

Privilege granted to the Genoese colony of Galata by Mehmed II the Conqueror, 1453

This is the covenant of the tributary non-Muslims of Galata, granted [to them] by Sultan Mehmed Khan the Conqueror upon his conquest of Istanbul. It was written in Greek and bears the Imperial cipher

I, who am the Great Sovereign and the Great Sovereign of Sovereigns, Sultan Mehmed Khan, son of Sultan Murad, give my solemn oath unto God, Creator of the earth and heavens, by the enlightened and pure soul of His Messenger, and by the Koran, and by the hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets, and by the souls of my grandfather and my father, and my own life and my sons' lives, and by the sword I am wearing, that since the inhabitants of Galata and their notables have sent in friendship to my Sublime Threshold their envoys with the keys of the aforementioned fortress and since they have accepted to become my subjects, I on my side agree that they may continue their rites and customs as before, and that I will not march on them and demolish their walls and fortress. I have ordered that their wealth, their means of subsistence, their property, their warehouses, their vineyards, their mills, their ships, their boats, and all their goods, and their wives, their little sons, and their slaves both male and female should remain in their hands and that I should not vex them or molest them; and that they should pursue their livelihood like [those] in my other dominions, that they should travel by sea and by land without anyone hindering or molesting them; that they should be held exempt and admitted by all; that I will impose upon them the Islamic poll tax [which] they will pay form year to year like the others and I [in return] will not deprive them from my imperial care and I will protect them like [those] in my other domains; and that their churches should remain in their hands, that they should practice their rites, but that they should not ring their bells; and that I shall not take their churches and turn them into mosques; and that they, in turn, shall not build new churches; and that Genoese merchants should pursue their livelihood by sea and land and [be allowed to] come and go, paying their customs dues according to established rules, and that no one should molest them. And I have ordered that I shall not take any [of their] boys as Janissaries, and that no one should convert any infidel to Islam against his will, and that they should choose whomever they wish from among themselves as a steward to represent their interests, and I have ordered that no falconer or any of my servants should stay at their homes; and that the inhabitants and merchants of the aforementioned fortress be exempt and free from forced labor. Let it be known by all and may they put trust in my imperial cipher. Written in the third decade of [the month of ] Djumada'l-ula of the year eight hundred and fifty seven