

Galata

Galata or Galatae is a district in Istanbul, the largest city of Turkey. Galata is located at the northern shore of the Golden Horn, the inlet which separates it from the historic peninsula of old Constantinople. The Golden Horn is crossed by several bridges, most notably the Galata Bridge. Galata (also known as Pera back then) was a colony of the Republic of Genoa between 1273 and 1453. The famous Galata Tower was built by the Genoese in 1348 at the northernmost and highest point of the citadel. There are several theories concerning the origin of the name Galata. According to the Italians, the name comes from Calata (meaning downward slope) as the district is sloped and goes downwards to the sea from a hilltop. The Greeks believe that the name comes either from Galaktos (meaning milk, as the area was used by shepherds in the early medieval period) or from the word Galat (meaning Celtic in Greek) as the Celtic tribe of Galatians were thought to have camped here during the Hellenistic period before settling into Galatia in central Anatolia. The inhabitants of Galatia are famous for the Epistle to the Galatians and the Dying Galatian statue. In history, Galata is often called Pera which comes from the old Greek name for the place, Peran en Sykais, literally 'the Fig Field on the Other Side'. Much later in Byzantine times Galata became significant as the site of the Megalos Pyrgos (Great Tower) from which an iron chain could be raised in times of war to block entry to the Golden Horn. This tower was destroyed during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, but a new tower was later built by the Genoese on a different nearby site as the Christea Turris (Tower of Christ) and survives to this day (see: Galata Tower). From 1273 to 1453, when it was captured by the Ottomans in the Siege of Constantinople, 'Pera' was a Genoese colony. The ruins of the Palace of the Genoese podestà Montani de Marinis, known as the Palazzo del Comune (Palace of the Municipality) in the Genoese period and built in 1314, still stands in a narrow street behind the famous Bankalar Caddesi (Banks Street) which was the financial center of the Ottoman Empire and has rows of Ottoman-era bank buildings, including the headquarters of the Ottoman Central Bank. Several ornaments which were originally on the facade of the Genoese Palace were used to embellish these 19th century bank buildings in the late Ottoman period. Another famous building in Galata is the Church of St. Paul (1233) which was built by the Dominican priests of the Catholic Church during the Latin control of Constantinople (1204-1261). The building is known today as the Arap Camii (Arab Mosque) because it was given by Sultan Bayezid II to the Arabs of Spain who fled the Spanish Inquisition of 1492 and came to Istanbul. At present, Galata is a quarter within the borough of Beyo lu in Istanbul.