th century and that the Ottomans were an important supplier. Plague did not only influence the supply of grain, it caused sudden changes in demand if major urban centres such as Istanbul or Venice were subject to a major outbreak. However, as stated above, the yearly fluctuations in the grain trade were influenced by a number of other factors, such as political instability, war, the influence of the weather on the harvest and competing demands. Illustrative of the complex relation between these factors is the fact that although prices of grain increased greatly after the outbreak of 1347, the first spike in grain prices did occur four years before the arrival of the plague due to deteriorating political conditions.³⁹³

The grain trade was a profitable business, in which the Ottomans were involved from early on. Bithynia provided the Byzantines with wheat in 1343 when the Tatars closed the ports of the Black Sea. The Venetians were also buying Ottoman wheat and prepared to pay well. Their dealings with Murad I, Bayezid and Süleyman Çelebi provided those rulers with important tax revenues.³⁹⁴ İnalcık enumerated the important grain-growing regions for Istanbul (and by extension for the Venetians and others who wanted to engage in trade in times of shortages) as being : the plains of Thrace, the Danubian basin, Bulgaria, the steppe region from the Dobruja to the Don river, the plain of Thessaly, western Anatolia and Egypt.³⁹⁵

³⁹² Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie. tome troisième: 1431-1463*, 1961, 216.

³⁹³ Elizabeth A. Zachariadou. "Prix et marchés des céréales en Romanie (1345-1405)." in *Romania and the Turks (c. 1300- c. 1500)*. London. Variorum Reprints. 1985, 294 .

³⁹⁴ Zachariadou. "Prix et marchés des céréales en Romanie (1345-1405)." in *Romania and the Turks (c. 1300- c. 1500)*, 300.

³⁹⁵ İnalcık, "An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire". (Volume 1: 1300-1600), 180-183.

Obviously, controlling these regions meant that a good profit from the grain trade could be ensured.

Unfortunately, commerce did not remain limited to an exchange of goods and money; a direct effect of trade was that it spread plague as well. Although all shipping could transmit plague through an infected crew, grain shipments could bring infected mice and their fleas along with their cargoes. Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo who was member of an embassy to Timur Lenk, described how they received news that plague was present when they arrived in Anatolia in 1403 ³⁹⁶:

... A vessel arrived in the port of Tenio, and they sent to ask where she came from. She was from Gallipoli, a place belonging to the Turk, but on Grecian land and was bound for Chios with a cargo of wheat; and she brought news that a great pestilence raged at Gallipoli.³⁹⁷

There can be little doubt that such shipments as described by De Clavijo were highly contagious and contributed to the distribution of the disease. The relation between the arrival of a contaminated ship in a port and the subsequent outbreak of the plague in that city was understood from early onwards. As a result, measures were taken to limit the risk of contamination. One of those was the implementation of preventive isolation of vessels, also known as quarantine. The name quarantine is derived from the Italian quarante or 'forty' which indicated the number of days a suspect vessel was to remain anchored outside the harbour. Ragusa was the first town to introduce the measure in 1377 : all who arrived from an infected area had to spend a month on the adjacent island of Mercano before being allowed to enter

³⁹⁶ The outbreak is confirmed by Doukas as quoted by Lowry (2003: 99) : In the spring of 1403 a dire famine and pestilence struck all the provinces where the feet of the Scythians had trodden.

³⁹⁷ Ruy Gonzalez De Clavijo. *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand: A.D. 1403.* 26.

the city.³⁹⁸ The same year, Venice adopted the same procedure, but upon advice of the physicians, the period of isolation was extended to forty days.³⁹⁹ Along with other measures, such as bills of health, the creation of lazareths and health boards, quarantine was one of the tools in the fight against contamination. It was not entirely successful, for fraud was always possible. According to Biraben Ragusa became infected by a vessel carrying wheat from Sicily in the year 1500 in spite of its strict reglementations.⁴⁰⁰

As was mentioned above, no indications were found in the sources that the Byzantine or Ottoman authorities had adopted any such measures on a regular basis or had indeed any policy at all. However, at least on one occasion, in 1437, did Byzantine Constantinople impose a quarantine measure on vessels coming from the Black Sea as reported by Pero Tafur. When returning by ship from Trabzon to Constantinople, he was confronted with the quarantine measures that the city had taken to protect itself from plague:

...We returned to Trebizond, where, as I have said, the Emperor did his best to detain me, but he could not succeed and we departed and came to Constantinople. But orders having been issued that no ships coming from the Black Sea were to enter the harbour, either at Constantinople or Pera, because it was feared that they would bring the plague with them, they built a shelter two leagues from Constantinople where the ships could discharge their cargo, and where they had to remain for sixty days unless they were prepared to put to sea again. Certainly the foreign nations bring much sickness with them, and I myself saw in that lodging men dead of plague.⁴⁰¹

Interestingly, the quarantine measure apparently was a joint enterprise between the Genoese and the Byzantine. In view of the Italian experience that the Genoese had with quarantine, it seems that they took the initiative to implement it. It is probable

³⁹⁸ Barisa Krekic, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th Centuries: A City Between East and West*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 1972. 99-10.

³⁹⁹ Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol 2, 176.

⁴⁰⁰ Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Vol 1, 93.

⁴⁰¹ Pero Tafur. *Pero Tafur: Travels and Adventures*. Malcolm Letts, ed. London: George Routledge & Sons. 1926. 138.

that an outbreak of major proportions had triggered the authorities into action. Indeed, several other sources indicate that a terrible plague outbreak had taken place, not only in Constantinople, but in the whole region during the years 1435/36. Oruç Bey records stoically that "Hicretin 838'inde⁴⁰² büyük vebâ oldu."⁴⁰³ Where exactly the outbreak took place the chronicler did not indicate.

More information is available from the "Târîh-i âl-i Osmân by Yusuf bin

Abdullah.⁴⁰⁴ (1997: 123-124):

Ol senede Murâd Han Edrene'de karâr edüb Keşürlük yaylasına çıkdı azîm tâûn olmış idi hicretin sekizyüz otuzdokuz senesinde.⁴⁰⁵

The recordings of the Venetian Senate for the 27th December 1435 mention that :

We have been informed that there is a terrible plague (outbreak) in Constantinople and in Trebizond : in order to protect Venice from the epidemic, we order the captain of the galleons of Romania to anchor his vessels in the waters of Istria, where he will await orders.⁴⁰⁶

Although it is obvious from the above that the previous plague outbreak had made a terribly high number of casualties and from Tafur's testimony that the disease had by no means disappeared completely, the measures were not reinforced rigorously by the Byzantine authorities. For Tafur's assertion that he had not "lodged with the others, but had remained two days in the fields" was accepted without questioning by the Despot Dragas, who ordered a boat to be sent for him.⁴⁰⁷ This again creates the impression that the quarantine measures were above all a Genoese initiative which the Byzantines enforced only half-heartedly.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰² 838 AH corresponds to August 1434- July 1435.

⁴⁰³ *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 84.

⁴⁰⁴ Yusuf bin Abdullah, *Bizans Söylenceleriyle Osmanlı Tarihi; Târîh-i âl-i Osmân*, 123-124.

⁴⁰⁵ 839 AH corresponds to August 1435- July 1436.

⁴⁰⁶ P. Thiriet. *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie*. Tome troisième: 1431-1463, 49.

⁴⁰⁷ Tafur (1926:138) not only was sent for to be brought to Constantinople, but the Despot had no qualms about receiving Tafur in audience immediately.

⁴⁰⁸ Both Venetians and Genoese took the quarantine rules very seriously.

Previous outbreaks in the 15th century had not provoked any quarantine regulations that could be detected in the sources. De Clavijo for example, continued his journey until his ship reached a point about fifteen miles from Constantinople. Then, a messenger was sent to the emperor and two days later, they loaded all their possessions onto a boat and went to Pera. De Clavijo emphasizes that they did so because "the wind was foul and the vessel was unable to reach the port."⁴⁰⁹ No mention is made either of quarantine facilities or of a quarantine period.

Likewise, the access to Pera or Constantinople via other routes of entry was not guarded, at least not as a measure against plague. When the traveller Bertrandon de la Brocquière fulfilled his exploratory mission in 1432, he visited Bursa first. From there, he joined a caravan with goods for Pera that arrived in Scutari (Üsküdar). The passage to Pera over the Bosphorus was controlled, but only in order to collect the taxes due:⁴¹⁰

...Nous venismes à Escutary qui est ung villaige sur le destroit que nous appelons le bras Saint George, au droit de Pere. Et là passay ledict destroit avec lesdis marchans, et y avoit des Turcs qui gardoient le passaige et recepvoient l'argen du tribut qu'il failloit baillier poru passer et passasmes en deux vaisseaulx qui estoient aux Grecs.

In spite of the fact that only a few years before there had been the horrendous outbreak in Bursa during which many Turkish notables had perished and that plague had recently been present in Patras⁴¹¹, the Latins in control of Pera did not impose quarantine measures.⁴¹² Furthermore, Turkish authorities did not in any way try to control the entry to the city of Bursa, in spite of its very recent

⁴⁰⁹ Ruy Gonzalez De Clavijo. Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand: A.D. 1403. 28.

⁴¹⁰ Bertrandon De la Broquière. *Le voyage d'Outremer de Bertrandon de la Broquière*. Ch. Schefer, ed. Paris: Ernest Leroux. 1892, 140.

⁴¹¹ The outbreak was described in Neşri (1987: 609). Likewise, Schreiner (1977: 394) and Sphrantzes (1980: 46) described how the Greek town of Patras was visited by the epidemic in 1431.

⁴¹² If they had, it would surely have been mentioned in de la Brocquière's detailed narrative.

experience with the outbreak. For when de la Brocquière arrived alone in Bursa, ahead of a group pilgrims arriving from Mecca, he was in no way submitted to any control, but could proceed straight away to his lodgings :

Et quant je vins à l'entrée de ladite ville de Bourse, je vins à une place, là où il se assemble trois ou quatre rues... et me fist mener à l'ostel d'ung Florentin, ... et y fu l'espace de dix jours et visetay la ville de Bourse bien à mon aise.⁴¹³

Although no quarantine or other regulations to prevent plague outbreaks seem to have been implented in either Pera or Constantinople in the 15th century ⁴¹⁴, the opposite was very much true. That is, the Venetians were extremely careful not to have their vessels contaminated by the plague. As a result, the crew of their galleys was ordered to stay aboard when by necessity they had to enter a contaminated harbour. In september 1417, the Venetian Senate records show the decision that :

The captain of the Gulf will go to Constantinople in order to escort the galleons of Romania, because anything can be feared in the wake of the occupation of Patras; no member of the crew will go on land in Constantinople, where the plague has been reported.⁴¹⁵

As we saw earlier, a similar decision was taken by the Venetian Senate during the outbreak of 1435:

We have been informed that a terrible plague is taking place in Constantinople and Trebizond: in order to protect Venice from the epidemic, we order the captain of the galleys of Romania to anchor his vessels in the waters of Istria, where he will await orders.⁴¹⁶

This policy of quarantine and general vigilance was continued throughout the fifteenth and into the sixteenth century. In 1501, a letter arrived in Venice from Candia that explained how:

⁴¹³ De la Broquière, *Le voyage d'Outremer de Bertrandon de la Broquière*, 130.

⁴¹⁴ except for the quarantine measure described by Tafur as explained earlier.

⁴¹⁵ Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie. Tome deuxième: 1400-1430*, 159-160.

⁴¹⁶ Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie. Tome troisième: 1431-1463*, 50.

Ships that arrived from Syo and had previously left Constantinople have brought news of great plague in Constantinople. For that reason, they were obliged to stay forty days (or *quarantine*) in Candia.

Unlike the Venetians, there is no indication that the Ottomans imposed measures of quarantine in the period under investigation, that is up to the first half of the sixteenth century. Only later, in the second half of that century, can we find any indication of the application of quarantine in the *mühimme defter* of 1566, and this for the island of Chios, or Sakız. The decree ordered that Christian merchants who arrived from plague-stricken places should remain imprisoned for almost a month (and pay a daily fine). This 'punishment' effectively amounted to a quarantine measure, the more so since the decree stipulated that Muslim merchants could not be held prisoner in the same premises. In conclusion, no evidence could be found as to whether the Ottomans systematically applied measures such as quarantine in the first two centuries of the presence of the disease. It might very well be that the evidence simply did not survive, because it seems surprising that Ottoman bureaucracy with its firm grip on society would not have tried to remediate the situation through regulations. On the other hand, the Ottomans might have displayed an 'ad hoc' approach to the disease, taking special measures whenever they saw the necessity, such as in the case of Sakız island. Moreover, comparisons with 'Europe' tend to focus on the systematic efforts of the Venetian republic to repel plague from their city and their galleys. Such a comparison is void of any meaning, as Venice had the benefit of borders that essentially coincided with its city-gates. Moreover, the Venetian galleys transported enormous concentrations of wealth, therefore it was in the *Serenissima's* best interest to keep their galleys (which were leased by the Venetian authorities) well-defended, that is plague-free. In contrast, at the turn of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman empire's borders were

larger than those of any European state and the collecting of customs duties was subcontracted through the principle of tax-farming⁴¹⁷, creating a potential area of conflict of interest between the controlling of disease by the authorities and the maximizing of profits by private individuals.

⁴¹⁷ Halil İncalcık. *Sources and Studies on the Ottoman Black Sea*. Gönül and Şinasi Tekin, editors. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University. 1995.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence collected within the framework of this thesis supports the view that in order to assess the impact of the Black Death on the Ottomans, it is primordial to understand the recurrence of the disease in the region inhabited by the latter. Aspiring completeness of its chronology would be utopic, but the results of the research clearly show that for the last decennium of the fifteenth century and the first three decennia of the sixteenth century, allowing for seasonal fluctuations, the disease was virtually permanently present in both Bursa and Istanbul. It should be emphasized that this spatial and temporal limitation in no way reflects an epidemiological reality, but the scope and the availability of the sources investigated. Indeed, even in the first decennia of the Black Death pandemic, Byzantine sources attest to a higher frequency of plague in Constantinople than commonly cited. This seems to indicate that already in the early years of the pandemic, plague was a regular visitor of the region. Istanbul's strategic position on the trade route with the Black Sea undoubtedly explains this phenomenon. The ports on the shores of the Black Sea, like Caffa, with its flourishing trade in potentially contagious commodities such as fur and grain, and especially slaves, formed the link with wild foci of plague that had its origins in the steppe of Central

Asia. Since Iran still harbours plague reservoirs, it can be assumed that these were present as well in the period under investigation, creating another likely source of infection for cities such as Bursa, that had intensive exchanges with that area due to the silk trade. Furthermore, evidence abounds that the disease did not spare smaller urban centers and even villages either.

In the light of the frequency with which cities such as Istanbul and Bursa (and most probably Edirne) were struck with plague, the question of where the disease arrived from becomes irrelevant. For either the disease became truly endemic within these cosmopolitan centers, periodically demanding few, unnoticable casualties, until it flared up again with the arrival of new people (janissaries, settlers, merchants) and favorable seasonal conditions, or it arrived every year afresh. After all, the opportunities for infection were plenty: contaminated slaves arriving from the Black Sea, the Ottoman army returning from a victorious, but plague-ridden siege, plague-infested Venetian galleys returning from Cairo. The multitude of human mass-movements passing through the respective Ottoman capitals made outbreaks a most likely event. Even if outbreaks in certain areas can be attributed to the passing of the Ottoman army or the arrival of contaminated *devşirme*, trying to determine an overall direction of the spread of plague is futile. For the period under investigation, plague was present somewhere in Europe every year. Venetian, Catalan, Genoese or Ragusan vessels could at any time bring along the deadly cargo. But a new wave of the disease could also arrive from the North through the contact with the coastal regions of the Black Sea or from the East across the border with the Safavid neighbour or from Arab territories, such as the frequently visitated Mamluk capital Cairo. Seasonal rythms played a role either directly, by favouring a pneumonal (through human

transmission favoured by humid, winterly conditions) or bubonal (that is, flea-transmitted disease during warmer seasons) version or indirectly, by determining the prevalence of trade movements and the organisation of military campaigns.

The perennial activity of plague in the major urban Ottoman centers also explains the casual reporting of the Ottomans : the disease had become a familiar, albeit deadly background, against which the exploits of the Ottoman dynasty and military class were set. The unavoidability of plague also explains why except for some special cases, Ottoman bureaucracy did not endeavour to tackle the disease by means of quarantine. If the disease really seemed to be endemic in, say, Istanbul, there was indeed little point in trying to keep it out. As long as trade was kept going and not hindered by any barriers or quarantine regulations, fresh supplies of manpower could be financed and incorporated into the existing Ottoman society. In view of the abovementioned movements of merchants, slaves, *devşirme*, troops and settlers, it seems anyhow to have been near-impossible for the Ottomans to impose draconian quarantine measures without clogging the functioning of Ottoman society.

With respect to the response of the early Ottomans towards plague, sources reveal preciously little. The few mentions are matter-of-factly, indicating that for the Ottoman society, plague was but one of many ways to die. Without being on top of the agenda, the subject was not a taboo, either. Ottoman medical compendia describe the disease and its putative cures without any religious connotation. Home-spun plague treatises, which appear at the end of the fifteenth century, although hoping for divine redemption, shun the rhetoric of some European examples of the genre about heavenly punishment. In fact, they display the same mixture of theories involving miasma and contagion and practical advice about

how to avoid and cure the disease as the European ones. This should be hardly surprising as both European and Ottoman treatises were the continuation of the pre-Black Death Arab tradition of the plague treatise genre. Outside the circle of Ottoman academia, plague was not considered to be a stigmatising event, either. Tombstones occasionally mention plague as a cause of death, succinctly, without alluding to doom and damnation. By the sixteenth century, and judging by the writings of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu certainly still in the seventeenth century, plague had become a deadly nuisance to Ottoman society.

Did the Ottomans try to engage actively in combating plague in other ways than imposing quarantine ? In view of their well-oiled administration, it would seem inconceivable that they had not, from early days onwards, tried to limit the effect of the disease. Of course, many measures could have been imposed without any explicit reference to plague at all, leaving us to wonder in how far for instance the building of the Dar-üş-Şifâ hospital by Bayezid I in Bursa was a response to the recurring plague epidemics that struck the city from 1348 onwards. If, as we have argued above, plague had become a local, albeit serious health problem, it seemed logical that the Ottomans would treat it this way, that is, as yet another health issue. Not dedicating any hospital facilities uniquely to plague is yet another indication that the Ottomans did not consider the disease to be an *external* danger, but something that had become in every sense, part and parcel of their society. This does not mean that they would not try to shield themselves from it: those who could, fled the disease-stricken areas, be they humble peasants or Ottoman rulers. Mehmed the Conqueror would flee plague if the situation allowed, but nevertheless let affairs of state predominate. His descendant Suleyman would not

act differently, staying put when the situation required him to do so, but leaving for healthier surroundings when the option was available.

Concerning the question whether the appearance of the Black Death enabled the Ottomans to conquer the vast territories that grew into the Ottoman empire, the evidence is not conclusive. As in Europe, many Byzantine cities became, at least temporarily, severely underpopulated because of plague and the Ottoman rulers were only too keenly aware of any tactical advantage that could be exploited. Moreover, conditions of siege and raiding would create a favorable setting for plague to appear among the indigenous population. Yet Constantinople would be conquered only a century after the Black Death first struck the city. And if a more-or-less nomadic lifestyle formed some protection against the disease, that same advantage should have been to some extent available to the other Turkish *beyliks*, which the Ottomans eventually conquered. The situation of the Balkans during the early period of conquest is too scantily documented to allow any assessment of the possible impact of the disease on the local inhabitants. However, it seems that the mountainous regions sometimes offered a refuge for the disease to at least part of the population. In view of these considerations, it seems that it was successful military campaigning and the drive for expansion that formed the cornerstone of Ottoman success, rather than the natural disaster that had arrived in the form of plague.

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APPENDIX I ENTRIES FROM THE DIARY OF MARINO SANUDO

MCCCCCLXXXVII, MARZO (March 1497):

1. vol. 1, col.

A di 10 marzo, per lettere di Syo di 12 zener.

Come la peste era a Constantinopoli, et ne moriva 300 al dì.

2. vol. 1, col.

Da Constantinopoli, per lettere di 20 zener.

Item,...

Pur a Constantinopoli era gran peste, come ho ditto di sopra.

MCCCCCLXXXVII, GIUGNO (June 1497):

3. vol 1, col.

In questo tempo, in molte terre de Italia era grandissimo pericolo di peste, et zà in parte era il morbo cominzato, processo per le guerre et carestie, *unde* per la signoria nostra fu facto ogni provisione debita acciò la terra non se infetasse, *quod Deus avertat*.

MCCCCCLXXXVII, SETTEMBRE (September 1497) :

4. vol 1, col. 756

Capitolo di una lettera di Syo, scritta per il consolo nostro a domino Petro Delphino si San Canzian, et zonta in questa terra al principio di avosto.

Per lettere di Syo di 25 zugno...

In Constantinopoli, la peste fa gran processo.

MCCCCC, NOVEMBRE (November 1500):

5. vol 3, col. 1073

Item, per do schiavi schampati di Turchia, vien di Salonichij, dicono a Constantinopoli à gran peste; il signor esser in Andernopoli, e ungari li dà impazo.

MCCCCC, DECEMBRE (December 1500) :

6. vol 3, col. 1216

Vene, lezendossi le letere da mar, sier Francesco Chachuri...parti di Andernopoli a di primo novembrio, dove era il signor. E a Constantinopoli si dice, era la peste.

MCCCCCI, GENNAIO (January 1501) :

7. vol. 3, col. 1346

Da Corfù, dil baylo e proveditor, di 26 dezembrio, et di 3 zener.

...et il signor turcho è in Andrinopoli, perché in Constantinopoli hè grandissima peste...

MCCCCCI, FEBBRAIO (February 1501) :

8. vol. 3, col. 1394

Da la Barga, di Andrea Lanza, capetanio, di primo, al capetanio zeneral.

... tutti li turchi è andati col signor in Andernopoli; e a Constantinopoli è peste assai.

MCCCCCI, OTTOBRE (October 1501) :

9. vol. 4, col. 161

Da Syo, per letere di 30 zugno, si ave di Zuan di Tabia, consolo.

...Poi, per letere di X septembrio, el dito scrive, el signor turco, era a di 28 avosto in Constantinopoli, ... e fin qui tamen el signor non era movesto et è meraveia, hessendo la peste in Constantinopoli et Pera, e fa gran processo ...

10. vol. 4, col.161

Da poi, per letere di Candia, di 23 septembrio

Si ave, che per nave et griparia venuta da Syo, partita da Constantinopoli, dice esser gran peste a Constantinopoli; et per questo fono banizati star a Scandia 40 zorni.

MCCCCCI, DICEMBRE (December 1501):

11. vol. 4, col. 179/180

Da Syo, per letere di Zuan di Tabia, consolo nostro, di 21 octubrio.

Come hanno, per letere di 4 octubrio, di Pera, el signor turcho non esser movesto da Constantinopoli. Ancora, che, per letere di avosto, fo scritto dovea cavalchar per tutto avosto o ver fin X septembrio, e' fin qui non è mosso, e si miravegliano, perchè la peste fa processo in Constantinopoli, de 700 al dì et *ultra*.

MCCCCCII, MARZO (March 1502) :

12. vol. 4, col. 242

A dì 18 marzo.

Habiamo auto in questa hora tarda, a dì 19 decembrio, per homo, partito da Constantinopoli a li 22 del passato, venuto per via del pasazo...

La peste feva processo, 800 al zorno, tra Constantinopoli e Pera.

MCCCCCII, GIUGNO (June 1502) :

13. vol. 4, col. 267

Da Constantinopoli.

Come è molti zorni il signor turco non ha tenuto Porta, ne è persona la habbi veduto; et si judichava fusse morto...

MCCCCCII, OTTOBRE (October 1502) :

14. vol. 4, col. 390

Item, à letere di Syo, dil consolo, di 5 ; avisi di 5 septembrio, di Pera.

..poi, per uno altro aviso, par il signor turco non vadi in Andernopoli; et a Pera era il morbo.

MCCCCCII, NOVEMBRE (November 1502) :

15. vol. 4, col. 480

Da Syo, di Zuan di Tabia, consolo nostro, a l'orator, data a dì 7 octubrio.

Item, il morbo è a Constantinopoli e a Galipoli; e a Constantinopoli è carestia di formenti, dove il signor à mandato fuori di stretto 14 schirazi per formento.

MCCCCCIII, GENNAIO (January 1503) :

16. vol. 4, col. 668

Do Constantinopoli, dil secretario nostro, di ultimo decembrio... fo li

Item, da Thaut non fu, perchè in quelli zorni li era morto uno fiol di anni 30, da peste, che pur la pizega.

MCCCCCIII, MARZO (March 1503) :

17. vol. 4, col. 804/805

Copia de una letera venuta di Moldavia.

Serenissime princeps et domine excellentissime, humili commendatione præmissa.

Et che è el morbo grande in Constantinopoli e in Andernopoli, e gran carestia; a Constantinopoli ne muor 200 al zorno, et in Andernopoli più di 200.

MCCCCCIII, OTTOBRE (October 1503) :

18. *Item, è lettere di Rado vayvoda di Transilvania, come a Costantinopoli è il morbo grande e gran carestia e 'l Turcho amalato e si tien...*

MCCCCCIV, FEBBRAJO (February 1504):

19. vol. 5, col. 874

Dil ditto. di 8.

... e haveano cargato in esso luogo de Talandi per ditto luogo di Constantinopoli, dove si dice esser grandissima fame e peste *etiam* in tutto el paese.

20. vol. 5, col. 914

Da la Zefalonia, dil proveditor, di 26 zener

..e che a Costantinopoli è grandissima carestia del viver, e peste.

MCCCCCIV, MARZO (March 1504) :

21. vol. 5, col. 968

Di la Cephalonia, di sier Nicolò Marcello proveditor, di 5 fevrer.

Se intende a Constantinopoli è grandissima peste e penuria di viver...

22. vol. 5, col. 995

Da Sybinicho, fo leto una lettera, di 4 marzo, di Zuan Chavilichi fo di sier Tomaxo...

Dice è stà gran morbo in quella parte che non è rimasto ni can ni gato; et è morto il fiol dil Turcho Curchut celebi, che tegniva quel paese.

23. vol.5, col. 1003

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Lunardo Bembo vice Baylo, di 26.

Item, di novo nulla zè, ma tutte merchantie dormeno rispetto le carestie et morbi che mai non manca, benchè al presente sia pocho mal.

24. vol. 5 , col. 1034/1035

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Lunardo Bembo vice baylo, di 18 zener.

A di 6 ditto manchò di morbo el magnifico Synan bassà bigliarbei di la Grecia, zenero dil Signor turco...

25. vol. 5, col. 1063

Di la Zefalonia, di sier Nicolò Marcello, proveditor, di 26 fevrer.

..e che a Constantinopoli è gran peste e carestia...

MCCCCCIV, APRILE (April 1504) :

26. vol. 6, col. 10

Item, fo letere di Constantinopoli, di sier Lunardo Bembo, vice baylo, di ultimo zener.

Et da Constantinopoli 0 da conto, *solum* vi è gran peste e carestia.

MCCCCCV, MAGGIO (May, 1505) :

Da Constantinopoli, di 31 marzo.

Di sublevation di janizari, per la gran charestia vi hè lì et *alia*.

MDX, APRILE (April 1510) :

27. vol. 10, col. 211

Et fo leto una lettera di Andernopoli di sier Nicolò Zustignan di sua man, di 20 marzo.

Item, il Signor turco volea conzar il suo seragio vechio ma si pentì e mandò a Constantinopoli per paviona e si tien anderà in campagna : el qual Signor è sta amalato e li e-è assà amalati si dice fluxo come di peste...

MDX, MAGGIO (May 1510) :

28. vol. 10, col. 245

Di Andernopoli, di Lodovico Valdrin, secretario dil baylo, di 25 marzo.

Come il Signor ha mandato a Constantinopoli a tuor li pavioni e cussi li altri per andar a Layla a star *etc.* per li caldi.

MDX, GIUGNO (June 1510) :

29. vol.10, col. 551

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Andrea Foscolo, baylo,...di 20 april.

.. il Signor à mandato a tuor li pavioni vol andar a Jayla...

30. vol 10, col. 552

Item, eri zonse li pavioni dil Signor erano in Constantinopoli mandati a tuor per andar a Jayla, ma par il Signor non si moverà se non poi la luna di zugno, e par voi andar in uno locho chiamato Molicho una zornata lontam di Gallipoli dove è uno serajo vechio e uno bagno di aqua calda, à mandato a veder per aconzarlo, *etc.*

MDXII, DICEMBRE (December 1512) :

31. vol. 15, col. 392

Di Constantinopoli, di sier Nicolò Zustignan baylo, di 9 et 26 Octubrio.

Item, si il Signor non verà a Constantinopoli si presto, per esserli il morbo.

32. vol. 15, col. 410

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Lunardo Zustinian baylo, fo letere di 20 Novembrio,

Come il Signor ch'era in Angoli, si diceva veniva in Bursa et at star l'invernata a Constantinopoli, e li bassà e altri havea mandato a preparar in Constantinopoli per ritornar *etc.*

...*Da Constantinopoli.* Come ho scritto, è questo aviso, che ivi ne muor da 300 al dì da peste. Esso baylo e marchadanti è reduto di fuora di la terra.

MDXIII, APRILE (April 1513) :

33. vol.16, col. 194

Fu posto... (di) provedadori sora la sanità, che le galie di Alexandria, che sono a Ruigno, atento è più di zorni 40 non vi è morto alcun su dite galie di peste, che le possino venir in questa terra... Andò in renga sier Vettor Morexini, è sora le pompe, et contradise, dicendo per niun modo si facesse venir, perchè meteria il morbo in questa terra; et il primo morbo dil 1478 fo per una cassa venuta di Constantinopoli di drapi amorbadi stada serada anni 20, e aperta infetò le persone.

MDXIII, AGOSTO (August 1513) :

34. vol. 16, col. 387

Di Constantinopoli, di sier Nicolò Justinian baylo più letere, le ultime di 30 Zugno.

Item, come de li a Constantinopoli è gran peste.

MDXIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1513) :

35. vol.17, col. 36

Somario di letere di sier Hironimo Capelo sopracomito, fo di sier Andrea, andato a condur l'orator nostro a Costantinopoli. Date a Syo, a dì 25 Luio 1513.

Hanno letere di 3 da Constantinopoli: come ogni dì ne moriva 250 al zorno.

36. vol. 17, col. 36

Somario di lettera di domino Santo Barbarigo a sier Vettor Capelo, data a dì 23 Luio in Syo.

... el morbo era in Pera, e in Constantinopoli morivano da 300 in suso al giorno, e andava procedendo. Sarà miracolo si la galia non se infetta.

37. vol. 17, col. 37

Di Constantinopoli, di sier Nicolò Zustinian baylo, di 25 Lujo e 6 Avosto.

Come el Signor è lì in campagna, ma in la terra è tanta grandissima peste che le botege è serate, et è cossa stupenda dil gran numero ne muor.

Item, è morti do nostri zenthilomeni merchadanti, li in Pera, da peste, sier Piero Malipiero qu. sier Hironimo qu. siser Giacomo e sier Zuan Trivixan di sier Giacomo da la Dreza, e ne vano 300 al zorno.

Item, aspetasi l'orator nostro, et è stà preparato caxa, e tien di quello el domanderà la più parte sarà da la signoria dil Signor exaudito, el qual per esser pauroso di la peste, è andato fuora sopra la Grecia in certo locho, tanto più che nel seragio dil Signor era zà principiato la peste in li garzoni.

38. vol. 17, col. 79

Di sier Antonio Zustinian el dotor, va orator al Signor turco, date a Meteli, a dì primo Avosto.

Il Signor turco si dice non esser a Constantinopoli, per esservi gran peste.

39. vol. 17, col. 110

Di Constantinopoli, vidi letere di sier Hironimo Capelo sopracomito, date in galia a Pera, a dì 16 avosto.

Il Signor è ussito di Constantinopoli, per il morbo grande; ne muor al zorno assa' meno dil consueto. ...

MDXIII, OTTOBRE (October 1513) :

40. *Di Constantinopoli, di sier... col . 159-160 COPIEREN !!!!*

41. vol. 17, col. 266

Item, si ha, per uno parti a dì 19 Setembrio da Constantinopoli, non porta lettere ma dice a boca; come l'orator nostro varito parti a dì 13 con la galia per andar a Eno e li smontar e andar in Andernopoli a la udientia dal Signor turco, che li se ritrova; et il morbo era in Constantinopoli al solito et più presto minuiva che creseva.

MCXIV, FEBBRAIO (February 1514) :

42. vol. 17, col. 538

Poi, sier Antonio Zustinian dotor, venuto orator di Constantinopoli, andò in renga e fe' la sua relatione...

(Antonio Zustinian) nè volse el venisse di Constantinopoli in Andernopoli per terra, ni ritornasse per terra.. e convene andar con la galia, qual restò a Eno. Dise di la peste grande

era in Constantinopoli quan lo el zonse, et che l'ha scorso gran pericolo, perchè i non si varda; ma quando el si amalò, il medico el medicava, che era un zudio, 4 dì avanti li era morto do fioli da peste, pur Idio lo risolvò; et la galia si teniva con guardia, ma non si poteva far che non se impazase con amorbati.

MDXIV, SETTEMBRE (September 1514) :

43. vol. 19, col. 64

Di Soria fo letere, etiam *di Damasco*.

Con avisi del Signor turco, qual andato con l'exercito contra el Sophi, par sia voltato esso Signor turcho, et era zornate do lontan di Alepo. Si tien sia per venir a tuor la Soria. *Item*, scrive la morte di do marchadanti nostri in Alepo da peste, sier Octavian Bon qu. sier Domenego et sier Francesco Foscarini di sier Andrea.

MDXIV, DICEMBRE (December 1514) :

44. vol. 19, col. 326

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Nicolò Zustinian baylo nostro, di 30 Octubrio, venute per via di Corphù.

Come erano venuti olachi dil campo dil Signor, quali diceano el Signor era ritrato 5 zornate di Tauris et mena via con se 2000 homini maistri di ogni sorte cosse, et havia auto ducati 600 000, zoè seicento milia, tra danari e robe di Tauris, et ch'el voleva invernar in l'Amasia per ruinar ben dito Sophi a tempo novo...

Et ch'el fiol di dito Signor, qual è a Constantinopoli, havia mandato a far janizeroti per il paese, perchè li janizari è nel Seraio voleva trarli fuori et farli janizari, poi spachi (sipahi), per esserne morti assai in questa bataia...

Item, a Constantinopoli era cominziato la peste.

(pest gekomen van het kamp van Selim via oğlak of via de nieuwe janizeroti ?)

MDXV, GENNAIO (January 1515) :

45. vol. 19, col. 377

Tamen, el captanio de dita barza ha ditto che, per diligente inquisition ha auto el gran maistro di Rodi di questo, ha inteso che al Signor turco li manca 60 milia persone in cerca tra morti in bataglia, di fame e di peste, et che la fame e peste e non altro l'ha fato ritrar esso Turco indrio al suo paese a la volta di Angori...

MDXV, MAGGIO (May 1515) :

46. vol. 20, col. 225

Di Constantinopoli, di sier Nicolò Justinian baylo fo leto letere, di 5 et 10 April, trate di zifra.

Item, el Signor turco è in Amasia et janizari sono molto insolenti, *adeo* il Signor non osa dir nulla; ...et pareva volesse privarlo e levar uno altro per Signor; qual dubitando suo fiol unicho, ch'è in Constantinopoli, ... mandò una vesta a donar al prefato suo fiol tosegata. El qual fiol auta, dubitando, fe' vestir uno di soi, et de subito morite.

MDXVI, SETTEMBRE (September 1516) :

47. vol. 22, col. 541

Dil dito (rezimento), di 19, manda una letera auta dal contestabele di la Parga.

... et cussi si ha per la nave Mosta, qual vien da Constantinopoli; è grandissimo morbo, et cussi a Salonichi.

48. vol. 22, col. 546/547

Da Constantinopoli vene letere, hessendo Pregadi suso, di sier Lunardo Bembo baylo, di 23 Lujo.

Scrive, bisogna mandar li presente *omnino* al capitano di Galipoli. De li la peste è grandissima etc.

MDXVI, OTTOBRE (October, 1516) :

49. vol. 23, col. 40/41

Da Costantinopoli, di sier Leonardo Bembo bailo nostro, fo letere date in Pera, a dì 21 Avosto, senza zifra, venute con nave per mar.

Item, la peste è grandissima in Costantinopoli.

50. vol. 23, col. 115

Di Ragusi fo letere di zorni 14, qual manda letere dil baylo nostro da Costantinopoli sier Leonardo Bembo, di 17 Septembrio, date in Costantinopoli.

Scrive la peste li vene in caxa dove l'abitava in Pera, si è levato etc.

MDXVII, LUGLIO (July 1517) :

51. vol. 23. col. 506

Di sier Lunardo Bembo baylo di Constantinopoli,...Dil dito, date in Pera a di 20 Zugno.

Et dicono, el Signor manda 500 case di fameglie dil Cayro qui a Constantinopoli.

MDXVII, AGOSTO (August 1517) :

52. vol. 23, col. 599/560

Copia de una letera scripta ... per sier Dimitri Columbardo olim patron de nave, dat in Baffo a di 23 Zugno 1517, a hore 20.

Item, al tempo mi atrovata in Alexandria, ... ho visto con li miei ochi esser stà cargate, et per quello se dice, patroni de case con tutte sue brigate, dicono esser da 1500 et più richi, che se trovava al Cayro, et dice voler mandarli a Constantinopoli con tutta sua richeza.

MDXVIII, MARZO (March 1518) :

53. vol. 25, col. 273

Sumario di letere di sier Alvise Mocenigo el cavalier, stato orator al Signor turco. Data a di 10 Novembrio, in Constantinopoli. ... Dil dito, a di 19 dito.

... che ha fato ruinar li in Constantinopoli, da i fondamenti, con occisione di molti, la colona sopra la quale soleva già esser di bronzo a cavalo Theodosio imperador, opera antiqua et memorabile.

MDXVIII, AUGOSTO (August 1518) :

54. vol. 25, col. 687

Da Constantinopoli, fo letere di sier Lunardo Bembo baylo nostro di 29 Luio.

Et par, la peste sia intrata in Constantinopoli, etiam venuto in Pera etc.

MDXVIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1518) :

55. vol. 26, col. 66

Da Constantinopoli fo letere ... di sier Leonardo Bembo, baylo nostro, date in Pera a di 7 Avosto.

Come, a di 29 Lujo fo l'ultima sua; et dovendo partir uno messo spazato per fiorentini per caxon di uno mercadante fiorentin morto da morbo.

MDXVIII, OTTOBRE (October 1518) :

56. vol. 26. col. 133/134

Da Syo, di Thomà di Thabia consolo nostro, di 26 Avosto, drizate al rezimento di Creta.

Come, per gripo armato vien de li, avisa aversi el Signor turco zonse in Constantinopoli a di 26 Luio, et parti subito per le pianure, si dice va in Andernopoli... Et che in Constantinopoli e in Pera era la peste, et non danno de li recepto a'navilii vien de li, per dubito etc.

57. vol. 26, col. 160 + 162

Di sier Sebastian Moro provedador di l'armata, data in porto di Candia a di ultimo Setembrio.

... ben li disseno che a Constantinopoli era grandissimo morbo.

MDXVIII, DICEMBRE (December 1518) :

58. vol. 26, col. 295-6

Di sier Sebastian Moro provedador di l'armata fo letere..

Et che 'l morbo in Constantinopoli havea fato molto progresso; ma adesso l'era alquanto cessato.

MDXIX, AGOSTO (August 1519) :

59. vol. 27, col. 598

...una letera li scrive esso sier Nicolò, qual fo lecta, data a Corfù a di 4 dito...

Come era zorni 26 manchava di Andernopoli, et 4 zorni avanti il Signor turco si era levato de li e andato a la montagna verso Galipoli in lochi freschi, poi dia ritornar a invernar de li.

MDXX, FEBBRAIO (February 1520) :

60. vol. 28, col. 229-230

Da Constantinopoli, fo letere ... di sier Tomà Contarini bailo nostro, date a dì 27 Decembrio le ultime, in Andernopoli.

Item, come la peste era in Andernopoli grande.

61. vol. 28, col. 232

Da Constantinopoli fo lete le letere di sier Tomà Contarini bailo, di 27 Dezebrio, di Andernopoli.

Come la peste è lì, e voria levarse e andar in Pera; ma non ha danari, è mezo disperato, venderà il suo mobele etc.

MDXX, GIUGNO (June 1520) :

62. vol. 28, col. 595-596

Copia di capitolo di letere di sier Andrea Sanudo, fo di sier Beneto, date in Cipro a Nicosia, a dì 9 April 1520

La peste è in Andernopoli, e il Signor turco è levato de lì et è andato a Filipoli...

MDXX, OTTOBRE (October 1520) :

63. vol. 28, col. 304

Di sier Tomà Contarini baylo nostro a Costantinopoli, date in Pera a dì primo Septembrio.

Come, a dì 12 Avosto scrisse da poi partì il Signor con la corte per Andernopoli per star questa invernata de lì, e lui Baylo convegnerà andarvi licet quel aere li sia contrario, dove se intende à gran morbo...

64. vol. 29, col. 595

E letere di Baylo di Constantinopoli, di 24 dil passato a questo rezimento.

Scrive, che 'l Signor turco volea andar in Andernopoli et ancora lui Baylo zudegava dover andar... Et per avisi particular in merchadanti, si à da Constantinopoli come de lì è il morbo grande

65. vol. 29, col. 303

A dì 21, Domenega. La matina se intese queste letere contener la morte del Signor turco da peste apresso Andernopoli, e la terra fo piena.

66. vol. 29, col. 306

Poi fo lete nove di Ragusi, di 11...

Come, per uuno messo partì di Andernopoli a dì 23 Septembrio, si havea la morte dil Signor turco tra Andernopoli e Constantinopoli in uno locho ditto Ogras, dove fu il conflito con il padre...

67. vol. 29, col. 322

Dil Baylo di Constantinopoli, date in Pera, a dì 17 Septembrio.

Dil dito, pur di 17, era in zifra.

Come a dì primo scrisse el Signor havia auto do carboni e una jandusa al scaro, et era in campagna, et come l'era risanato zà 12 zorni: hora avisa aver inteso è restè molto dolente; si ha fato far lì in campagna una casa di legnami in la qual non vi entra si non li medici et quelli il governa, et par sopra la spala li sia venuto una nasion o peste, che ha fato gran piaga, sichè si dubita molto di la sua vita, ...

MDXX, NOVEMBRE (November 1520) :

68. vol. 29, col. 340

Di Hongaria, di sier Lorenzo Orio el dotor orator nostro, in Possonia, a dì 7 Octubrio.

Soa Maestà mandò per esso orator dicendoli in quel momento aver auto nove vere et infalibel che il Signor turco era morto di peste nel loco dove fu il conflito col padre...dicendo debi scriver bona nova a la Signoria, perché succederia persona non daria molestia ni a Soa Maestà, ni a cristiani.

69. vol. 29, col. 341

Fo leto una letera di la comunità di Ragusi, sotoscrita divotissimi servitori, rectores consilium et comunitas civitatis Ragusii, data in Ragusi, a dì 21.

Come, haveano auto letere di soi oratori di Andernopoli di 5 Octobre, che li avisa avano a dì 22 Septembrio morite Selim signor, di peste, ...

70. vol. 29, col. 359-361

Di sier Bernardo Soranzo baylo e consieri, di Corfù, di 10 Octubrio.

Capitolo over deposition di quel patron di nave vien di Syo, nominato Tomaso di Zuane.
... e che a Constantinopoli era poco morbo.

MDXXII, AGOSTO (August 1522) :

71. vol. 33, col. 422

A dì 25, fo leter di Constantinopoli, di sier Andrea di Prioli baylo nostro, date in Pera, a dì 21 Luio.

... e de lì era morbo grandissimo. In zorni 22 morti 23 milia persone.

MDXXII, SETTEMBRE (September 1522) :

72. vol. 33, col. 448

A dì 15, la matina, fono letere di sier Andrea di Prioli baylo a Constantinopoli, di 13 Avosto.

Item, scrive la peste era lì a Constantinopoli teribilissima.

73. vol. 33, col. 449

A dì 16, da matina, fo letere di Constantinopoli di 14 Avosto, dil baylo Prioli.

Come la galia Querini, su la qual montò il Baylo vechio, ne erano morti molti da peste, et assa' di loro erano fati turchi; pur si partiva meglio la potea per venir di quì.

MDXXII, SETTEMBRE (September 1522) :

74. vol. 33, col. 462

La matina fo letere di Constantinopoli, di sier Andrea di Prioli baylo nostro, di 29 Avosto.

Come de lì la peste feva gran progresso, ...

75. vol. 33, col. 468

Sumario de una letera data in Candia, a dì 22 Avosto 1522...

Tenuta fin 28, questa matina è zonta qui la galia Querina, che era in Constantinopoli, con il baylo suso sier Thomà Contarini et Zorzi Griti fio natural di sier Andrea procurator, e per venir da Constantinopoli dove si muor da peste non è stà lasciato praticar con il resto di l'armata : è stà a la Fraschia.

MDXXII, OTTOBRE (October 1522) :

76. vol. 33, col. 477

In le letere di Constantinopoli, è di la morte de lì di sier Hironomo Loredan qu. sier Marcho, era merchadante, da peste.

MDXXII, NOVEMBRE (November 1522) :

77. vol. 33, col. 508

Da Ragusi, di Giacomo di Zulian, di primo Octobrio.

Come la peste era venuta lì, e si feva provision...

MDXXIII, LUGLIO (July 1523) :

78. vol. 34, col. 301

La peste, per quanto aspetta a la prima di le galie di Baruto era quasi cessata, che cominzio ul'altra per la nave Dolfina vien di Constantinopoli, con la qual vene sier Zuan Mocenigo... stato mercante a Costantinopoli.

MDXXIII, AGOSTO (August 1523) :

79. vol. 34, col. 384

Da Constantinopoli vene lettere di sier Piero Zen orator nostro, di 23 Luio, venute per via di Ragusi.

Come esso Orator havia hauto audientia dal Signor turcho molto grata. *Item*, che de lì era gran peste, et sier Andrea di Prioli baylo nostro era morto da peste in do zorni a dì 16 dito; il qual il Luni disnò con dito Orator, il Marti si amalò, e il Mercore morite.

MDXXIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1523) :

80. vol. 34, col. 399

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Piero Zen orator nostro, date a dì 5 Avosto.

Come de lì se moriva da peste 500 al zorno, et che'l Signor era in seraggio, nè dava audientia ad alcuno.

MDXXIII, DICEMBRE (December 1523) :

81. vol. 35, col. 257

Sumario di quanto intesi da sier Francesco Zen di sier Piero, ch' è orator al Signor turco, venuto da Constantinopoli per terra a dì 6 Dezembrio 1523.

Item, che la peste era granda; ne moriva al zorno . . . niun si schivava; ha scorso gran pericolo: il Baylo si apestò, perchè uno morì per mezzo caxa fò partà justa il solito in strada dove fò pianto da li parenti, e lui, sier Andrea di Prioli baylo cridò fusse portà via et se incolorò, dove la saltò la peste, in zorni 4 morìte, nè mai volse dir l'havesse... *Item*, che in caxa di lo Orator che steva in Costantinopoli 4 si apestò, 1 morìte, 3 varìte. Havia aspri . . . al zorno dal Signor per spexe, ch' è ducati 6, et stava con lui certe guardie; et fino non andò a basar la man al Signor non si andava fuora; poi si andava dove si voleva, et veniva tutti chi voleva da esso Orator et come el Signor levò li aspri, le varde fò levate.

Item, che a Constantinopoli è di ogni nation, e tutti stà in la sua fede. El Signor vol il sua carazo nè di altro se cura; sempre quasi vi è il morbo, ma quelli morbi non è come questi de Italia, perchè molti varisseno di loro.

MDXXIV, MARZO (March 1524) :

82. vol. 36, col. 118

Copia de una lettera de Constantinopoli, de 14 Febraro 1524.

El magnifico ambasador da uno canto li recresceva a veder tal invito per dui rispetti, el primo che pur ello temeva del morbo, l'altro rispetto de la età non lo competeva star una meza notte in piedi, che vui sapeti ben el dormir è nutrimento del vechio. (d'un côté)

MDXXV, DICEMBRE (December 1525) :

83. vol. 40, col. 513- 515

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Piero Bragadin bailo de 6 Novembrio.

E morto Ali-bei dragomano di peste, el qual havendo la peste andò a la porta da li bassà et si apuzò non potendo star in piedi, siché Imbraim l'ha hauto a mal, et di la sua morte non si duol molto perchè era homo desideroso di guerra, perchè con quella el vadagnava.

... La peste de qui fa progresso; ne muor da 500 in 600 al zorno, ch' è gran cosa a questi tempi, Idio mi tegni la man, e tutti quelli è amalati soto la luna pasata è morti. Et essendo andato a parlar a Mustaphà bassà, li era morto 60 in caxa sua da peste, tra le qual soe schiave bellissime, li costò ducati 2000. Scrive, lui baylo è restà solo in Pera de nostri, li mercadanti è fuziti a le Vigne. Poche caxe sono che non siano amorbate. Idio mi aiuti.

MDXXVI, FEBBRAIO (February, 1526) :

84. vol. 40, col. 824

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Piero Bragadin baylo, date in Pera a di 29 Decembrio,.

Talisman rays è morto di peste, qual andava in Alexandria, e la soa galia è tornà di qui; et la peste è alquanto cessada et si va miorando.

85. vol. 40, col. 893-894

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Piero Bragadin baylo, di 4 zener

E morto Gasparo di Livieri zoier in do zorni da peste...

MDXXVI, GIUGNO (June, 1526) :

86. vol. 41, col. 525-534

Sumario di la relatione di sier Piero Bragadin venuto Baylo di Constantinopoli, fatta in Pregadi a di 9 Zugno 1526.

Ha portà grandissima fatica et pericolo di vita per la peste, che mai si ha riguardato esso Baylo, sì che miracolose si pol dir sia preservato, et si li vene un carbon, ch' è specie di giandusa, et varite. Disse li moriva atorno caxa in Pera; parlava ogni dì con amorbati, pur non hauto mal, però che lì non si guarda; et che Ali bei dragoman homo di 70 anni con la peste li stete apresso a caxa del bassà Imbraim, et de lì 3 zorni morìte.

MDXXVI, SETTEMBRE (September 1526) :

87. vol. 42, col. 653

Di Xagabria, di pre Stefano sopradito (= de Posedaria) di 28, al conte Jurco suo fradello.

Come di le cose di Hongaria il Re ha 100 milia combatenti tra li qual è 18 milia bohemi... et nel campo del Turco è assà amalato, et vi è peste et fluxo...

MDXXVI, DICEMBRE (December 1526) :

88. vol. 43, col. 473

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Piero Zen orator, di 4 Novembrio.

E morto il secundo genito del Signor di anni . . . da peste.

MDXXVII, MARZO (March 1527) :

89. vol. 44, col. 263

Noto. Heri fo dito nova da Ragusi, per uno vien, riporta a boca et haver parlato con uno in Ragusi, dove non ha voluto praticar per il morbo vi è; et li ha ditto esser nove certe come a Costantinopoli il Signor turco era morto da peste, ...

MDXXVII, GIUGNO (June 1527) :

90. vol. 45, col. 288-291

Copia di una lettera da Constantinopoli, di sier Marco Minio orator nostro, data a dì 8 Mazo 1527...

La Domenega da matina a di . . . andai a la Porta a basar le man a questo Gran Signor..

Zercherò di expedirmi più presto porò, perchè il morbo molto si augmenta.

MDXXVII, AGOSTO (August 1527) :

91. vol. 45, col. 619-620

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Piero Zen baylo, di 17 Luio.

Scrivo di grandissima mortalità è li; ne moreno 200 al zorno.

MDXXIX, OTTOBRE (October 1529) :

92. vol. 52, col. 59-60

Copia de una lettera scritta in Constantinopoli per pre' Triphon Rechenich, capelan di sier Piero Zen orator et vicebailo, de 24 agosto 1529...

La terra de qui è miorata di morbo per la Dio gratia, et è abundantia di viver.

MDXXX, AGOSTO (August 1530) :

93. vol. 53, col. 453

Sumario di lettere di sier Marchiò Trivixan soracomito, date a Constantinopoli, et scritte a soi fratelli

A di 25 del passato, zoè di zugno, fo mandà a invidar li oratori et baylo a le feste, et a di 26 si andò a bon hora...

Vene prima, avanti il Signor, solachi 200 con li soi archi et semitare, ... Poi vene il Signor.

Sier Hironimo Contarini et io soracomiti siamo andà do volte con le galie a salutar el podromo dove è il Signor. ... De qui è gran morbo et me inscresse star tanto qui.

MDXXXI, DICEMBRE (December 1531) :

94. vol. 55, col. 209-210

In questa matina noto, questa note passata esser morto sier Antonio Sanudo, fo Cao di X, et erra di la Zonta dil ditto Conseio, mio fradello, di anni 71 1/2, stato do mexi e più amalato... io resto, di anni 65 in 66, perhòchè naqui 1466 a di 22 mazo. E più zoveni de mi vivi, che vien a Conseio, numero 14, che prego Dio viva longamente, et a la fin mi doni vita eterna.

MDXXXII, GIUGNO (June 1532) :

95. vol. 56, col. 401

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Piero Zen orator et vicebailo, di 20 Mazo, ricevuto a dì 14 Zugno, scritte di sua mano propria.

Havendo messo ordine col capitano di l'armata di parlarli, mi mandò a dir se trovassimo a le Vigne per star mezo zorno insieme per ragionar, et posto l'ordine li preparò uno disnar a la caxa dil Cantacusino, la qual tengo rispetto dil morbo *licet* al presente la terra sia sanissima...

MDXXXII, OTTOBRE (October 1532) :

96. vol. 57, col. 169

Da Sibinico, dil conte et capitano, di 19 Octubrio, ricevute a di 29 dito.

...riporta il Signor turco con tute le zente di Natolia a di dito passò con gran freta per dito loco di Belgrado et andava a camin francese a la volta di Constantinopoli,...

... per vendicarsi di danni auti divulgase che Imbraim paserebbe sopra la campagna di Cluino et de li passerà in Bosina per andar a Constantinopoli, et che in Cluino et vilazi vicini molti moreno da peste che poco curano.

MDXXXIII, GENNAIO (January 1533) :

97. vol. 57, col. 404 - 405

Da Costantinopoli, di sier Piero Zen orator et vicebailo, di 21 Novembrio, ricevute a dì 3 zener.

E venuto nova il magnifico Perì Bassà esser morto in Andernopoli, chi dice atosicato et chi di morbo.

MDXXXIII, APRILE (April 1533) :

98. vol. 58, col. 59

Dil Zante, di sier Mathio Barbarigo proveditor, di 16 Marzo, ricevuto a dì 19.

Come hessendo venuti alcuni coronei a star de li, era venuto uno zaus dil stamularo di la Morea a rechiederli, i quali è partiti. Uno ha voluto andar, li ho dito che trovandoli si farà l'oficio e lo fazo star con guardia, con dir venendo di locho amorbato a zìò l'ixola non se infetasse; et avisa in la Morea in molti luogi si muor grandissimamente.

MDXXXIII, GIUGNO (June 1533) :

99. vol. 58, col. 301

Di sier Tomà Contarini, va orator al Signor Turco, date in galia apresso Ragusi, a dì 3 Zugno, ricevute a dì 12 ditto.

No ho voluto praticar a Ragusi, per esser la terra e tutti infestadi di peste.

MDXXXIII, LUGLIO (July 1533) :

100. vol. 58, col. 500

Di Cataro, di sier Trifon Gradenigo rector e proveditor, di 25 Luio, ricevute a dì 28 ditto.
... el chadi (de Costantinopoli) spazò a Ragusi per haver olachi e non fo trovati per esser il morbo grandando.

MDXXXIII, LUGLIO (July 1533) :

101. vol. 58, col. 525 -526

Reporto, a dì 15 Zugno, Domenica

(par) Sier Piero da Ponte citadin, venuto hozi da la Morea...

...et dubitano grandemente che non vadino cussì fazendo a tuti li christiani di la Morea, ne la qual par continua la peste.

...come la Cesarea Maestà haveva mandato ambasator al Gran signor turco, per qual causa non si sapeva, et che in campo tocava pur alquanto la peste ma mancho dil solito, et alcuni turchi a cavallo et a piedi erano andati a ruinar certe ville de li albanesi sopra Patras.

102. vol. 58, col. 577

Di sier Piero Zen e sier Tomà Contarini oratori, di 16 ricevute ut supra.

De qui il morbo grande.

MDXXXIII, AGOSTO (August 1533) :

103. vol. 58, col. 623-625

Da Constantinopoli, di sier Piero Zen, sier Thomà Contarini oratori, et sier Nicolò Justinian baylo, di 23 Luio,...

Noto. Per lettere particular se intese la peste esser grandissima, ne moreno 500 al dì et esser morto sier Francesco Morexini, qu. sier Ziprian da peste, era grosso mercante...

MDXXXIII, AGOSTO (August 1533) :

104. vol. 58, col. 631-632

Di Roma, di l'orator Venier, di 21 ricevute a dì 27.

... disse haver nova da Napoli e dal marchese di la Tripalda come hanno avisi da Costantinopoli il Sophi haver ruinà le forze dil Turco a li confini...

Et è aviso, nel campo turchesco esser principià la peste,...

MDXXXIII, AGOSTO (August 1533) :

105. vol. 58, col. 634-636

Da Constantinopoli di sier Piero Zen, sier Tomà Contarini oratori, sier Nicolò Justinian baylo, di 26 Luio.

De qui il morbo è tanto pericoloso e grande.

MDXXXIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1533) :

106. vol. 58, col. 692

Di Costantinopoli, di oratori, fono letere, di 10, 15, et 17 Avosto...

Morbo grandissimo...

MDXXXIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1533) :

107. vol. 58, col. 697-699

Da Costantinopoli, di sier Piero Zen, sier Tomà Contarini, oratori, sier Nicolò Justinian bailo, di 10 Avosto, ricevuto a dì 17 de Settembre.

El morbo multiplica; el mar è pieno de fuste di ladri; non sanno che far per la sua tornata; venendo per terra il paese è amorbato tutto...

El Signor et il bassà sono fugiti a Beycosi per paura dil morbo.

Noto. Per particular se intese che li a Costantinopoli è peste grandissima, morti da 18 nostri bazarioti, et sier . . . Bernardo di sier Piero havia la peste.

TRANSLATION ENTRIES FROM THE DIARY OF MARINO SANUDO

In addition to the standard Italian-English Collins dictionary, use was made of the *Dizionario del dialetto Veneziano* by G. Boerio. 1856.

The following terms were left untranslated in the text:

Sophi : term used for the Shah Ismail.

Signoria: term to designate the Republic of Venice.

Carboni: carbuncles

Jandusa or Giandusa: a kind of boils or swellings

From Lane. *Studies in Venetian Social and Economic History*. Edited by Benjamin G. Kohl and Reinhold C. Mueller. London: Variorum Reprints, pp. 157-158 :

Provveditori: squadron commanders or councilors of the captain general

Capitani: there were normally capitani or commanders for each fleet of merchant galleys

Sopracomiti: commanders of individual light galleys

Patroni: commanders of great galleys or round ships

Recepto: a document given to a ship as proof it left a plague-free port.

MCCCCLXXXVII, MARZO (March 1497)

1. vol. 1, col.

On the 10th of March, by letter from Syo of the 12th of January

That there is plague in Constantinople, and 300 die daily.

2. vol. 1, col.

From Constantinopolis, by letter of the 20th of January

There is also great plague in Constantinople, as I have said above.

MCCCCLXXXVII, GIUGNO (June 1497)

3. vol 1, col.

In these days, there is a great danger of plague in many areas of Italy, and already in some parts plague has begun, proceeded by war and penury, whence our Signoria has called for all due measures so that the territory does not get infested (infected), that God may ward it off.

MCCCCLXXXVII, SETTEMBRE (September 1497)

4. vol 1, col. 756

Paragraph of a letter from Syo, written by our consul to the lord Petro Delphino si San Canzian, and returned in this land on the first of August.

In Constantinople, plague progresses greatly.

MCCCCC, NOVEMBRE (November 1500)

5. vol 3, col. 1073

Idem, by two slaves who escaped from Turkey, coming from Saloniki, (they) say that there is great plague in Constantinople; the lord (=Turkish ruler) is in Andernopolis (=Edirne) and the Hungarians give him trouble.

MCCCCC, DECEMBRE (December 1500)

6. vol 3, col. 1216

Came, reading the letters (that came) by sea, sir Francesco Chachuri... who departed from Edirne on the first of November, where the Turkish ruler was. And in Constantinople, they say, was plague.

MCCCCCI, GENNAIO (January 1501)

7. vol. 3, col. 1346

From Corfu, from the baylo and proveditor, of the 26th of December and the 3rd of January.

... and the Turkish lord is in Edirne, because in Constantinople there is tremendous plague...

MCCCCCI, FEBRAIO (February 1501)

8. vol. 3, col. 1394

From la Barga, from Andrea Lanza, captain, of the first (of the month), to the captain general.

... all the Turks have gone with the *signor* (=Turkish ruler) in Edirne, and in Constantinople there is a great deal of plague.

MCCCCCI, OTTOBRE (October 1501)

9. vol. 4, col. 161

From Syo, by letter of the 30th of June, was obtained from Zuan di Tabia, consul.

... Furthermore, by letter of the 10th of September, the aforementioned writes that the Turkish lord was in Constantinople on the 28th of August, until the end of which the lord did not move and was wondered, plague being in Constantinople and Pera and made great progress.

10. vol. 4, col. 161

Moreover, by letters from Candia, of the 23th of September

It appears that by ships and groups coming from Syo, which left Constantinople, (they) say there is great plague in Constantinople, and because of this they were banished to stay in Scandia for 40 days.

MCCCCCI, DICEMBRE (December 1501)

11. vol. 4, col. 179/180

From Syo, by letters of Zuan di Tabia, our consul, of the 21st of October.

As was obtained, by letters from the 4th of October, from Pera, the Turkish ruler has not left Constantinople. Also, that in letters of August was written that he had been expected to ride the whole of August until the 10th of September, and in the end he has not moved and they wonder, because plague has progressed in Constantinople, from 700 per day and more.

MCCCCCII, MARZO (March 1502)

12. vol. 4, col. 242

On the 18th of March

We have heard in this late hour; on the 19th of December by a man that left Constantinople on the 22 of the previous month,...

Plague is progressing, 800 a day between Constantinople and Pera.

MCCCCCII, GIUGNO (June 1502)

13. vol. 4, col. 267

From Constantinople.

That for many days the Turkish lord has not held audience, nor has anyone seen him, and it is thought that he is dead...

MCCCCCII, OTTOBRE (October 1502)

14. vol. 4, col. 390

Idem, there are letters from Syo, from the consul, from the 5th; news of the 5th of September, from Pera.

...furthermore, by another news, that the Turkish lord does not go to Edirne and in Pera there is plague.

MCCCCCII, NOVEMBRE (November 1502)

15. vol. 4, col. 480

From Syo, From Zuan di Tabia, our consul, to the orator, dated the 7th of October.

Idem, plague is in Constantinople and in Galipoli; and in Constantinople there is lack of flour/cereals where the lord has sent 14 schirazi out the straits for cereals/flour.

MCCCCCIII, GENNAIO (January 1503)

16. vol. 4, col. 668

From Constantinople, from our secretario, of the last (day) of December... was read.

Idem, that Davut was absent, because in these days a son, aged 30 years, died from plague, what also *la pizega*.

MCCCCCIII, MARZO (March 1503)

17. vol. 4, col. 804/805

Copy of a letter that came from Moldavia.

And that there is great plague in Constantinople and in Edirne, and great penury; in Constantinople, 200 die each day and in Edirne more than 200.

MCCCCCIII, OTTOBRE (October 1503)

18. vol. 5, col.

Idem, there are letters from Rado vayvoda of Transylvania, that in Constantinople there is great plague and penury...

MCCCCCIV, FEBBRAJO (February 1504)

19. vol. 5, col. 874

Of the aforementioned, from the 8th.

... and they have charged in this place Talandi for the so-called place of Constantinople, where they say there is great famine and plagu, furthermore in the whole country.

20. vol. 5, col. 914

From Cephalonia, from the proveditor, from the 26th of January

.. and that in Constantinople there is a great penury and plague.

MCCCCCIV, MARZO (March 1504)

21. vol. 5, col. 968

From Cephalonia, from sir Nicolò Marcello proveditor, from the 5th of February.

It appears that in Constantinople there is great plague and penury...

22. vol. 5, col. 995

From Sybinicho; was read a letter, from the 4th of March, from Zuan Chavilichi fò of sir Tomaso...

He says there is great plague in these parts (so) that neither dog nor cat remained, and that died the son of the Turk, Korkut Çelebi, who held this country.

23. vol.5, col. 1003

From Constantinople, from sir Lunardo Bembo vice baylo, from the 26th.

Idem, there is nothing new, but all the merchants are inactive in consideration of the penury and diseases that are never absent, even though at present it is not so bad.

24. vol. 5 , col. 1034/1035

From Constantinople, from sir Lunardo Bembo vice baylo, from the 18th of January.

On the 6th of this month went missing from plague the magnificent Sinan pasha, beylerbey of Greece, son-in-law of the Turkish lord...

25. vol. 5, col. 1063

From Cephalonia, from sir Nicolò Marcello, proveditor, from the 26th of February.

... and that in Constantinople there is great plague and penury...

MCCCCCIV, APRILE (April 1504)

26. vol. 6, col. 10

Idem, there were letters from Constantinople, from sir Lunardo Bembo, vice baylo, from the last day of January.

And in Constantinople there is nothing on the account (nothing new), only there is great plague and penury.

MDX, APRILE (April 1510)

27. vol. 10, col. 211

And a letter was read from Edirne from the hand of sir Nicolò Zustignan, from the 20th of March.

Idem, the Turkish lord wished to repair his old palace but changed idea and sent for tents to Constantinople and has the intention to leave for the countryside: this lord is ill and quite ill, it is said he is suffering from *fluxo* as also from plague.

MDX, MAGGIO (May 1510)

28. vol. 10, col. 245

From Edirne, from Lodovico Valdrin, secretary of the baylo, from the 25th of March.

That the ruler has sent to Constantinople to take the tents and also the other things (that are needed) to go to the Layla to stay (there) for the heat.

MDX, GIUGNO (June 1510)

29. vol.10, col. 551

From Constantinople, from sir Andrea Foscolo, baylo,..from the 20th of April.

.. The Lord has sent for the tents in order to go to the Jayla.

30. vol 10, col. 552

The tents of the Lord that were in Constantinople and that were sent for to go to the Jayla, but the Lord will not move until the moon of June, and wants to go in a place called Molicho which is a day's journey from Gallipli where there is an old palace and hot baths.etc

MDXII, DICEMBRE (December 1512)

31. vol. 15, col. 392

From Constantinople, from sir Nicolò Zustignan baylo, from the 9th and 26th of October.

Idem, that the Lord will not be seen in Constantinople so soon, as there is plague there.

32. vol. 15, col. 410

From Constantinople, from sir Lunardo Zustinian baylo, there were letters from the 20th of November,

That the Lord, who was in Ankara, is said to have come in Bursa and will spend the winter in Constantinople, et the pashas and others have been sent to prepare for the return in Constantinople etc.

... *From Constantinople.* As I have written, there is this news, that there die 300 daily from plague. This baylo and the merchants have sought refuge outside the territory (that is, Constantinople and Pera).

MDXIII, APRILE (April 1513)

33. vol.16, col. 194

Was posted ... (by) the administrators of the sanità (the Venetian office, responsible for public health) that the galleys from Alexandria, which are in Ruigno, have not seen anyone die of plague for more than 40 days, (so) that they can come in this territory (that is, Venice)...

Sir Veto Morexini, took the floor and refuted, saying that under no circumstances they should be allowed to come, because it would bring plague in this territory, and the first (case of) plague of 1478 was caused by a crate with plague-infested cloth coming from Constantinople that had stayed closed for 20 years and upon opening it, it infected people.

MDXIII, AGOSTO (August 1513)

34. vol. 16, col. 387

From Constantinople, from sir Nicolò Justinian baylo more letters, the last one from the 30th of June.

Idem, that there is great plague in Constantinople.

MDXIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1513)

35. vol.17, col. 36

Summary of the letters from sir Hironimo Capelo sopracomito, son of sir Andrea, who went to bring our orator to Costantinople. Dated in Syo, on the 25th of July 1513.

Have letters from day 3 from Constantinople: that each day 250 die.

36. vol. 17, col. 36

Summary of the letter from the lord Santo Barbarigo to sir Vetor Capelo, dated on the 23rd of July in Syo.

... plague was in Pera and in Constantinople 300 die daily, and progressing. It would be a miracle if the galleys did not become infected.

37. vol. 17, col. 37

From Constantinople, from sir Nicolò Zustinian baylo, from the 25th of July and the 6th of August.

That the Lord is there in the countryside, but in the territory (= Constantinople) there is such enormous plague that the inns (hans) are closed, and it is incredible how great a number are dying.

Idem, are dead two of our gentlemen merchants there in Pera, from plague, sir Piero Malipiero son of sier Hironimo son of sir Giacomo e sir Zuan Trivixan of sir Giacomo da la Dreza, and 300 depart each day.

Idem, is awaiting our orator, and has been preparing the house, and claims that he will ask the greatest part (of the expenditures) from *la Signoria*, the Signor being *ex audito* (=not available for an audience), who, being afraid of the plague, has left for a certain place in Greece, since in the palace of the Lord plague has started in the garrison.

38. vol. 17, col. 79

From sir Antonio Zustinian the doctor, is going to be orator to the Turkish lord, dated in Meteli, on the first of August.

It is said that the Turkish lord is not in Constantinople, because there great plague.

39. vol. 17, col. 110

From Constantinople, were seen letters from sir Hironimo Capelo sopracomito head merchant, dated on a galley in Pera, from the 16th of August.

The Lord has left Constantinople because of the great plague; the number that are dying daily is fairly less than usual.

MDXIII, OTTOBRE (October 1513)

40. A letter from Constantinople, dated 4 September (17/159 and 160):

There is an enormous plague outbreak that has started to increase markedly with the new moon... The orator, who was ill with fever (*febre terzana*) is waiting to get better in order to join the ruler, who is said to be staying in the vicinity of Edirne with his court. The orator will leave within 10 days at the most and will give permission to the galley (that will take him closer to Edirne) to wait for him at Eno, because this place is dangerous because of its bad air.

Also, those that desire to repatriate, which will be longer via Nadal, will be forced to remain in sanità (this is the place where people were kept in quarantine by the Venetians).

Business is slack in Constantinople, because the city has lost 60 000 people of plague in the course of one year, including a great number of prominent figures (*mazori*). And as the court is absent, little *fazende si fa*.

From the dragoman..., it was heard that the ruler is in the vicinity of Edirne, at 10 miles and it is said that he will stay there a few days. It is not known where he will stay for the winter. There are those that think in Edirne and those that think he will not, because of the plague there was and is, but that he will ride to Philippopoli. Others believe he will go to stay for the winter in Skopje, close to Hungary and at 8 days from Ragusa.

It is difficult to come to terms with this ruler. Some say because he is too prudent. Some blame his sense of guilt about the sin of wine.

A letter from Constantinople by Nicolò Zustinian, dated 4 September (159 and 160): There is an enormous plague outbreak that has started to increase markedly with the new moon... The orator, who was ill with fever (febre terzana) is waiting to get better in order to join the ruler, who is said to be staying in the vicinity of Edirne with his court. The orator will leave within 10 days at the most and will give permission to the galley (that will take him closer to Edirne) to wait for him at Eno, because this place is dangerous because of its bad air.

Also, those that desire to repatriate, which will be longer via Nadal, will be forced to remain in sanita (this is the place where people were kept in quarantine by the Venetians). Business is slack in Constantinople, because the city has lost 60 000 people of plague in the course of one year, including a great number of prominent figures (mazori). And as the court is absent, little is being done (in terms of trade).

From the dragoman..., it was heard that the ruler is in the vicinity of Edirne, at 10 miles and it is said that he will stay there a few days. It is not known where he will stay for the winter. There are those that think in Edirne and those that think he will not, because of the plague there was and is, but that he will ride to Philippopoli. Others believe he will go to stay for the winter in Skopje, close to Hungary and at 8 days from Ragusa.

41. vol. 17, col. 266

Idem, There is (news), by one who left Constantinople on the 19th of September, he did not carry any letters but said that our orator has arrived: he left on day 13 with the galley to go to Eno and there would debark and go to Edirne to the audience of the Turkish Lord, who was staying there; and plague was in Constantinople as usual and is decreasing rather than increasing.

MCXIV, FEBBRAIO (February 1514)

42. vol. 17, col. 538

Moreover, sir Antonio Zustinian doctor, came - he is orator of Constantinople, he went into the forum and made a statement.

(Antonio Zustinian) did not want to go from Constantinople to Edirne by land, neither to return by land. And arranged to go with the galley, which stayed in Eno. He said that there was great plague in Constantinople when he returned there and that he had avoided great danger because he had not been there;

but when he got ill, his physician, who was a Jew, treated him. Four days before, two of his sons had died of plague, may God redeem him. And the galley was kept with guards, but there was nothing one could do but not mingle with the plague-stricken.

MDXIV, SETTEMBRE (September 1514)

43. vol. 19, col. 64

From Syria there were letters, furthermore from Damascus.

With news from the Turkish lord, who had gone on a campaign against the *Sophi*, for having invaded (the territory of) this Turkish lord and was at two days from Aleppo. It is supposed he came in order to take Syria. *Idem*, writes of the death of two of our merchants in Aleppo of plague, sir Octavian Bon son sir Domenego et sir Francesco Foscari of sir Andrea.

MDXIV, DICEMBRE (December 1514)

44. vol. 19, col. 326

From Constantinople, our Baylo sir Nicolò Zustinian, from the 30th of Octobre, arrived by way of Corphu.

That *oğlaklar* had arrived from the camp of the Lord that had said that the Lord had retreated at 5 days from Taurus and brought along with him 2000 men that were masters in all sorts of skills and had obtained 600 000 ducates, that is six hundred thousand comprising money (*danari*) and cloth from Taurus, and that he wanted to stay in Amasya for the winter in order to destroy the aforementioned *Sophi* anew.

And that the son of the Lord, who is in Constantinople, had sent to form janissaries for the country, because he wanted to send outside the janissaries that were in the palace and he wanted to form janissaries, and then *sipahi*, because many of them had died in this battle.

Idem, plague had started in Constantinople.

MDXV, GENNAIO (January 1515)

45. vol. 19, col. 377

Tamen, the captain of the aforementioned barge had said that - by way of painstaking interrogation the Grand Master of Rhodos had obtained (information) from him, and had made clear that the Turkish Lord was deprived of about 60 thousand persons between casualties from battle, famine and plague, and that famine and plague and nothing else had made the Turk retreat towards his own country in the vicinity of Ankara...

MDXV, MAGGIO (May 1515)

46. vol. 20, col. 225

From Constantinople, from sir Nicolò Justinian, baylo, there were read letters, from the 5th and the 10th of April, encoded.

Idem, the Turkish Lord is in Amasya and the janissaries are very insolent, to such an extent that the Lord does not dare to say anything; ...and it seems that they want to abdicate him and raise another as Lord; who is suspicious of his only son, who is in Constantinople, ... he sent a poisoned jacket to give to his son. And this son obtained it, and being suspicious had it worn by one of his, who died instantly.

MDXVI, SETTEMBRE (September 1516)

47. vol. 22, col. 541

From the aforementioned (regiment), of day 19, was sent a letter obtained from the contestabele di la Parga.

... and thus news was obtained by the ship Mosta, which came from Constantinople; there is enormous plague, and also in Saloniki.

48. vol. 22, col. 546/547

From Constantinople have come letters, from Pregadi, from sir Lunardo Bembo, baylo, from the 23rd of July.

He writes that it is necessary to send the presents entirely to the captain of Galipoli. That there, plague is enormous etc.

MDXVI, OTTOBRE (October, 1516)

49. vol. 23, col. 40/41

From Costantinople, from sir Leonardo Bembo, our Baylo, there were letters dated in Pera, on the 21st of August, not encoded, they came by ship over seas.

Idem, plague is enormous in Costantinople.

50. vol. 23, col. 115

From Ragusa there were letters of the 14th, that were sent by our Baylo of Costantinople, sir Leonardo Bembo, from the 17th of September, dated in Costantinople.

He writes that plague came into the house in which he lived in Pera, and he has left it etc.

MDXVII, LUGLIO (July 1517)

51. vol. 23. col. 506

From sir Lunardo Bembo, Baylo of Constantinople,...From the aforementioned, dated in Pera on the 20th of June.

And they say that the Lord is sending 500 households of families from Cairo here in Constantinople.

MDXVII, AGOSTO (August 1517)

52. vol. 23, col. 599/560

Copy of an encoded letter ... from sir Dimitri Columbardo, former patron de nave, dated in Baffo on the 23rd of June 1517, at 20 o'clock.

Idem, at the time I was present in Alexandria, I saw with my own eyes being shipped, and by this is said, patrons of households with all their members, they say there are 1500 and the richest that are to be found in Cairo, and it is said (the Lord) wants to send them to Constantinople with all their riches.

MDXVIII, MARZO (March 1518)

53. vol. 25, col. 273

Summary of the letters of sir Alvise Mocenigo, the cavalier, who was orator of the Turkish Lord. Dated on the 10th of November, in Constantinopoli. ... From the aforementioned, on the 19th of that month.

... that there, in Constantinople, he has made destroy to its foundations and under the scrutiny of many, the column on which previously stood the statue in bronze of the mounted emperor Theodosius, an ancient and memorable work

MDXVIII, AUGOSTO (August 1518)

54. vol. 25, col. 687

From Constantinople, there were letters from sir Lunardo Bembo, our baylo, from the 29th of July.

And furthermore that the plague has made its entry in Constantinople, and arrived in Pera etc.

MDXVIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1518)

55. vol. 26, col. 66

From Constantinople there were letters ... from sir Leonardo Bembo, our baylo, dated in Pera on the 7th of August.

That the 29th of July was his last day (of his assignment) and that he had to leave after a month, delayed by Florentines from the house of a Florentine merchant that had died of plague.

MDXVIII, OTTOBRE (October 1518)

56. vol. 26. col. 133/134

From Syo, from Thomà of Thabia, our consul, from the 26th of August, adressed to the regiment of Crete.

That, by an armed group which came from there, it seems to appear that the Turkish Lord returned to Constantinople on the 26th of July, and left suddenly for the plains, it is said that he is going to Edirne... And that in Constantinople and in Pera there was plague and no *recepto* are given to the ships that come from there, out of suspicion, etc.

57. vol. 26, col. 160 + 162

From sir Sebastian Moro, purveyor of the fleet, dated in the harbour of Candia on the last day of September.

... well, they say that there is enormous plague in Constantinople.

MDXVIII, DICEMBRE (December 1518)

58. vol. 26, col. 295-6

From sir Sebastian Moro, purveyor of the fleet, there were letters dated in Parenzo on the 22nd of December and in Corfu on the 24th of December.

And that plague had made great progress in Constantinople; but nowadays had stopped somewhat.

MDXIX, AGOSTO (August 1519)

59. vol. 27, col. 598

...a letter that was written by sir Nicolò, which was read, dated in Corfu on the 4th of this month.

That the last 26 days he had remained absent from Edirne and four days earlier, the Turkish Lord had left from there and had gone to the montains near Gallipoli in a cool place, moreover they say he will return to spend the winter there (that is, Edirne)

MDXX, FEBBRAIO (February 1520)

60. vol. 28, col. 229-230

From Constantinople, there were letters ... from sir Tomà Contarini, our baylo, dated on the 27th of December, the latest in Edirne.

Idem, that there was tremendous plague in Edirne.

61. vol. 28, col. 232

From Constantinople were read the letters of sir Tomà Contarini, baylo, from the 27th of December, from Edirne.

That plague is present there and that he would like to leave and go to Pera, but has no money and is half-desperate, he will sell his furniture etc.

MDXX, GIUGNO (June 1520)

62. vol. 28, col. 595-596

Copy of the paragraph of the letters of sir Andrea Sanudo, son of sir Beneto, dated in Cyprus in Nicosia, on the 9th of April 1520

Plague is present in Edirne, and the Turkish Lord has left from there and has gone to Filibe...

MDXX, OTTOBRE (October 1520)

63. vol. 28, col. 304

From sir Tomà Contarini, our baylo in Constantinople, dated in Pera on the first of September.

That, on the 12th of August he wrote that since then the Lord and his court had left for Edirne in order to spend the winter there, and he, baylo, would convene to go there although the air there did not suit him, and where it is understood that there is great plague.

64. vol. 29, col. 595

There are letters from the baylo of Constantinople, from the 24 of the latest (month) to this regiment.

Writes that the Turkish Lord wanted to go in Edirne and again he, baylo considered that he has to go... And by special news from merchants, obtained from Constantinople, that there is great plague.

65. vol. 29, col. 303

On the 21st, Sunday. This morning were heard those letters that contain the death of the Turkish Lord from plague in the vicinity of Edirne and there was a great crowd.

66. vol. 29, col. 306

And then was read news from Ragusa, from the 11th...

That, from a messenger that left Edirne on the 23rd of September, it appears the death of the Turkish Lord happened between Edirne and Constantinople in a place called Ogras, where the the conflict with his father had taken place...

67. vol. 29, col. 322

From the Baylo of Constantinople, dated in Pera, on the 17th of September.

From the aforementioned, and then from day 17 was encoded.

How on the first he wrote that the Lord had two *carboni* and a *jandusa al scaro* and was in the countryside and how he was being cured of it for already 12 days. Now there was news that it had remained very painful; he had himself made a house of wood (log cabin) in which no one entered except for his physicians and those that he governed, et par dessus du marché et par sopra la spala and on top of that, a nation with plague had come to him, which had greatly pained him, certainly he worried a great deal about his life...

Come a dì primo scrisse el Signor havia auto do carboni e una jandusa al scaro, et era in campagna, et come l'era risanato zà 12 zorni: hora avisa aver inteso è restè molto dolente; si ha fato far di in campagna una casa di legnami in la qual non vi entra si non li medicì et quelli il governa, et par sopra la spala li sia venuto una nasion o peste, che ha fato gran piaga, sichè si dubita molto di la sua vita, ...

MDXX, NOVEMBRE (November 1520)

68. vol. 29, col. 340

From Hungary, from sir Lorenzo Orio, doctor, our orator, in Possonia, on the 7th of October.

His Majesty sent for this orator, telling him that in this moment he had heard true and undisputible news that the Turkish ruler had died of plague in the place were he had the conflict with his father... saying that he had to write the good news to *la Signoria*, because the person to succeed him would not give harm neither to his Majesty, nor to the Christians.

69. vol. 29, col. 341

Was read a letter from the community of Ragusa, *sotoscrita divotissimi servitori, rectores consilium et comunitas civitatis Ragusii*, dated in Ragusa, on day 21.

That there are letters from the orator from Edirne from the 5th of October, that inform the passing away of the Lord Selim, from plague,...

70. vol. 29, col. 359-361

*From sir Bernardo Soranzo, baylo and **consieri**, from Corfù, from the 10th of October. Paragraph over the statement (made) by this shipowner that came from Syo, called Tomaso di Zuane.*

... and that in Consstantinople there was little plague.

MDXXII, AGOSTO (August 1522)

71. vol. 33, col. 422

On day 25, were read letters from Constantinople, from sir Andrea di Prioli, our baylo, dated in Pera, on the 21st of July.

... and that plague was enormous there. In 22 days 23 thousand people died.

MDXXII, SETTEMBRE (September 1522)

72. vol. 33, col. 448

On day 15, in the morning, (there) were letters from sir Andrea di Prioli, baylo in Constantinople, from the 13nd of August.

Idem, writes that there is horrible plague in Constantinople.

73. vol. 33, col. 449

On day 16, in the morning, (there) were letters from Constantinople from the 14nd of August, from the baylo Prioli.

That (on) the galley Querini, which the former Baylo had boarded, there were deaths of plague and many of them were Turks, furthermore, many of them were made Turks, furthermore that he left as well as he could to in order to come here

MDXXII, SETTEMBRE (September 1522)

74. vol. 33, col. 462

In the morning there were letters from Constantinople, from sir Andrea di Prioli, our baylo, from the 29nd of August.

That there, plague made great progress...

75. vol. 33, col. 468

Summary of a letter dated in Candia, on the 22nd of August 1522...

Obtained at the end of (day) 28, this morning returned the galley Querina, that was in Constantinople, with the former baylo sir Thomà Contarini and Zorzi Griti, the natural son of sir Andrea, procurator, and while coming from Constantinopoli where they die from plague it was not allowed to be maintained with the rest of the fleet : and it stayed at Fraschia.

MDXXII, OTTOBRE (October 1522)

76. vol. 33, col. 477

In the letters from Constantinople, the death there from plague is said of sir Hironomo Loredan son of sier Marcho, who was a merchant, from plague.

MDXXII, NOVEMBRE (November 1522)

77. vol. 33, col. 508

From Ragusa, from Giacomo di Zulian, of the first of October.

That plague had arrived there and that provisions were taken.

MDXXIII, LUGLIO (July 1523)

78. vol. 34, col. 301

The plague, for which the galleys from Baruto were waiting since the first day, was almost finished. Then it started again by the vessel Dolfina that came from Constantinople, and on board of which arrived sir Zuan Mocenigo who is a merchant in Constantinople.

MDXXIII, AGOSTO (August 1523)

79. vol. 34, col. 384

From Constantinople came letters from sir Piero Zen our orator, from thei 23rd of July, which had arrived by way of Ragusa.

That this orator had obtained a much appreciated audience from the Turkish Lord.

Come esso Orator havia hauto audientia dal Signor turcho molto grata. *Idem*, that there was great plague and and that sir Andrea di Prioli, our baylo died of plague in two days on the 16th; he dined with the aforementioned orator on Monday, on Tuesday he became ill and he died on Wednesday.

MDXXIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1523)

80. vol. 34, col. 399

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Zen, our orator, dated on the 5th of August.

That there, 500 die daily of plague, and that the Lord was in the palace and did not grant audience to anyone.

MDXXIII, DICEMBRE (December 1523)

81. vol. 35, col. 257

Summary of what was understood from sir Francesco Zen (son) of sir Piero, who is orator to the Turkish Lord, arriving from Constantinople over land on the 6th of December 1523.

Idem, that plague was great; and that . . . were dying daily niun si schivava; has run great danger: the Baylo became ill with plague because a plague-stricken was left half-dead in the streets by his relatives, next to his house and he, the Baylo sir Andrea di Prioli had him carried hither and became pale, which is when plague struck him. He died in 4 days, and had never wanted to say he caught it (the disease)... *Idem*, that in the house of the Orator, who was in Costantinople, 4 had become plague-stricken, 1 died, 3 were cured. He had *aspers* daily from the Lord for expenditures, which is 6 *ducates*, and guards remained with him; and in the end he did not go to kiss the hand of the Lord, he did not go out; then he went where he wanted and all came who wanted to this orator and as the Lord withheld the *aspers*, the guards were abolished.

Idem, that in Constantinople there are from each nation, and all remain in their own faith.. El Signor *vol il sua carazo nè di altro se cura*; almost always there is plague here, but this plague is not as that from Italy, because many get cured from it.

MDXXIV, MARZO (March 1524)

82. vol. 36, col. 118

Copy of a letter from Constantinople, from the 14th of February 1524.

The magnificent ambassador on the one hand refrained from seeing those guests for two reasons, the first (being) that he was afraid of plague, the other reason being that he could not stay up half a night, for you know well that sleep is the nutrition of the elderly...

MDXXV, DICEMBRE (December 1525)

83. vol. 40, col. 513- 515

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Bragadin, baylo on the 6th of November.

Died from plague Ali Bey, dragoman, who while having plague went to the residence of the pasha and apologized for non being able to stand upright; certainly Ibraim took it badly, and did not mourn a great deal because it was a man who liked war...

... Plague here makes progress, 500 to 600 die daily, which is a great event in these days. God holds my hand, all those that became ill under the last moon are died. And having gone to speak with Mustapha Pasha, there are 60 dead in his house of plague, among whose were very beautiful slaves that had cost 2000 ducates. He writes that he, baylo, has stayed as the only one of our people in Pera, the merchants have fled to the vineyards. Few are the houses that are not plague-stricken. That God may help me.

MDXXVI, FEBBRAIO (February, 1526)

84. vol. 40, col. 824

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Bragadin baylo, dated in Pera on the 29th of December.

Talisman Rays died of plague while on the way to Alexandria and his ship returned here and plague has abated somewhat and it is improving.

85. vol. 40, col. 893-894

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Bragadin baylo, from the 4th of January.

Gasparon di Livieri, jeweller, died of plague in two days...

MDXXVI, GIUGNO (June, 1526)

86. vol. 41, col. 525-534

Summary of the comments (relaas) of sir Piero Bragadin who came, Baylo of Constantinople, done in Pregadi on the 9th of June 1526.

Has gone through great fatigue and risk for my life because of plague, this Baylo that never spared himself; his preservation is certainly miraculous if one can say so and he got a carbuncle, which is a sort of *giandusa* and got better. He says they die around the house in Pera; he spoke every day with plague-stricken people, and in spite of this nothing bad happened to him, but he did not protect himself; and that Ali Bey, dragoman, a man of 70 years old with plague had stayed in his vicinity in the house of Imbraim Pasha, and that he had died in 3 days of plague.

MDXXVI, SETTEMBRE (September 1526)

87. vol. 42, col. 653

From Xagabria, from the priest Stefano aforementioned (= de Posedaria) from the 28th, to the count Jurco, his brother.

As concerning the matters of Hungary, the King has a hundred thousand combatants among whom there are 18 thousand Bohemians... and that in the camp of the Turk there are a great deal ill and there is plague and *fluxo*.

MDXXVI, DICEMBRE (December 1526)

88. vol. 43, col. 473

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Zen, orator, from the 4th of November.

The second son of the Lord (Süleyman) died of plague, . . . years old.

MDXXVII, MARZO (March 1527)

89. vol. 44, col. 263

Note. Yesterday news was given from Ragusa by one who arrived (from there), he reported to have spoken with one in Ragusa, where he did not want to be active because of the plague that is there, and said it is certain news that the Turkish Lord died of plague in Constantinople.

MDXXVII, GIUGNO (June 1527)

90. vol. 45, col. 288-291

Copy of a letter from Constantinople, from sir Marco Minio, our orator, dated on the 8th of May 1527...

On Sunday morning, on day . . . , I went to the Porte to kiss the hand of this Great Lord... I am seeking to get send away sooner, I will ask, because plague is increasing greatly.

MDXXVII, AGOSTO (August 1527)

91. vol. 45, col. 619-620

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Zen, baylo, from the 17th of July.

Writes of the enormous mortality that is there; there are 200 dying daily.

MDXXIX, OTTOBRE (October 1529)

92. vol. 52, col. 59-60

Copy of a letter written in Constantinople by pre' Triphon Rechenich, chaplain of sir Piero Zen, orator and vicebaylo, from the 24th of August 1529...

The territory here is becoming free from plague by the grace of God, and there is an abundance of victuals.

MDXXX, AGOSTO (August 1530)

93. vol. 53, col. 453

Summary of the letters from sir Marchiò Trivixan soracomito, dated in Constantinople, and written to his brothers.

On the 25th of the past (month), that is of June, was brought to invite the orators and baylo to the festivities and on the 26th they went early...

Came first, before the Lord, 200 solachi with their arches and scimitars,... Then came the Lord. Sir Hironimo Contarini and I soracomiti went twice with the galleys to salute the hypodrome where the Lord was. ... Here there is great plague *me inscresse* being here for so long.

MDXXXI, DICEMBRE (December 1531)

94. vol. 55, col. 209-210

This morning there was the news that my brother sir Antonio Sanudo, who was Cao di X was member of the council of that body,, passed away at the age of seventy-one and a half. He had been ill for more than two months. I remain at the age of 65 going to 66, because I was born on the 22nd of May, 1466. I am the youngest that joins the council, as number 14. May God grant me a long life, and at the end give me eternal life.

MDXXXII, GIUGNO (June 1532)

95. vol. 56, col. 401

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Zen, orator et vicebailo, from the 20th of May, received on the 14th of June, written by himself.

Having left a message with the captain of the fleet to speak with him, he sent me (a message) to say we would meet in the vineyard to stay half a day in order to get together, and after the order of the day, I prepared him a dinner in the house of Cantacuzenos, that I held with regard to plague, although at the moment the territory is very healthy (that is, disease-free)

MDXXXII, OTTOBRE (October 1532)

96. vol. 57, col. 169

From Sibinico, from the count and captain, on the 19th of October, received on the 29th of the said month.

...reported that the Turkish Lord with all the people from Anatolia on the said day passed with great speed passed the aforementioned place Belgrado, and went on the French route in order to return to Constantinople.

... he divulged that Imbraim would pass through the countryside of Cluino and from there would pass on to Bosnia in order to go to Constantinopoli, and that in Cluino and the surrounding villages many were dying of plague and few got better.

MDXXXIII, GENNAIO (January 1533)

97. vol. 57, col. 404 - 405

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Zen, orator and vicebailo, on the 21st of November, received on the 3rd of January.

News arrived of the magnificent Peri Pasha having died in Edirne, some say asphyxiated, and some from plague.

MDXXXIII, APRILE (April 1533)

98. vol. 58, col. 59

From Zante, from sir Mathio Barbarigo, purveyor, from the 16th of March, received on the 19th.

... and information that there is great death in many places in the Morea....

MDXXXIII, GIUGNO (June 1533)

99. vol. 58, col. 301

From sir Tomà Contarini, going as orator to the Turkish Lord, dated in galley of the shore of Ragusa, on the 3rd of June, received on the 12th of the said month.

He has not wished to be active in Ragusa, because the territory and all are plague-infested.

MDXXXIII, LUGLIO (July 1533)

100. vol. 58, col. 500

From Cataro, from sir Trifon Gradenigo rector and proveditor, from the 25th of July, received on the 28th of the said month.

... the *kadi* (of Constantinople) went to Ragusa to find *oğlak* and none could be found due to the great plague.

MDXXXIII, LUGLIO (July 1533)

101. vol. 58, col. 525 -526

Report, on the 15th of June, Sunday

(by) sir Piero da Ponte citizen, (who) arrived today from the Morea...

... that the Imperial Majesty (Charles Quint) sent ambassadors to the Great Turkish Lord, for reasons unknown, and that in the camp yet some were plague-stricken, but that it was generally absent and that some Turkish infantry and cavalry went over Patras to ruin certain cities of the Albanians.

MDXXXIII, AGOSTO (August 1533)

102. vol. 58, col. 623-625

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Zen, sier Thomà Contarini orator, and sir Nicolò Justinian, baylo, on the 23rd of July,...

Note. By private letters it is understood that plague is enormous, 500 there die daily and sir Francesco Morexini, son of sier Ziprian, died of plague, he was a big merchant...

103. vol. 58, col. 577

Di sier Piero Zen e sier Tomà Contarini oratori, di 16 ricevute ut supra.

That there is great plague here.

MDXXXIII, AGOSTO (August 1533)

104. vol. 58, col. 631-632

From Rome, from the orator Venier, of the 21st, received on the 27th.

... he had said to have news from Naples and from the Marquis of Tripalda that they had information from Constantinople that the *Sophi* had ruined the force of the Turk at the border...

And there is information that in the Turkish camp plague has started...

MDXXXIII, AGOSTO (August 1533)

105. vol. 58, col. 634-636

From Constantinople from sir Piero Zen, sir Tomà Contarini orators, sir Nicolò Justinian, baylo, on the 26th of July.

That here plague is so dangerous and enormous.

MDXXXIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1533)

106. vol. 58, col. 692

From Constantinople, from the orators, there were letters, from the 10th, 15nd, et 17nd of August...

Enormous plague...

MDXXXIII, SETTEMBRE (September 1533)

107. vol. 58, col. 697-699

From Constantinople, from sir Piero Zen, sir Tomà Contarini, orators, sir Nicolò Justinian baylo, on the 10th of August, received on the 17nd of September.

The Lord and the pasha fled to Beykoz out of fear of plague.

Note. By way of private letter it was understood that there in Constantinople there is an enormous plague outbreak, 18 of our merchants died and sir . . . Bernardo of sir Piero has plague.