

Activities - "Banks Street" - The Exhibition of Voyvoda Street from the Ottoman Period to Our Days

The narrow street alongside the inner walls of Galata which Evliya Çelebi calls "the Voyvoda's way" in his seventeenth-century travel account became, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the financial and commercial heart of Istanbul and even of the whole Ottoman Empire. It is during this period that this street, swarmed by bankers and newly established banks, earned its nickname oft "Banks Street". With the establishment of major insurance companies, law firms, architects, the Tobacco Regie and a number of commercial and industrial enterprises, the street acquired the imposing aspect it has been able to preserve to this day. Banks Street remained a major pole of the economic life of Istanbul well into the Republic. Although it has lost some of its importance in the 1990s after the gradual move of the major banks' and insurance companies' headquarters to Maslak, the street remains one of the most lively and dynamic areas of Istanbul today.



The Ottoman Bank, as one of the oldest residents of the street, and in collaboration with the Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey, inaugurated an exhibition on the major transformations of Banks Street. Prepared by Edhem Eldem and Bülent Erkmen, the exhibition on 26th October at the Ottoman Bank's former head office. During the three months (until 11th February 2001) exhibition, visitors were able to admire the façades on both sides of the street, to read stories about these buildings and their residents, and to listen to the memories of present former residents.