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The Contours of a Local Identity

It was a chilly November day of the year 1494 (*Safer* 900 a.h.). İlyas slowly climbed the steep hill toward the large mosque of the Grand Vizier Davudpaşa. Its lofty dome and tall minaret overlooked the whole district, the large semt to which it had come to give its name. Obviously, the Davudpaşa mosque was much larger and loftier than the small mescit İlyas himself had built down the hill. But how could he, a simple butcher, have ever competed with the fortune of a grand vizier? There was no point in being dissatisfied with the comparison. Turning back, İlyas looked down the hill toward the Marmara Sea and marveled at all that had been accomplished.

İlyas had seen glorious days indeed. He sometimes felt that the whole city of Istanbul was his. True, he was only a simple butcher. But he had been given, in his time, the incomparable honor of feeding and serving the army that conquered this magnificent city. He had been appointed chief butcher of the sultan's army, and had served his master as best as he could. He did not only feed the Blessed Army; he was also part of it. This meant that he too had waged a Holy War in his own right. That was more than four decades ago. For weeks and months in the spring of the year 1453 (857 a.h.) İlyas and his aides had borne the heavy responsibility of slaughtering sheep and providing the besieging army with a sufficient amount of meat. Once Constantinople was taken, who could deny his vital contribution to the victory?

And yes, after the conquest, when the time came for sharing the spoils, he was not forgotten. The glorious Sultan Mehmed the

Conqueror allotted his chief butcher, İlyas, a large piece of land within the walled city. The other chief butcher of the conquering army, Demirhan, had also received his share. He had, however, died soon after the conquest. Demirhan's lot was perhaps better situated, as it overlooked the bustling Golden Horn from the top of a steeper hill near the Byzantine church of Christ Pantocrator and was nearer to the commercial center of the city. But it was much smaller in area and already rather densely populated by Christians. As to his own share, near the city walls and overlooking the sea of Marmara, it was much larger and virtually empty. Luckily, İlyas had to face a territory that was practically a *tabula rasa*. Indeed, after the conquest the quasi-deserted city had to be almost totally repopulated. Settlers had to be brought in, new neighborhoods had to be formed, mosques had to be built, and Byzantium had to be given a new and Muslim stamp. So, in a sense, Kasap İlyas' Holy War was far from having ended with the capture of the city. His personal Holy War was in fact only beginning.

He remembered the very day he had set foot on "his" bit of Istanbul. That was also the first time he had entered the conquered city itself. Approaching his territory on a boat, he had found landing on a small old wharf made of a few creaking planks. The infidels called it the Agios Emilianos wharf. Part of the Muslim army had already used it as a landing place during the two-month long siege of Constantinople. This wharf was the nearest sea access to his portion of the city. İlyas had then looked at the area in and around the city walls bordering on the sea of Marmara and he had chosen the best place to build his mosque: not too close to the sea and the city walls, but not too high up the hill either, a plot of land bordering on the small side road that led from the Forum Bovis of the infidels to the city walls near the Seven Towers. Then he had boats bring to the seaside blocks of stone, limestone, and sand to make mortar, wood for construction, and so forth. Workers were hired and building began.

Very soon, however, the building of the mosque had to come to a temporary halt. İlyas remembered why. He was sitting on a block of stone watching the workers unloading the boats and carrying the various building materials from the wharf to the construction site of the mosque. The actions of one of these workers struck him. The man took a heavy stone or a sack full of limestone from the boat moored at the wharf, brought it to the building site and, without leaving it there, carried the same sack or stone back to the boat again. The action was repeated quite a few times. İlyas was puzzled.

When asked for the reason for his strange behavior, the man answered that "he felt he had to do his share of daily work, and that he had no choice but to work for a living; however, as he was impure, he felt he should not contribute to the building of a holy place of worship while in a state of ritual impurity." İlyas was struck by the man's honesty and piety. On the spot, he gave the order to stop all work on the building site of the mosque. Then, he gave priority to building a large hamam first, so that the workers could wash and regularly perform their ritual ablutions. A location just across from the mosque was selected for the purpose. The mosque itself was finally completed only after the public bath was built and in operation. With the mosque and the shops built just next to it, the providential public bath would become an essential part of the new *mahalle*.

Many of those who worked on Kasap İlyas' construction site were also among his former aides in his work as a butcher. They were all used to slaughtering sheep and cattle and all of them enjoyed a good bite of mutton or beef. Save one. This odd man was strangely averse to eating meat and would never even have a taste of it. No wonder he was nicknamed "Etyemez" (meat-averse!). It was very strange, therefore, that this man could take part in a long-term enterprise whose very existence rested on the provision and consumption of animal meat. Naturally, İlyas ended up by banishing this misfit. The man was told to go and settle as far away as possible from the mosque and from the center of İlyas's new *mahalle*. The vegetarian went and settled on a small bit of land at the extreme western tip of the large area put by the Sultan under İlyas's responsibility. The vegetarian's place of banishment was later to become a separate neighborhood known as Etyemez. Nevertheless, this neighborhood always remained morally part and parcel of Kasap İlyas's dependencies.

But all of this was a long, long time ago. İlyas the butcher was now old and felt tired as he climbed up the hill on a narrow dirt road. He knew that the end was not very far, but he was ready to go, and at peace with himself. He had already accomplished the pilgrimage to Mecca, the Haj. Besides, he had just made his will and had given away all of his possessions to endow a holy foundation. The foundation, his perpetual vakıf, was to take care of his mosque, the mosque he had built himself, the visible product of his dedication, of his piety and hard work. This mosque that bore his name, the Kasap İlyas mosque, was standing just below him, toward the foot of the hill on land gently sloping toward the sea. He had indeed

> richly endowed it. Apart from the yearly revenues accruing from the thirty thousand aspers in cash that had bequeathed to his foundation, there would also be the rental incomes from no less than sixteen shops and six rooms, all adjoining the mosque. These moneys would certainly be more than sufficient for the upkeep. An imam as well as a müezzin would be appointed on a permanent basis and the imam would be the trustee of his foundation. The wages of the Coran reciters, those of the Friday preachers and of the cleaners and caretakers of his mosque, as well as the expenses for the necessary upkeep and repair work would be paid out of his foundation's revenues.
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> Besides, with the public bath and the shops all near the city gate leading to the seaside and to the wharf, he was sure that a small center of attraction had already taken shape. Through his efforts, a durable neighborhood community, a real mahalle had been formed. However rich or prestigious the adjacent *mahalle*s might become, he was sure that his mahalle would always have both chronological and spiritual precedence over its surroundings. In time, the *Kasap İlyas* mahalle would, no doubt, put its stamp on the whole district. It seemed then that Kasap İlyas had waged his personal Holy War with a great deal of success.
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> As for himself, he had made sure that, when the time came, his body would be laid to rest in the small plot of land just behind the mosque. That would be a perfect location for watching his neighborhood, the Kasap İlyas *mahalle*, grow and prosper—and forever remain a basic building block of Muslim Istanbul.

It is not totally impossible for these events to have really taken place. This narrative is, as a matter-of-fact, just a combination of various local myths and legends of Kasap İlyas with the few elements of truth that can be gathered from sixteenth-century sources.

As to the first serious historical source of detailed information on the *mahalle,* it dates from 1546, no less than half a century after the putative decease of its mythical founder and almost a century after the conquest of Istanbul.[1] In the detailed list of *vakıf*s established in 1546 and published by Barkan and Ayverdi, the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* is listed as one of fourteen neighborhoods that were then part of the Davud Paşa area.[2] In this collation of Istanbul pious foundations, the details of no less than 2,490 deeds of trust are enumerated and these are distributed over a total of 219 *mahalle*s of Istanbul *intra muros*. This shows an average of 11 *vakıf*s per Istanbul neighborhood, though for most of the *mahalle*s the number of deeds of trust did not exceed four or five. Among the neighborhoods adjacent to Kasap İlyas, for instance, only three *vakıf*s were registered for the Sancaktar Hayreddin

mahalle, two for Abacızâde, eight for Kürkçübaşı, nine for Hubyar, and eighteen for Davud Paşa. With a total of twenty six local pious foundations Kasap İlyas was indeed the record holder in and around the Davud Paşa area, and was also among the ten *mahalle*s of Istanbul having the highest number of local *vakıf*s.

Local Identity: The Formative Sixteenth Century

Less than a century after the conquest, Kasap İlyas had already acquired the location that it still occupies within the *semt* and *mahalle* topography of Istanbul. Set on the slopes of the last of the "seven hills" of the historical Istanbul peninsula, on land gently sloping toward the sea south of the Davud Paşa Mosque, Kasap İlyas was then, as it is today, embedded in the larger Davud Paşa *semt*.

The high number of endowments for local common benefit established in Kasap İlyas is a sure indicator of a strong sense of local identity and of a relatively high degree of social cohesion. The decisions that many of the inhabitants of the *mahalle* took, in the first half of the sixteenth century, concerning the transmission of their property, shows that they really believed in the perennity of their neighborhood. Those who established a foundation for local common benefit in their neighborhood chose to dispose of their goods in a manner that would establish an eternal link between them and their neighborhood community. A local identity, a sense of local belonging, was evidently already there, for such potent material effects would not have been produced without a strong collective belief in local common goals and benefits. The first deed of trust (*vakfiye*) established in the neighborhood is, as a matter-of-fact also the earliest within the whole Davud Paşa district and is dated May 1501 (Şevval 906 a.h.). That first local *vakıf* provides for the repair and maintenance of a local public convenience, a well for public use *(bi'r-i mâ-yı müşterek)* situated in the neighborhood.[3]

Was the comparatively large number of local endowments due to the fact that Kasap İlyas was particularly populous or particularly well-off in the sixteenth century? On the matter of populousness, just the contrary is true. As we shall see, though large in area, the *mahalle* was always, in the sixteenth as well as in later centuries, rather sparsely populated. As to riches, the available sources do not allow for that sort of a comparison at a *mahalle* level in the sixteenth century, but, as we shall see, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century data would, if anything, point in just the opposite direction.

Starting from the very end of the fifteenth century, the inhabitants of that small bit of Istanbul seem to have strongly believed that they could meaningfully bequeath their possessions (in cash or as real estate property) for

a strictly *local* cause and purpose. Besides believing in the perennity of the mosque and of the *mahalle* itself, the inhabitants who endowed a foundation for local common benefit must have put a good deal of confidence in the personality of the local religious leaders (i.e., the *imam* and the *müezzin* of the Kasap İlyas mosque) who would automatically have to function as trustees and would have to manage the trust fund or the real estate property in accordance with the desires of the founder.

Besides, Kasap İlyas, through the prestige of its local religious leaders, seems to have acquired a particular urban aura. Indeed, the trusteeship of a number of houses situated in Arap Taceddin and in the adjacent "new" *mahalle* had also been given to the *imam* of the Kasap İlyas mosque. However, not even a single item of property situated in our neighborhood had been given in trust to a local religious foundation situated elsewhere in the city in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Points of Reference

In the last quarter of the fifteenth century three buildings played a definitional role in the formation of our neighborhood and of its local identity: (1) the Davud Paşa complex (*külliye*) which gave its name to the whole area and was situated up the hill above Kasap İlyas. Built in 1485 by the grand vizier Koca Davud Paşa (d. 1498), it was composed of a large mosque, a shrine (*türbe*), a small theological school (*medrese*), and a soup kitchen for the poor (*imaret*); (2) the Kasap İlyas mosque, built probably not long before 1494, which is the date of its deed of trust; and (3) the large Davud Paşa double bath (*çifte hamam*[4]) situated right in the middle of our *mahalle* and built probably at the same time as the Davud Paşa complex itself. As it was nearer to the city walls bordering on the sea of Marmara than to the Davud Paşa complex, the Davud Paşa public bath was often designated as Deniz Hamamı, or Denizciler Hamami (The Seamen's *Hamam*).

Together with the Davud Paşa gate on the city walls bordering the sea of Marmara and the small wharf that jutted out from the piece of land just outside the gate, these three buildings were the main formative landmarks of both the Davud Paşa *semt* and the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. These three buildings put their imprint on the area, became the basic topographical points of reference for a local identity, and contributed to the formation of a durable local consciousness. Indeed, neither the name of the Davud Paşa District nor that of Kasap İlyas appear in a previous listing of Istanbul pious foundations dated from 1472.[5] The last quarter of the fifteenth century was crucial in that respect.

Were there any traces of any Byzantine building, monument, road, church, and so forth or of any other pre-Ottoman center of attraction that could have served as a point of reference to the newly formed *mahalle*? Judging from the speed with which local identities were formed in the neighborhood after the Ottoman conquest, the answer seems to be negative. The Byzantine monument nearest to the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* would be the *Arcadius column,* at the center of a small *forum* that was situated about a quarter of a mile to the north and was within the bounds of the Cerrahpaşa District, where the basis of the column can still be seen. To the west of Davudpaşa, the neighboring *semt* of Samatya derives its name from the Greek *Psammathia*. To the east of Kasap İlyas are the large vegetable gardens of Langa, whose Turkish name is a direct descendent of the Byzantine *Vlanga.* No onomastic or topographical traces have been transmitted to Ottoman Istanbul, however, either of *Xerolophus*, the Byzantine denomination of the hills of the Davudpaşa District, or of *Hagios Emilianos*, the name of a church and of a gate in the city ramparts, both in the same district.[6] The district was in no way an important Byzantine economic or political center. It did not become a primary urban center under Ottoman rule either. The construction of durable local identities in Ottoman Davudpaşa and in Kasap İlyas seem to have owed little to what the district had contained in Byzantine times.

The area was very sparsely populated in the late Byzantine period. Sources show that the whole Marmara coast from the point of the Seraglio to the Castle of the Seven Towers was hardly inhabited.[7] Buildings were rare in the first decades of the Turkish conquest as well. Many maps and engravings of the period show vast empty areas all along the coast. The Buondelmonti map of the end of the fifteenth century as well as the Vavassore map dating from the 1520s show, despite the usual inaccuracies of scale and perspective, that the seacoast of the walled city of Istanbul was lined with gardens, vineyards, orchards, and windmills and contained large areas of empty land. In all of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century historic maps and charts, very few houses, churches, and mosques appear along the Marmara coast of intramural Istanbul.[8]

Deserted though it was in the decades preceding the Turkish conquest, the Davudpaşa area was not given priority when Istanbul had to be repopulated after the Ottoman takeover. Some of the neighboring districts did receive an influx of immigrant population, but not Kasap İlyas and Davudpaşa. As part of the policy of repopulating Istanbul, for instance, many Armenian communities were brought from around the Anatolian towns of Tokat and Sivas in the years immediately following the conquest, and they were settled in the neighboring districts of Samatya, Langa, and Sulumanastır.[9] For all we know, our district and *mahalle* were not directly concerned by any of these forced population movements. The neighborhood identities that took shape

in the *mahalle* and in the district were not connected to any "imported" network of preexisting relationships (a common geographic origin, ethnic or religious groupings, etc.) which would have simply been superimposed upon a new topographical *locus*. The available evidence seems to indicate that local identities and local solidarities in Kasap İlyas were formed on the spot, the two mosques, the *hamam* (a place for meeting as much as one for taking baths) and the wharf having served as basic mental and geographic landmarks.

The account-books of the large and central *Süleymaniye* mosque, built between 1550 and 1557, barely a decade after the 1546 list of pious foundations, contain another bit of evidence indicative of this early formation of the Davudpaşa and Kasap İlyas local identities.[10] In the absence of family surnames, almost all of the workers employed on the construction site of the large sultanic mosque were clearly identified by their place of origin. For those coming from outside the capital, the name of their town of origin was added to their name and for the Istanbulites, that of their district within the city. Next to those coming from the adjoining districts of Langa or Samatya, many workers (stonemasons, carpenters, etc.) on the construction site, from 1550 on, were clearly identified as "such and such from Davudpaşa."

Endowments, Donations, and Foundation Aims

The specifications of the sixteenth-century Kasap İlyas *vakıf*s list the broad range of endowments that were set up by the local inhabitants.[11] First of all, various amounts of cash, ranging from one thousand to thirty thousand aspers (*akçe*) were donated. In most of the deeds of trust it was clearly specified that the yearly return of these moneys would be 10 percent. Then there is real estate (a total of sixteen houses and five shops, all situated within the *mahalle)* which had been endowed. This is quite considerable, given that Kasap İlyas could not, in all probability have contained at the time much more than fifty or sixty houses. Besides cash and real estate, some utensils for daily use (a cauldron, a large tray, a copper bucket, a basin, a pickaxe, a spade, etc.) were also bequeathed to the Kasap İlyas mosque, as well as, more appropriately, some manuscript copies of the Coran.

Three of the twenty-six *vakıf*s provided funds for the upkeep of a dervish lodge (*tekke*) situated elsewhere. The Süleyman Halife *tekke* belonging to the Halvetî Sufi order was situated in the neighborhood of Sofular, about a kilometer to the east, and three Kasap İlyas deeds of trust dating from 1515 and 1521 provided funding for this lodge. This leads us to presume that there existed no such *tekke*s in or near Kasap İlyas in the first half of the sixteenth century.[12]

The deeds of trust directly and openly state that their object is one of local common benefit. The upkeep and repair of the Kasap İlyas mosque is

the most often-cited aim and endowed moneys and their future revenues are clearly earmarked for that specific purpose. The provision of oil for the oil-lamps of the mosque and the purchase of candles for lighting the mosque on special days is also important. The care and cleaning of the two communal water-wells of the *mahalle* have also been provided for, as well as the expenses of a small local primary school (*muallimhane*) which was endowed as early as 1514. In another important chunk of the deeds of trust both the management of, and the revenues that would accrue from, the bequeathed property (houses and shops) are directly left to those who are to officiate as *imam* and/or as *müezzin* of the Kasap İlyas mosque. These indirect donations to the *imam* are often conditional upon his regular recitation of Coranic prayers for the rest of the soul of the deceased donor. The existence of officiating local religious leaders must be seen as an object of common benefit from the point of view of the local community.

From a strictly technical and legalist point of view, though, about half of the sixteenth-century Kasap İlyas pious foundations belonged to the type called hereditary (*evlâtlık* or *zürri*) *vakıf*s. Technically, this means that the initial donor could decide that the donated cash or property forming the initial endowment would at first be entrusted either to one or more of his direct descendants or to another person of his choice. The endowed property would then be managed by these selected "heirs" and would revert to the trusteeship of the *imam* of the local mosque only after the death of those persons or the complete extinction of their line of descendants. As suggested by Barkan and Ayverdi in their introduction to their modern edition of the 1546 list of Istanbul *vakıf*s, this mode of constitution of the *vakıf*s could also have been used as a way of bypassing the very strict Islamic rules (*ferâiz* or *muhallefât*) concerning the partition of inheritances.[13]

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the *imam* of the Kasap İlyas mosque who was also the local leader of Kasap İlyas, was managing the revenues of twenty-six different local pious foundations. From among these, the use of, and/or the revenues accruing from, six houses and three shops had been given to him by the various donors. As we shall see, the *imam*s of the Ottoman Kasap İlyas *mahalle* have always enjoyed fairly comfortable income levels, and the basis for their regular income flow seems to have been already established in the early sixteenth century.

Mahalle Topography: Boundaries and Landmarks

To determine the precise boundaries of the sixteenth-century Kasap İlyas *mahalle* is an attempt both vain and impossible. The *mahalle*s—or, rather, those that survived until the twentieth century—were officially assigned precise and artificial boundaries only in 1927.[14] For centuries the Kasap İlyas

mosque, the Davudpaşa complex, the *hamam*, the wharf, and the city ramparts bordering on the sea of Marmara were sufficient definitional landmarks. There is nevertheless reason to suppose that the area and borders of the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* did not change to a very considerable extent during the last few centuries. To the west and to the east of it, the two neighboring *mahalle*s (Sancaktar Hayrettin *alias* Bayezid-i Cedid, and Kürkçübaşı) have always been the same. The southernly limits of Kasap İlyas were, then as now, naturally set by the city walls and by the sea of Marmara. To the north, there were two neighboring *mahalle*s (Hubyar and Abacızade) in the sixteenth century but these had later disappeared and had been absorbed into other northernly neighborhoods.

To sum up, Kasap İlyas extended, then as now, over a rectangular area, with the long sides of the rectangle being oriented approximately in the east-west direction. Compared with the other intramural Istanbul *mahalle*s, Kasap İlyas has never been a *small* neighborhood. In the nineteenth century, Istanbul neighborhoods usually covered an area ranging from one to five hectares.[15] Kasap İlyas, toward the end of the nineteenth century, had a total area of no less than six hectares. Only a little more than half that area was effectively inhabited, though, and the Davud Paşa vegetable gardens took up the rest.

The streets of Istanbul received official names only in the 1860s. The people of Istanbul gave names to the more important streets before the nineteenth century, but nothing points to the existence of street names as early as the sixteenth century. There were no house or gate numbers either and the modern construct of an "address" could not apply.

The truth is that none of the real estate property in Kasap İlyas set up as a pious foundation in the sixteenth century can now be located with any degree of precision within the *mahalle*. For in the deeds of trust, these properties were always described with reference to the nearest well-known landmark and to the names of the owners of the neighboring houses or property. The landmarks most often used in the sixteenth-century Kasap İlyas *mahalle* were, besides its namesake mosque and the *hamam,* the city ramparts, the Davud Paşa gate on the same ramparts, and the wharf.

The Wharf

Among these ontological markers of Kasap İlyas, the Davud Paşa wharf is of special importance. This wharf, which probably preexisted the *mahalle*, was far from being essential to the general port activities of a large city like Istanbul. The most important wharfs were always, in Byzantine as in Ottoman times, located along the coast of the Golden Horn, which was a magnificent natural harbor. To these were brought most of the goods im-

ported to the city and the main wharfs used for passenger transportation were also situated along the coast of this harbor. The Davudpaşa wharf was nevertheless one of the very few jetties situated on the Marmara Sea coast of the walled city. Along a one-mile stretch of coastline from Langa to Samatya, among the vegetable gardens and the fishermen's huts, there were but two small jetties: that of Yenikapı, mostly used for bringing fruits and vegetables from the Asian coast in the nineteenth century, and our Davudpaşa wharf.[16] The Davudpaşa wharf served as a basic point of reference for a much wider area than our neighborhood.

This wharf epitomizes the functional articulation of Kasap İlyas to the rest of the city. To this small wooden wharf, barges brought such construction materials as wood for burning, timber, coal, straw, sand, and gravel. These were then stored in a number of nearby warehouses within the Kasap İlyas *mahalle*, all situated between the Davudpaşa wharf and the main thoroughfare of Kasap İlyas that passed between the mosque and the *hamam*. Records suggest that the presence of warehouses in the area was as ancient as the wharf, or as the neighborhood itself. As early as 1511 a deed of trust mentions the existence of a "seller of wood/timber near the Davudpaşa wharf."[17] Traces of these shops and warehouses are to be found throughout the centuries.

These warehouses obviously did not address themselves to the sole inhabitants of Kasap İlyas, or even to the larger Davudpaşa area of which Kasap İlyas was a part. Most of these goods were commodities of first necessity, whether for fuel (wood and coal), for transportation (straw), or for construction and repair work (sand and gravel). As a matter-of-fact, the general layout of the city of Istanbul commanded that an important part of the import, transportation, and domestic distribution of these bulk goods be done by sea, to avoid the hilly and dense maze of narrow streets in the city center. They had to be stored in warehouses situated not too far away from their port of disembarkment. From there, retail trade and distribution could proceed. The Davudpaşa wharf and the warehouses in our *mahalle* serviced a large portion of the city, in fact almost the whole of the Marmara seacoast west of Langa. Our neighborhood therefore had an urban commercial function whose importance exceeded the narrow limits of a small and residential *mahalle*. Wood and timber was brought to the capital-city of the Ottoman Empire from various Black Sea ports and their first points of entry were situated along the southern shore of the Golden Horn (in *Cibali* and *Odun iskelesi*, to be more precise).[18] The Davudpaşa wharf and the warehouses in the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* served as one of the main transiting points for urban retailing and distribution.

The centuries-long presence of the wharf and of the attached warehouses did put a durable imprint on Kasap İlyas. The owners of the warehouses used local labor and facilities, and many of the street-porters living within the *mahalle* were partly or fully employed in the transportation and distribution

of timber, sand, and so forth. The whole area acquired, as we shall see, a certain disrepute due to the presence of the porters and of various warehouse workers, a largely "nonfamilial" and mostly migrant group within an otherwise almost completely residential area. The small wooden Davudpaşa wharf was also sometimes also used for public transportation. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century listings of boats and barges operating in Istanbul show that a few, though not many, of them were permanently attached to the Davudpaşa wharf. These boats and barges must have carried passengers to and from the city center, that is, to and from other wharfs situated on the Golden Horn. This public transportation activity probably continued until the 1860s, when the *mahalle* was connected to central Istanbul by a tramway line. Although Istanbul is a typical port-city surrounded by water on three sides and where various types of boats were, for centuries, the most important means of public transportation, there are few serious studies on the history of marine transportation within the city.[19]

The Davudpaşa wharf also had its political heyday in the early sixteenth century, for it was, in a way, involved in the political fight between Selim and Korkut, both sons of Sultan Bayezid the Second (reigned between 1481 and 1512) and potential heirs to the Ottoman throne. When the throne seemed to be up for grabs Korkut, who was then governor of Manisa, secretly moved to Bandyrma, took a boat that crossed the Sea of Marmara, and landed in Istanbul on April 9, 1512. His intention was to rally the various Janissary corps stationed in Istanbul and to convince them to join him in order to overtrow his father. The attempt was not crowned with success and it was Selim, later nicknamed "The Grim," who finally mounted the Ottoman throne. What pertains to the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* in this adventure is that, to mount his political coup, Prince Korkut had chosen the Davudpaşa wharf when he disembarked upon his arrival at Istanbul.[20] That is hardly surprising for, in all military and political logic, he needed a wharf that was both well-known to navigators and was not too centrally situated. It can be surmised that, had Prince Korkut's political gamble succeeded, the fortunes of the small and secondary Davudpaşa wharf and of the *mahalle*s in its environs might well have received an economic and political boost.

Even in the early sixteenth century, however, the significance of this minor wharf was not limited to the sole Kasap İlyas *mahalle,* within the bounds of which it happened to operate. The Davudpaşa wharf, minor though it was, was used as a basic topographical landmark for a much wider area. In fact, the whole of the Marmara coast all the way from the Langa vegetable gardens to the Greek and Armenian quarters of Samatya were using this wharf as a topographical marker. For instance, in two deeds of trust dated April 1530 and October 1542,[21] the small mosque of Bayezid-i Cedid, situ-

ated about half a mile to the west of the Kasap İlyas mosque, and nearer in fact to the district of Samatya than to Davudpaşa, is described as "the mosque of Sultan Bayezid near the Davudpaşa wharf." Moreover, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not only this or that particular building or plot of land, but whole *mahalle*s were described with reference to the Davudpaşa wharf. In many of the local deeds of trust drawn in the late seventeenth century, the neighborhood where the donated property is situated is described as ". . . the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* near the Davudpaşa wharf."[22] So is the neighboring *mahalle* always referred to as ". . . the Bayezid-i cedid *mahalle* near the Davudpaşa wharf."

Later, the inhabitants of Kasap İlyas even came to be designated, in some nineteenth-century sources, as those from the Davudpaşa wharf (*Davudpaşa Iskeleli*). This designation was meant to differentiate those who lived in the parts of the Davudpaşa District nearer to the seaside and to the wharf—that is, in the Kasap İlyas *mahalle*—from those who resided up the hill, near the grand vizier's mosque and the religious court contiguous to it. These people were therefore called those from the Davudpaşa Court (*Davudpaşa Mahkemeli*).[23] When local fire brigades were constituted within Istanbul in the middle of the nineteenth century, the volunteers from the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* were, almost naturally, incorporated into the Davudpaşa Wharf fire brigade, and those from the upper parts of the district into the Davudpaşa Court brigade.

The Ramparts

The city ramparts bordering on the Sea of Marmara, the natural southern border of our rectangular neighborhood, constituted yet another important definitional landmark for the Kasap İlyas *mahalle*. A gate on the walls (*Davudpaşa kapısı*) opened on a small plot of land from which jutted out our wharf. These walls had lost all defensive function after the capture of Constantinople and had not undergone any substantial repair work.[24] Materials were often extracted from them to build houses. Among the sixteen houses donated to a pious foundation in Kasap İlyas in the first half of the sixteenth century, no less than nine were set very close to these city walls. As the description in the deeds of trust shows *(cidar-ı kal'a ile mahdud*), either the houses themselves or their gardens were abutting on the waterside ramparts. Many shops and warehouses were also contiguous to the city walls in the sixteenth century. We know that three of these shops were endowments of pious foundations, in 1511, 1521, and 1529. The last two were shops/warehouses for timber and wood. Then as now, there were vegetable gardens

as well under the city walls, and one of them, too, had been bequeathed to a foundation in 1515.[25]

All this leads us to believe that the center of gravity of the sixteenth century population of Kasap İlyas had been nearer to the sea. There probably was a relatively greater concentration of houses, shops, and people in the part of the neighborhood between the Kasap İlyas mosque, situated more or less in the center of the *mahalle*, and the southernly ramparts. Compared to this part of the neighborhood, the slopes of the hill toward the Davudpaşa mosque must have been more sparsely settled.

HOUSES AND GARDENS

The sixteenth-century deeds of trust contain a number of important clues on houses, land use, and general patterns of settlement in the Kasap İlyas *mahalle*. The houses and other real estate property donated to a local *vakıf* are often described in some detail.[26]

Houses as Dwellings

The usual *nomenklatura* of houses and dwellings in Ottoman Istanbul comprises four different status markers. These markers are, in ascending order of prestige: *süflî* (shabby, run-down), *tahtanî* (level with the ground), *fevkânî* (elevated), and *mükellef* (luxurious). These adjectives are the expression of a hierarchy in both size, quality, and social status of the house. The last qualifier was usually reserved for palatial houses and for the larger dwellings of the high-ranking military and bureaucrats.[27] The *tahtânî* houses were on average, single-story houses, and the *fevkânî* usually had two stories.

Out of the sixteen houses set up as a foundation in Kasap İlyas in the first half of the sixteenth century and whose descriptions are given in the deeds of trust, no less than thirteen are qualified as *hane-i tahtânî*. That is, they all had only a ground floor.[28] Two others were qualified as *süflî*, that is, they also had one single floor but they were smaller and/or shoddier than the others. Only one of the houses in Kasap İlyas was qualified as a *fevkanî* house and therefore had more than one floor, most probably two. In the sixteenth century, just as in later centuries, and notwithstanding the presence of a few large mansions, the houses in the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* were mostly of an average size and of a quite modest appearance.

From the little that remains of the old *mahalle*s of Istanbul today, one gets the distinct impression that the wooden two-story type of residence was definitely the most common one. But this contemporary impression concerns

mostly the surviving nineteenth-century wooden buildings. Back in the sixteenth century, the most common type of Istanbul dwellings seem to have had only one floor. Many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European travelers also report that one-story buildings were pervasive in most of Istanbul.[29]

Moreover, it is probable, as Barkan and Ayverdi also point out,[30] that most of these one-story *süflî* or *tahtani* houses in the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* only contained a single "room," the main living quarters. The word *hane*, or "house," most probably designated the whole construction, while the individual dwelling-units included therein were designated by the word *bab,* which means "door," "gate," or "entrance." When and if the two did not coincide, it was openly specified in the deed of trust, for instance, a house with two gates (*iki bâb hane*) was being donated to a *vakıf*. A patent example of the distinction between house and residential unit is given by a deed of trust established in the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* and dated December 1526. According to this deed, "a house with two gates" was being set up as a pious foundation, but the donor had clearly specified that the incomes accruing from the large room (*beyt-i kebir*) were to be put to a different use than the moneys that were to accrue from the renting of the small room (*beyt-i sagir*).[31]

The assumption that most of these houses must have contained a single living space is also supported by the abundance of outhouses and annexes attached to each of them. The roofed single space was functioning both as a living room and as a bedroom, because most of the other domestic chores and functions were banished to these outhouses and extensions. The houses in the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* all possessed one or more of these extensions. The kitchen (*matbah*) and the kiln or oven (*furun*), for instance, were invariably separated from the house itself, and so, for obvious reasons, were the toilets (*kenif*). Some houses had a well, others an open veranda (*zulle*), and still others a cellar or a granary (*serdab* or *anbar*). The extensions attached to the same *hane* were obviously being used in common by all of the households living within the same dwelling-unit. Indeed, a water-well that is donated to a Kasap İlyas *vakıf* is mentioned in the deed of trust as being an extension of a house and is described as a common water-well (*bi'r-i ma-yı müşterek*).

The Kasap İlyas houses, as were most dwellings in sixteenth-century Istanbul, were wooden constructions that had a basic timber structure, and brick, mud or stone filling in between. The outside walls might have been covered with boards or planks. More probably, they were simply plastered.[32] Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European travelers to Istanbul are unanimous in observing that all of the large public buildings (mosques, public baths, *han*s, *medrese*s, etc.) were solidly built of stone, whereas most private housing was basically built of wood. Wood was a cheaper and more readily available building material than stone, and this was important for the more modest neighborhoods of Istanbul.

The sixteenth-century Istanbulites had been eyewitnesses to the terrible havoc of the 1509 earthquake. This violent earthquake (later nicknamed "the minor doomsday") had destroyed more than a hundred mosques in intramural Istanbul, as well as the larger part of the ramparts of the city. No stone minaret was left standing.[33] After this devastating earthquake, wooden constructions acquired in Istanbul the reputation of being both more resistant to shocks and the cause of less casualties in case of destruction. However, time and time again the public authorities in Istanbul tried to discourage and even to forbid the widespread use of timber as a basic building material. Time and time again official edicts were issued by the *kadı* of Istanbul to regulate the height of wooden houses, to limit the width of their eaves, to set standards concerning their roofing, to set the minimum distance between these types of houses, and so forth,[34] all in order to keep the risk of fires under control.

These efforts were to no avail, though, and the regulations could not be obeyed or upheld, for a very simple reason. First, the population at large could afford but the cheapest of building materials and, second, the number of available craftsmen such as stonemasons, carpenters, and brickmakers was limited. And a large number of these craftsmen were often commandeered for the building of a sultanic mosque, the repair of a fortress, and so forth, and wars often created shortages of masons and builders. Fires, large and small, continued to ravage the city. The havoc wrought in the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* by the two large fires that cut through Istanbul in 1660 and again in 1782 is proof that, as far as housing is concerned, wood continued to be the main building material throughout the centuries, at least in our neighborhood.

Only ten years after the fire that ravaged half of Istanbul in 1782, G. A. Olivier, a representative of the French government who traveled through the Ottoman Empire is surprised by the difference in the quality of the public and private buildings in Istanbul. His testimony confirms that nothing had really changed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries as far as building techniques were concerned. Olivier writes:

> The houses have a skeleton made of oak and this skeleton sits on foundations which are not very deep. The beams are either nailed or fitted with tenons. The empty spaces within the wooden structure are then filled with a sort of mortar made of a mixture of mud, hay and bits of hemp. The walls are covered on the outside with rather irregular painted planks. The roof is covered with long and half-cylindrical tiles similar to those we use in the south of France. In the houses the floors are always wooden. Only public and official buildings such as hans, hamams, bedestens etc. are ever built of solid blocks of stone."[35]

We shall return to the subject and to the destructions caused by fires.

As to the sixteenth-century wooden houses of Kasap İlyas, they were certainly not in a contiguous row, nor were they attached to each other. Almost all of the houses, even those qualified as *süflî*, seem to have had a garden, or at least a flower bed (*sofa*), or a plot of land of some sort. Out of the sixteen houses set up as a foundation in Kasap İlyas in the first half of the sixteenth century and whose descriptions are given in the deeds of trust, five had a small garden (*cüneyne*) and four of them a small vegetable garden (*bahçe)*. Two of these houses were flanked by stables (*ahır*) and one of them had even a vineyard (*kerm*). For another house, the deed of trust specifies that it was surrounded by just an empty plot of land (*arz-ı hâliye*).

The Bostans

There were also many larger vegetable gardens (*bostan*s) in sixteenth-century Kasap İlyas. One of these vegetable gardens, situated right in front of the Davudpaşa gate, was given as an endowment to a local pious foundation by one Kethüda Sinan in February 1515.[36] The planting of trees, and the sowing and reaping of fruits, vegetables, and flowers was an important activity in sixteenth-century Kasap İlyas. With the extensions of the large and neighboring Langa vegetable gardens penetrating right into our *mahalle*, and given that many of the gardens attached to the Kasap İlyas houses were also probably used as orchards and vegetable gardens, the area had an agricultural character, an almost semirural atmosphere. In many cases, the resident household units living enclosed in a more or less self-sufficient dwelling coincided with an agricultural unit of production. Many of the houses that had been donated to a local foundation in the early sixteenth-century Kasap İlyas *mahalle* had a water-well that went with it. These wells were used for watering the vegetable gardens and orchards rather than for drinking. Some of the wells also had, perhaps, a water wheel drawn by a horse, also used for ploughing, and put in adjoining stables, donated with the house.

As communications were slow and relatively scarce, most of the fresh fruit and vegetables consumed within the city of Istanbul came, until well into the twentieth century, from the many local vegetable gardens and orchards. These *bostan*s were located either within the quite sparsely populated walled city itself, or in its immediate surroundings. One of the largest vegetable gardens within the walled city was indeed that of Langa, immediately to the east of Kasap İlyas. These large Langa gardens extended right into our neighborhood. Most of the fruit and vegetable sellers in Istanbul were of the itinerant type and they carried and marketed the fresh fruit and vegetables to the areas of Istanbul where there were no nearby *bostan*s.

Just as the wharf, the presence of these vegetable gardens—which gave our "peripheral" neighborhood a quasirural appearance—also put their stamp on

the social and occupational structure of our neighborhood. This was so in the nineteenth century as well as in the sixteenth. Many fruit and vegetable street vendors lived in the vicinity of the large Langa and Davudpaşa vegetable gardens, which were a permanent source of provisioning for their retail trade. As we shall see, this group of street vendors came to be the backbone of the non-wage-earning population of Kasap İlyas in the late nineteenth century.

Besides the mosque, the *hamam*, and a few shops clustered around the mosque, what other public amenities did our neighborhood contain in the sixteenth century? Was there a bakery, for instance? We do not know for certain. Some of the houses donated in the sixteenth century had an oven or kiln (*furun*). If the baking could have been done at home, what about the wheat and the flour? There were some windmills in Istanbul in the sixteenth century and some of these were situated on the nearby windy hills overlooking the sea of Marmara. We also know that in the late eighteenth century there was a privately owned mill within our neighborhood and that this mill was donated to a foundation.[37] This is not sufficient evidence, however, to deduce that the locals used to systematically take their wheat to the mill and then to bake their bread at home.

As for other public amenities, we know that there was at least one public fountain for drinking water in the neighborhood in the first half of the sixteenth century. Drinking water had been brought to the neighborhood through the so-called Kırkçeşme (forty-fountain) water conduit system that was part of Soliman the Magnificent's foundation that provided waterways for Istanbul. That fountain was situated right in the middle of the *mahalle,* where the mosque, public bath, and shops were situated.[38] There was also another public fountain midway up the hill on the road that climbed from the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* toward the Davudpaşa mosque. It was probabaly connected to the same large system of water conduits. This second public fountain somehow disappeared in later centuries but nevertheless left a durable imprint on the *mahalle*, for the name of this fountain (*Yokuşçeşme*, i.e., "sloping fountain" or "fountain on the slope") was given to the same street. The street still bears the same name.

STREETS AND DEAD ENDS

Out of the sixteen houses set up as a foundation in Kasap İlyas in the first half of the sixteenth century and whose detailed descriptions are given in the deeds of trust, nine were surrounded by a wall on all sides. These houses, with their gardens, and all sorts of outhouses and extensions included therein, were enclosed, walled (*muhavvata*). This is a critical detail that allows to visualize more clearly the patterns of land use, the streets, and the general outlook of the *mahalle* in the sixteenth century.

There was no reason why these one-story houses whose gardens were surrounded by walls should be facing each other. Besides, only those that had a second floor (and these were quite rare, especially in Kasap İlyas) could be overlooking the street or the neighboring gardens. The presence of walled-in areas, of various gardens also meant that the houses were somewhat at a distance from each other. The gates or facades of these houses did not have to face each other or to run parallel to the street. They did not have to follow any preestablished symmetry, building plan, or pattern either. The plots of land on which these houses were built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were apparently of different sizes and of sometimes quite irregular shapes. The deeds of trust usually situate each house and plot of land by referring to the owners of the neighboring houses or plots. And some of the endowed properties in the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* had two neighbors, some three or four, and some even five. Some of the gardens and plots of land are described as being triangular. There was no clear cluster of houses, except perhaps just around the mosque itself and around the Davudpaşa *hamam* just across it. Houses were sparsely distributed over the neighborhood, and so were the inhabitants. A single house, donated in 1524, was described as being contiguous to another building, and that building was the Kasap İlyas mosque itself.

It appears that what is perceived nowadays as the "traditional Istanbul housing pattern" does not date from as far back as the sixteenth century, at least not in or around our *mahalle*. The almost canonical image of the two- or three-story wooden houses with tiled large eaves, overhangs, and latticed bay windows, all regularly lined up on narrow and badly cobbled winding streets is an image that dates from the late eighteenth century at the earliest. It was certainly not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that wooden houses of two or three stories spread beyond the wealthier areas around the seat of government and the markets. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century streets and housing patterns were very different, especially in a relatively peripheral neighborhood like Kasap İlyas.

Ottoman towns were not anarchic or sprawling but they were sketchily planned. When a new center was endowed and founded in Ottoman Istanbul in the inceptive fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the result could be only a new neighborhood made of wandering lanes governed by rigid laws of property. For there was no town planning that could have preexisted the settlements in the conquered city and no time for preestablishing an ideal grid of streets and settlements. When the Kasap İlyas *mahalle* came into being, for instance, the various buildings were certainly not erected according to the fixing of a street map or of any sort of development scheme. Just the opposite happened. For land was plentiful, both in Istanbul and in the whole Davudpaşa District. So, the Kasap İlyas mosque, the shops, and the *hamam* were probably built first. With them, or after them, came the houses with their gardens

and multiplicity of extensions and outhouses, and all of these, as we saw, were enclosed within a wall or a fence. The space that remained became the streets of the *mahalle.* All of the strictly private spaces were built up, and the public passageways of the neighborhood were then defined by default, so to speak.

It is highly doubtful that the modern concept and image of a "street" could in any way fit the situation in sixteenth-century Istanbul. This is especially true for those "peripheral" parts of the walled city which, like the Kasap İlyas *mahalle*, had salient rural characteristics. A low population density as well as an agricultural and horticultural outlook were, as a matter-of-fact, the lot of many other sixteenth-century neighborhoods of Ottoman Istanbul. Many neighborhoods in the area all along the land walls from the sea of Marmara to the Golden Horn and many of those—like Kasap İlyas—that were located along the walls bordering the sea, as well as those situated within the alluvial plain of the Bayrampaşa stream (the "Lycus valley" in Byzantine times) shared the same fate.

Public Thoroughfares *(Tarîk-i 'amm)*

These Istanbul "streets" that accompanied the formation of various *mahalle*s and that gradually took shape in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had to espouse the city's quite uneven ground and unusually hilly topography. There were, of course, a few main arteries whose location did not change from early Byzantine times.[39] Their configuration was essentially dictated by the crestline of the intramural Istanbul hills and by their relation to the surrounding sea and to the main gates of the city ramparts. The road that was (and is still) considered Kasap İlyas' "high street" was precisely one of those older roads. This Ottoman artery was superimposed upon the Byzantine road that went from the Forum Bovis, situated right in the middle of the city, to one of the main gates on the land walls. But apart from those very few main arteries that remained intact for centuries, it is unlikely that many of the secondary "streets" of old Istanbul could have retained for long the configuration that they had in the sixteenth century.

What did these "streets" of Kasap İlyas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries look like? First of all, they were unpaved, and therefore dusty in the summer and muddy in the rainy winters of Istanbul. The regular paving of the Istanbul streets began to be considered a normal municipal activity only after the 1850s. Before that, if streets were to be paved the expense had to be paid by the locals,[40] and it is improbable that the modest dwellers of Kasap İlyas could have afforded that expense. Second, these "streets" did not necessarily have the same width; they could be quite narrow at some points and uselessly wide at others. The attempts at regulating the width of Istanbul