

# **THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST OF THE BALKANS**

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Editor: OLIVER JENS SCHMITT



## FOREWORD

The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans is one of the great upheavals in the history of Southeast Europe. Amazingly, it is rarely seen in context. Research is accordingly fragmented. The Bucharest conference of the *Association internationale d'études du Sud-Est européen* provided the appropriate framework for bundling recent research on this topic. Colleagues from Bosnia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania accepted the invitation. The contributors are grateful that the *Revue des études sud-est européennes* enables the publication of the most important contributions of this panel. The essays address several questions:

- 1) The question of space: how is the process of conquest to be placed in an European context? How did the Ottomans, as the new masters, structure the conquered space and what significance do Islamic religious foundations, which are the backbone of every Islamic dominated society, have?
- 2) What insight do actor-centered approaches offer? Structuralist research has long neglected agents and agencies. Now individuals reappear in research. In this vein, the regional nobility is examined, both the Muslim regional elites (uç beys) and the Christian (Orthodox and Catholic) nobility. It becomes clear how the conquest radically transformed an old world, but did not destroy all structures of the Balkan Christian societies: contacts existed across the conflict boundaries, even if these should not be confused with peaceful relationships. The conquest also triggered great waves of refugees and created a political diaspora in Catholic Europe. The role of Hungary has often been overlooked by research often focused on Italy and particularly Venice. Here it is analyzed in detail.
- 3) The final Ottoman conquest was usually preceded by decades of Ottoman raids. This turmoil affected large parts of the Balkans. The consequences of the deliberate destabilization of the Christian Balkan states on trade and the economy have rarely been examined. The analysis of the Balkan caravan trade reveals how much the Ottoman raids affected the hurtled regions in their economic development. The wearing down of the regional population is one of the explanations for the ultimate success of the Ottoman conquest.

Of course, these three approaches do not exhaust the wealth of questions on the topic. In their bundled form, however, they give the reader an impression of ongoing debates. Hopefully they will also give impetus to further research on an era that has profoundly transformed the Balkans.

*Oliver Jens Schmitt*



# THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST OF THE BALKANS AND ITS HISTORICAL ARENAS: ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REGIONAL AND SUPRAREGIONAL HISTORY

OLIVER JENS SCHMITT  
(Austrian Academy of Sciences, ÖAW)

The article aims at interpreting the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans as a major historical process in a larger spatial context. It discusses the late Medieval Balkans as a space that was interrelated with surrounding political and cultural spaces from the Adriatic to Anatolia and from the Black Sea area to the Aegean basin with a special focus on migration and diaspora groups.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Empire; Late Medieval Balkans; spatial methods.

The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans was not a single event, but a process lasting from the mid-fourteenth to the late fifteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> It is thus one of the

<sup>1</sup> The general bibliography is not easily summarised due to a lack of an overall survey. Here some of the more important works are listed. Unfairly overlooked due to its appearance shortly before the fall of the Iron Curtain and its language: R.A. Mihneva/H. Matanov, *Ot Galipoli do Lepanto. Balkanite, Evropa i osmanskoto našestvie 1354–1571 g.*, Sofia 1988; a Marxist account but with many important observations that has largely been neglected recently, also for linguistic reasons: E. Werner, *Die Geburt einer Großmacht. Die Osmanen (1300–1481). Ein Beitrag zur Genesis des türkischen Feudalismus*, Berlin (Ost) <sup>2</sup>1972; too little attention has also been paid to the works of the Leipzig Byzantinist K.-P. Matschke, “Research Problems Concerning the Transitions to Tourkokratia. The Byzantinist Standpoint”, in: F. Adanır/S. Faroqhi (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans. A Discussion of Historiography*, Leiden 2002, p. 79–113; K.-P. Matschke, “Der Übergang vom byzantinischen Jahrtausend zur Turkokratie und die Entwicklung der südosteuropäischen Region”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas* 1, 1999, p. 11–38; still a foundational work of Ottoman studies: H. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300–1600*. London 1973; the most recent collection of conference papers: S. Rudić/S. Aslantaş (eds.), *State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, Belgrade, 2017; the most recent attempt at a synthesis: M. Kiel, “The Incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire, 1353–1453”, in: K. Fleet (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey, 1071–1453*, ed. 1: *Byzantium to Turkey*, Cambridge, 2009, p. 138–191; M. Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria in the Turkish Period*, Assen, Maastricht, 1985; idem, *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*, Istanbul 1990; H. Kalessi, “Das türkische Vordringen auf dem Balkan und die Islamisierung. Faktoren für die Erhaltung der ethnischen und nationalen Existenz des albanischen Volkes”, in: P. Bartl (ed.), *Südosteuropa unter dem Halbmond. Untersuchungen über Geschichte und Kultur der südosteuropäischen Völker während der Türkenzeit*, Munich, 1975, p. 125–138, an important interpretation due its positive assessment of the Ottoman conquest from the national perspective of the Islamised Albanians; H.W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, Albany/NY. 2003; for early Ottoman history, see: I. Beldiceanu-Steinherr, *Recherches sur les actes des règnes des sultans Osman*,

great phases of upheaval in European, Mediterranean and Eurasian history. In the context of the history of the Balkans, the profound transformations of this epoch are matched only by the collapse and reshaping of the Roman Empire during the transition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. Regardless of how one assesses the transformation, there is no denying that politically, the Balkan region post-1500 was completely revolutionised compared to the early fourteenth century and that significant demographic, ethnic and cultural shifts were already becoming apparent and would later undergo further intensification in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There were also radical changes in property relations, land law and large parts of the economy (trade, the diversion of certain flows of goods such as precious metals). Society too experienced huge upheaval in the form of mass flight, the destruction of further sub-regions (but not the wider region itself), the rise of new elites, migration, particularly from Anatolia, and the beginnings of the Islamisation. It is impossible to make simple or sweeping statements simply due to the conquest's duration: over 150 years, the actors changed, both the Ottoman Empire, which under Bayezid II had little to do with the groups of warriors of an Orhan, and the many regional medium-sized, small and petty dominions.

But changes were also afoot in the world itself, in whose context the Ottoman conquest must be considered. For our topic cannot be examined only as regional history – although the regional historical approach is clearly eminent: research hitherto has always suffered from favouring only the one visual axis. The conquest has only been examined from the perspective of the Ottoman Empire or its subjugated opponents, the Byzantine Empire and the many Balkan dominions; or from the perspective of Crusader studies, or Mediterranean studies with its subdivisions of Venetian, Genovese and Catalan history, or research on the Order of St. John.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the conquest of the Balkans is also part of East-Central

*Orkhan et Murad I*, Munich, 1967; eadem, *Études ottomano-byzantines*, Istanbul, 2015; R.P. Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia*. Bloomington, 1983; K. Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds. The Construction of the Ottoman State*, Berkeley, 1995; P. Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, London, 1938, important for the 'Gazi theory'; still stimulating theoretically: S. Vryonis Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1971; for my own approaches: O.J. Schmitt, "Südosteuropa im Spätmittelalter. Akkulturation – Integration – Inkorporation?" in: R. Härtel (ed.), *Akkulturation im Mittelalter*, Ostfildern, 2014, p. 81–136; O.J. Schmitt (ed.), *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans. Interpretations and Research Debates*, Vienna, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> A selection of the proliferous literature: K.M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, vols. 1–2, Philadelphia, 1976–1979; N. Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580*, Cambridge, 1992; idem, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, Oxford, 2012; N. Housley (ed.), *The Crusade in the Fifteenth Century. Converging and competing cultures*, London/New York, 2017; idem, *Reconfiguring the Fifteenth-Century Crusade*, London, 2019; B. Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs. Les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Rome, 2013; D.M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, Cambridge, 1988; E. Orlando, *Venezia e il mare nel Medioevo*, Bologna, 2014; E. Ivetic, *Storia dell'Adriatico*, Bologna, 2019; G. Ortalli/O.J. Schmitt/E. Orlando (eds.), *Balcani occidentali, Adriatico e Venezia fra XIII e XVIII secolo*, Venice–Vienna, 2008; U. Israel/O.J. Schmitt (eds.), *Venezia e Dalmazia*, Rome, 2013; M. O'Connell, *Men of Empire. Power and Negotiation in Venice's Maritime State*, Baltimore, 2009; M. Balard, *Gênes et la*

European history and must therefore be understood especially from the perspective of the kingdom it affected most, the Lands of the Hungarian Crown.<sup>3</sup> But we must also look to Anatolia, the Levant and Iran, firstly, because the Balkans were just one, albeit a very important part of the Ottoman Empire and, secondly, because the Anatolian emirates (especially Karaman, but before it also Aydın, Menteşe, Saruhan and İsfendiyar on the Black Sea), the fifteenth-century White Sheep Turkomans, and around 1500 the growing Safavid Empire were sought-after allies of the Balkan and Southern and Central European states (principally Venice and Hungary), and later the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>4</sup>

This brief survey leads us to the main focus of this essay: the aim is to examine the age of conquest in its spatial dimension: regional history and supraregional history; the Balkans and Anatolia – where relevant to the Balkans – in their broader spatial contexts; but also the question of shifting border regions. The spatial dimension cannot be separated from the actors – and this analysis shall not indulge in simple geodeterminism.

In Ottoman studies, spatial approaches to the age of conquest are characterised by the link between architectural research and the analysis of administrative sources, mainly from a local and small-scale regional perspective.<sup>5</sup> The present

*mer/Genova e il mare*, Genoa, 2017; G. Pistarino, *I signori del mare*, Genoa, 1992; more recent works on the Catalans in the eastern Mediterranean: D. Duran i Duelt, “Los ducados de Atenas y Neopatra en el comercio regional e internacional durante la dominación catalana (siglo XIV) I. El comercio regional a través del observatorio de Candía”, *Estudios bizantinos* 6, 2018, p. 111–146; idem, “Los ducados de Atenas y Neopatra en el comercio regional e internacional durante la dominación catalana (siglo XIV) II. El comercio de larga distancia a través del observatorio de Barcelona y Mallorca”, *Estudios bizantinos* 7, 2019, p. 85–118, A. Luttrell, *The Hospitaller State of Rhodes and its Western Provinces, 1306–1522*, Aldershot, 1999; idem, *The Hospitallers of Rhodes in Their Mediterranean World*, Aldershot 1992; Z. Tsirpanles, *Η Πόδος και οι νότιες Σποράδες στα χρόνια των Ιωαννιτών ιπποτών*, Rhodos, 1991; N. Vatin, *L'ordre de Saint-Jean-de-Jérusalem, l'Empire ottoman et la Méditerranée orientale entre les deux sièges de Rhodes (1480–1522)*, Leuven – Paris, 1994; idem, *Les Ottomans et l'Occident (XV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Istanbul, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> T. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács. A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare*, Leiden – Boston, 2018; J.K. Hoensch, *Sigismund von Luxemburg*, Munich, 1996; idem, *Matthias Corvinus*, Graz 1998; Ch. Gastgeber et al. (eds.), *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit*, Vienna, 2011; M. Jászay, “Contrastes et diplomatie dans les rapports de Mathias I<sup>er</sup> Corvin et la République de Venise”, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 35, 1989, p. 3–39; G. Rászó, “Die Türkenpolitik Matthias’ Corvinus”, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32, 1986, p. 3–50; A. Dumitran/L. Mádly/Al. Simon (eds.), *Extincta est lucerna orbis. John Hunyadi and His Time. In memoriam Zsigmond Jakó*, Cluj-Napoca, 2009; L. Koszta et al. (eds.), *Stephen the Great and Matthias Corvinus*, Cluj-Napoca, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> E.A. Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade, Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydın (1300–1415)*, Vienna, 1983; B. von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte um Persien 1453–1600*, Wiesbaden, 1968; A.M. Piemontese, “La représentation de Uzun Hasan sur scène à Rome (2 mars 1473)”, *Turcica* 21–23, 1991, p. 191–203; G. Rota, *Under Two Lions. On the Knowledge of Persia in the Republic of Venice (ca. 1450–1797)*, Vienna, 2009; G. Boykov, “Anatolian Emir in Rumelia: İsfendiyaroğlu İsmail Bey’s Architectural patronage and Governorship of Filibe (1460s–1470s)” *Bulgarian Historical Review* 2013/1–2, p. 13–47.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the foundational studies by Machiel Kiels, now available as a Bulgarian volume of his complete works: M. Kijl, *Bălgarija pod osmanska vlast. Săbrani săčinenija*, ed. M. Barămoval

study is concerned with something quite different: it seeks to determine in which spatial framework the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans must be placed. This implies a supraregional approach that extends beyond the Balkans in the narrower sense. A second, related question considers how the conquest's spatial dimension can be conceived on the regional level. Space is understood here as an arena of events, as a place where political, military and transformations take place. Although this means focusing less on the socio-economic and cultural upheavals, the study seeks to understand the interrelationship of several large geopolitical fields, and ultimately the dynamics of frontier regions.

Such an approach renders it impossible to go into fine detail. It must also be noted that a holistic model is not proposed; rather, this examination should function alongside explanatory models pursuing institutional continuity and discontinuity, questions of land and tax law, demography or the (in) significance of Islamic religious war.<sup>6</sup> In close reciprocity with the spatial dimension, greater focus can be placed on political and military aspects than has been the case in the prior socioeconomic analyses or studies in the fields of cultural history or the history of religion.

Regional and supraregional history are closely intertwined in the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans: this is apparent if we consider the two ancient parts of the Byzantine Empire, the west (Dysis) and Asia Minor, or Rumelia and Anadolu, in the Ottoman spatial logic<sup>7</sup>. Until most of the regional states were done away with under Mehmed II, the Ottoman's regional opponents in the Balkans and Asia Minor (especially Karaman, İsfendiyar and the White Sheep Turkomans) first formed ties over the Aegean. Later, such arrangements would extend principally over the Black Sea, Mircea the Elder's Walachia taking on particular importance as it sought to compensate for its exposed position with Pontic alliances from the early fifteenth century onwards.<sup>8</sup>

Entangled regional history must also consider the marriages between the Ottomans and regional ruling dynasties, which became increasingly asymmetrical; what was initially an attempt by Orthodox princes (Byzantium, Bulgaria) to hem in the Ottomans increasingly developed into delivery of Orthodox princesses to the sultan's harem. This mirrored the decline of the Orthodox princes, from John VI Kantakouzenos or the Bulgarian tsar Ivan Alexander to the Serbian despot

G. Bojkov/M. Kiprovska, Sofia, 2017; see also the studies by H.W. Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans 1350–1500. The Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece*, Istanbul, 2008; H.W. Lowry/İ.E. Erünsal, *Notes & Documents on the Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar (Giannitsa)*, Istanbul, 2009; H.W. Lowry/İ.E. Erünsal, "The Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar. A Postscript", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 34, 2009, p. 131–208.

<sup>6</sup> Besides the studies by Matschke, see also fn. 1, on the discussion of the research, in O.J. Schmitt, "Introduction", in: Schmitt, *Ottoman Conquest*, p. 7–44; a comprehensive study of the Islamisation: A. Popović/G. Grivaud (eds.), *Les conversions à l'Islam en Asie Mineure et dans les Balkans aux époques seldjoukide et ottomane. Bibliographie raisonnée (1800–2000)*, Athens, 2011; on the institutional history approach, see: H. İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", *Studia Islamica* 2, 1954, p. 103–129.

<sup>7</sup> B. Geyer/J. Lefort (eds.), *La Bithynie au Moyen Âge*, Paris, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> T. Gemil, *Româniî și Otomanii în secolele XIV–XVI*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 92 ff.

George Branković.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note however, that also petty regional ruler lords such as Carlo I Tocco gifted (illegitimate) daughters to the harem (in this case to Sultan Musa) in exchange for auxiliary troops for regional battles with Christian opponents. Incidentally, after Musa's death, Tocco gave the same girl as a wife to an Ottoman officer who was an acolyte of Musa's successor Mehmed and, most importantly, the brother of an influential courtier. Petty regional lords used marriages at all levels of power, and Tocco proved to be particularly agile in his manoeuvres.<sup>10</sup>

In this connection, there were also reciprocal interventions in wars of succession; the Ottomans, specifically the regional border commanders/uç beys, were often called upon as auxiliary troops by the Balkan princes. This practice began under John VI and continued for decades. From Walachia to Bosnia, the Ottomans also installed well-disposed princes (in Walachia for instance Vlad in opposition to Mircea the Elder, or Radu Praznaglava, Radu the Handsome). In Bosnia, they also appointed counter-kings (for instance Ikač, Tvrtko II, Radivoj Ostojić)<sup>11</sup>. It is often overlooked however that Serbian, Walachian and Byzantine rulers intervened in internal challenges to the Ottoman throne. A particularly striking example is the alliance the two princes Andronikos (IV) Palaiologos and Savci struck up against their fathers John V and Murad I in 1373. But Manuel II Palaiologos, Mircea the Elder of Walachia, Vuk and Stefan Lazarević and Georg Branković intervened in the Ottoman Civil War of 1403–1413, and in 1410 the Orthodox rulers of Byzantium and Walachia even supported different Ottoman pretenders. In 1416 and again following Mehmed I's death, Byzantium attempted to nominate candidates to the Ottoman throne and to influence Ottoman domestic policy, as did Walachia in 1416, with drastic consequences. There was no shortage of Ottoman princes seeking protection and assistance from their Orthodox neighbours: one need only think of Bayezid I's son Yusuf, who after his father's defeat at Ankara fled to Constantinople and converted to Christianity, adopting the name Demetrios, or Orhan, who lived in Constantinople around 1450 and for whose keep the last Byzantine emperor demanded an enormous apanage from the young Mehmed II. Orhan fought against Mehmed II on 29 May 1453 and died fleeing when the city fell. Several Ottoman pretenders requested and received occasional help from Byzantine, Serbian and Walachian princes during the Civil War of 1402–1413, and the two Mustafas benefited equally from the support of

<sup>9</sup> M.St. Popović, Mara Branković, *Eine Frau zwischen dem christlichen und dem islamischen Kulturkreis im 15. Jahrhundert*, Ruhpolding, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> G. Schirò, *Cronaca dei Tocco di Cefalonia*, Rome, 1975, vv. 1916–1922; 3079–3083.

<sup>11</sup> O. Cristea, "The Friend of my Friend and the Enemy of my Enemy: Romanian Participation in Ottoman Campaigns", in: G. Kármán/L. Kunčević (eds.), *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Leiden/Boston, 2013, p. 253–274; N. Pienaru, "Les Pays Roumains et le Proche-Orient (1420–1429) I", *Revue roumaine d'histoire* 28/3, 1989, p. 189–207, and II. *Revue roumaine d'histoire* 29/1–2, 1990, p. 69–103, here part I, p. 190–200; E.O. Filipović, *Bosansko kraljevstvo i Osmansko carstvo (1386–1463)*, Sarajevo, 2019, p. 160–165; 309–310; L. von Thallóczy, "Radivoj, Sohn des Königs Ostoja von Bosnien 1429–1463", in: idem, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter*, München/Leipzig, 1914, p. 79–109.

Orthodox regional rulers. Mustafa, a son of Bayezid I (whose belonging to the dynasty was contested) was supported by Mircea the Elder I. Upon being defeated, he fled to Saloniki in Byzantium, where he was then held in honourable captivity on the island of Lemnos before contesting the Ottoman throne after Mehmed's death in 1421. In this manoeuvre, he was assisted by Byzantium and at times by the Rumelian border commanders and Sipahi; defeated, however, he was executed after his capture en route to Walachia, a principality of immense importance to Ottoman domestic policy. Almost concurrently, the second Mustafa, Murad II's brother, lost his battle for power in 1422 and fled briefly to Constantinople. As a footnote to this Ottoman–Orthodox entanglement, it is worth noting that in 1421, the dying Sultan Mehmed I placed two of his sons in the protection of the Byzantine emperor Manuel II, fearing fratricide.<sup>12</sup>

Ottoman princes turned to west in hope of military support quite early on. For instance, Davud Çelebi, probably a grandson of Savci, the rebel of 1373, resided at the court of Emperor Sigismund, who soon deployed him in Walachia and in Albania soon thereafter. In 1448, he fought with John Hunyadi at Kosovo polje. Bayezid Osman or Calixtus Ottomanus, as Davud a predecessor to Cem Sultan, one of the great figures of the Renaissance, also attained great renown.<sup>13</sup> It is therefore important to emphasise that there were pro-Ottoman groups at all regional courts, but also members of the Ottoman dynasty and uç beys who collaborated with or were used by Christian lords.

It is impossible to provide more than this brief outline of entanglement<sup>14</sup> – but the Balkan–Anatolian political world was not without its grey areas; while fronts existed, they changed often and the political actors did not operate within simple categories like Christian/Muslim, not that they were not profoundly aware of these categories.<sup>15</sup> Despite the close ties between actors, one thing is certain:

<sup>12</sup> E. Trapp *et al.*, *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, 15 vols. Vienna, 1976–1995, no. 9082 (Jusuf-Demetrios); no. 21133 (Orhan); *Encyclopedia of Islam* (online), C.J. Heywood, Lemma “Mustafa Düzme”, and *ibid.*, Lemma “Mustafa Çelebi”.

<sup>13</sup> F. Babinger, “Dâwûd Çelebi, ein osmanischer Thronwerber des 15. Jahrhunderts”, *Südost-Forschungen* 16, 1957, p. 297–231; idem “Bajeziid Osman (Calixtus Ottomanus), ein Vorläufer und Gegenspieler Dschem-Sultans”, *La Nouvelle Clio* 3, 1951, p. 349–388; N. Vatin, *Sultan Djem. Un prince ottoman dans l'Europe du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après deux sources contemporaines*, Ankara, 1997; idem, “L'affaire Djem (1481–1495)”, in: idem, *Les Ottomans et l'Occident (XV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Istanbul, 2001, p. 93–103, on Cem, most recently L. Horsch, “Prinz Cem an der Kurie (1489–1495). Ein Beitrag zur Wahrnehmung der Türken im Zeitalter der Renaissance”, *Südost-Forschungen* 77, 2018, p. 137–175.

<sup>14</sup> An extensive study is in preparation for *Travaux et mémoires*.

<sup>15</sup> The Ottoman vassal Konstantin Dragaš is said to have shouted to the Orthodox princes of Walachia at Rovine, “I pray to God that he may help the Christians, I want to be the first to die in this battle”; M. Braun, *Lebensbeschreibung des Despoten Stefan Lazarević von Konstantin dem Philosophen*, s'Gravenhage, 1956, p. 12–13; the Despot of Serbia Stefan Lazarević, prior to 1402 a loyal follower of the Ottomans whose armoured cavalry had decided the battle of Nikopolis in 1396 and who had fought to the end for Bayezid, professed to Venice in 1406 that he wanted to be a “good

ultimately, the regional petty states had disappeared, the Ottoman Empire had conquered the Balkans, but until the late fifteenth century, from the institutions to the elites, in many respects one might observe, albeit somewhat exaggeratedly: *Haemus captus victorem cepit*.<sup>16</sup>

This Balkan–Anatolian conflict area was bound up with three European political spaces, the fundamental constellations of which shall be outlined in the following. All three corresponded to actual conflict zones that largely determined how the European powers reacted towards Ottoman expansion and also explain why Catholic Europe never opted for a coordinated response. While each of the three spaces are dealt with separately, their analysis will demonstrate that they were closely intertwined.

1) Firstly, we can observe an *Adriatic conflict zone* in which Hungary, Venice and Naples jostled for hegemony, especially in the Southern Adriatic and the East Adriatic coast. These powers' mutual distrust dating back to the High Middle Ages (one need only think of the Norman–Venetian antagonism during the late eleventh century) often prevented collective campaigns against the Ottomans – *pars pro toto* examples would be King Sigismund's wars with Venice (1411–1413 and 1418–1420), the Byzantine attempts to mediate between Hungary and Venice under the emperors Manuel II and John VIII, the latter visiting Venice and Ofen/Buda in 1423/24, but also the Venetian–Hungarian contest for Dalmatia

Christian" once more despite having been an Ottoman vassal; G. Valentini, *Acta Albaniae Veneta saeculorum XIV et XV*, vol. 3, Munich/Palermo 1968, no. 1188.

<sup>16</sup> K.-P. Matschke, *Die Schlacht von Ankara und das Schicksal von Byzanz. Studien zur spätbyzantinischen Geschichte zwischen 1402 und 1422*, Weimar, 1981; a comprehensive portrayal of the Balkan–Anatolian entanglement in the Ottoman Civil War is provided by D.J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid. Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–1413*, Leiden, Boston, 2007; A. Pippidi, "Taking Possession of Wallachia: Facts and Interpretations", in: Schmitt, *Ottoman Conquest*, p. 189–208; L. Pilat/O. Cristea, *The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th Century*, Leiden, 2018; M.M. Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru, "Les relations du prince de Valachie Mircea l'Ancien avec les émirs seldjoukides d'Anatolie et leur candidat Musa au trône ottoman", *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6/10–11, 1968, p. 113–125; N. Pienaru, "Români și tatarii. Relațiile Țării Românești cu Hoarda de Aur în vremea lui Mircea cel Bătrân", in: O. Cristea (ed.), *Vocația istoriei. Prinos profesorului Șerban Papacostea*, Bucharest, 2008, p. 297–330; idem, "Les pays roumains et le Proche Orient (1420–1429)", *Revue roumaine d'histoire* 28, 1989, p. 189–207 and 29, 1990, p. 63–103; idem, "Relațiile lui Mircea cel Bătrân cu emiratul pontic Candar-oğulları", *Revista istorică* 7/7–8, 1996, p. 483–510; C. Imber, "The Role of Dynastic Politics in the Ottoman Conquest of the Balkan Peninsula", in: G. Dančev et al. (eds.), *Turskîte zavoevanija i sâdbata na balkanskite narodi, otrazeni v istoričeski i literaturni pametnici ot XIV–XV vek. Meždunarodna naučna konferencija, Veliko Târnovo, 20–22 maj 1987 godina*, Veliko Târnovo, 1992, p. 113–116; E.A. Zachariadou, "Les Tocco: seigneurs, vassaux, otages, rênégats", *Ankara Üniversitesi Güneydoğu Avrupa çalışmaları uygulama ve araştırma merkezi* 1, 2012, p. 11–22; M. Balivet, "Le personnage du « turcophile » dans les sources byzantines antérieures au concile de Florence (1370)–1430)", in idem, *Byzantins et Ottomans: Relations, interaction, succession*, Istanbul, 1999, p. 31–47; A. Krstić, "Which Realm Will You Opt For? – The Serbian Nobility between the Ottomans and the Hungarians in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century", in: S. Rudić/ S. Aslantaş (eds.), *State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, Belgrade, 2017, p. 129–163.

under Matthias Corvinus, during the long Ottoman war of 1463–1479. Regional lords also became embroiled in the Hungarian–Venetian conflict, either as victims of antagonism between the two great powers or as beneficiaries – but the Ottomans always profited from the situation: in 1418–1420, Venice fought not only against King Sigismund, but also in Northern Albania against the regional ruler Balsha III and his heir, the Serbian despot Stefan Lazarević. A vassal of Hungary and the Ottomans, Lazarević remained a target for Venice in subsequent years. Consider too the attempt by Bosnian king Tvrtko II to align himself with Venice and, after this policy failed, to turn to Hungary (1424) – and the Ottomans’ punishment of their insubordinate vassal.<sup>17</sup>

An equally persistent conflict was that between Venice and Naples in the mid-fifteenth century over control of the Strait of Otranto and Alfons V of Aragon’s Neapolitan plans for the Balkans, namely to establish a chain of vassals from Herzegovina, through the Albania of Skanderbeg and the Araniti down to the Despotate of the Morea, thus challenging the *dominium maris* and with it the Republic’s lifeblood. Indeed, these manoeuvres posed a greater threat to Venice than Alfons’ lofty designs on the imperial Byzantine throne. But another source of conflict was the Italian Pentarchy, the extremely fragile balance of power between Venice, Milan, Florence, the Papal States and Naples established by the Treaty of Lodi (1454) and the Italian League (1455).<sup>18</sup>

The Hungarian – Venetian – Neapolitan Adriatic complex thus had a geopolitical impact on Italian domestic policy, which in many respects reacted to the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. The Ottoman threat was both a rhetorical and

<sup>17</sup> W. von Stromer, “Landmacht gegen Seemacht. Kaiser Sigismunds Kontinentalsperre gegen Venedig 1412–1433”, *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 22/2, 1995, p. 145–189; F.-R. Erkens, “...Und will ein grosse Reise do tun’. Überlegungen zur Balkan- und Orientpolitik Sigismunds von Luxemburg”, in: J. Helmroth et al. (ed.), *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Erich Meuthen*, Munich, 1994, p. 739–762; G. Beckmann, *Der Kampf Kaiser Sigismunds gegen die werdende Weltmacht der Osmanen 1392–1437*, Gotha, 1902; M. Wakounig, *Dalmatien und Friaul. Die Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Sigismund von Luxemburg und der Republik Venedig um die Vorherrschaft im adriatischen Raum*. Wien 1990; O.J. Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien 1392–1479*, Munich, 2001, p. 271–274; E.O. Filipović, *Bosansko kraljevstvo i Osmansko carstvo (1386–1463)*, Sarajevo, 2019, p. 280–281.

<sup>18</sup> N. Rubinstein, “Das politische System Italiens in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts”, in: P. Moraw (ed.), *“Bündnissysteme” und “Außenpolitik” im späteren Mittelalter*, Berlin, 1988, p. 105–119; R. Fubini, “Lega italica e ‘politica dell’equilibrio’ all’avvento di Lorenzo de Medici al potere” *Rivista storica italiana* 105, 1993, p. 373–410; F. Babinger, “Sechs unbekannt aragonische Sendschreiben”, in: idem, *Spätmittelalterliche fränkische Briefschaften aus dem großherrslichen Seraj zu Stambul*, Munich, 1963, p. 76–95; C. Marinesco, “Alphonse V, roi d’Aragon et de Naples, et l’Albanie de Skanderbeg” *Mélanges de l’Ecole Roumaine en France*, 1, 1923, p. 1–135; idem, *La politique orientale d’Alfonse V d’Aragon, roi de Naples (1416–1458)*, Barcelona, 1994; A. Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous. King of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, 1396–1458*, Oxford, 1994; M. Jacoviello, “Relazioni politiche tra Venezia e Napoli nella seconda metà del XV secolo”, *Archivio storico per le province napoletane* 96, 1981, p. 67–133; M. Jacoviello, *Venezia e Napoli nel Quattrocento*, Napoli, 1992; O.J. Schmitt, “Skanderbegs letzte Jahre – west-östliches Wechselspiel von Diplomatie und Krieg (1464–1468)”, *Südost-Forschungen* 63/64, 2004/2005, p. 56–123.

a real-political instrument for pacifying Italian domestic conflict, leading to Lodi and its renewal (1470). The popes were the driving force behind this domestic coordination, albeit not the decisive players. The post-conciliar papacy's Ottoman policy at times revolved around commitment to crusades (especially under Calixtus III and Pius II), but it also attempted to strengthen its own standing as a territorial state in Italy. Crusades were thus a papal means of conducting a domestic policy seeking to stabilize Italy, the pope acting as the peninsula's mediator, a role many states were happy to recognize. Although they had emerged from the shock of 1453 and the fall of Negroponte in 1470, the leagues were more about Italian domestic compromise than decidedly anti-Ottoman manoeuvring. This entanglement of domestic policy and war with the Turks, further complicated by the leadership conflict between the pope and his close acquaintance Emperor Frederick III and the system of imperial diets proliferating throughout Europe, was particularly evident in the Congress of Mantua called by Pius II in 1459.<sup>19</sup> However, Italian domestic diplomacy was rendered more complex by the Ottoman threat, which became a lever of Italian domestic policy. All of the states cultivated their own relations with the Ottoman Empire, not only those with policies directly related to the Balkans (Venice, Naples, and to a lesser extent the Papal States, although their activity in this area was rather crusading than territorial), but also Florence, Milan or Mantua, which were not involved in conflict in the Balkans, but certainly desired Ottoman pressure on their Italian opponents (e.g. Milan versus Venice, but also Naples versus Venice) and moreover had their own trade interests in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>20</sup> Genoa was a special case: in the fourteenth century, the Republic had been in tough competition with Venice in the Levant and fought many wars with the Signoria for control of the straits and the Black Sea trade (most decisively during the Chioggia War of 1378–1381). After 1381 however, the mother city found itself increasingly in crisis, having to accept foreign rule under the French and the Milanese Visconti, and thus its influence in Italy as an independent power was limited. Around 1450, the threat to Ligurian maritime trade was no longer

<sup>19</sup> A. Calzona / F.P. Fiore / A. Tenenti / C. Vasoli (eds.), *Il sogno di Pio II e il viaggio da Roma a Mantova*, Città di Castello, 2003; G.B. Picotti, *La dieta di Mantova e la politica de' Veneziani*, Venice, 1912; C. Märkl, *Kardinal Jean Jouffroy (†1473). Leben und Werk*, Sigmaringen, 1996, p. 100–113; J. Helmuth, "Pius II. und die Türken", in: B. Guthmüller / W. Kühmann (ed.), *Europa und die Türken*, Tübingen, 2000, p. 79–137.

<sup>20</sup> F. Babinger, "Lorenzo de' Medici e la corte ottomana", *Archivio storico italiano* 121/3, 1963, p. 305–361; idem, "Relazioni visconteo-sforzesche con la Corte Ottomana durante il sec. XV.", in: *La Lombardia e l'Oriente*, Milan, 1963, p. 8–30; H.-J. Kissling, *Sultan Bâjezid's II. Beziehungen zu Markgraf Francesco II. von Gonzaga*, Munich, 1965. The Milanese emissary to Murad II boasted to the Burgundian agent Bertrandon de la Brocquière, "qu'il avoit esté cause de faire perdre Salonique aux Venissiens pour leur faire dommage et la faire gaignier au Turc; de quoy il fist grant dommage"; Ch. Schefer, *Le voyage d'outremer de Bertrandon de La Brocquière, premier écuyer tranchant et conseiller de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne*, Paris, 1892, p. 142; in 1430, fires were lit in Milan to celebrate the fall of Venetian Saloniki; E. Basso, "Genova e gli Ottomani nel XV secolo. Gli 'itali Teucrici' e il Gran Sultano", in: *L'Europa dopo la caduta di Costantinopoli : 29 maggio 1453*, Spoleto, 2008, p. 375–410, here p. 380.

Venice, but the Aragonian Mediterranean empire. Largely independently of the mother city, the Genoese regional lords in the Aegean (the Maona on Chios, the Alaun lords of Phokaia, the Gattilusi on Lesbos) pursued regional policies against the Ottomans.<sup>21</sup>

By the end of the age of Ottoman conquest, around 1500, the pentarchal system in Italy had collapsed. In 1480, the peninsula had been hit by a direct Ottoman attack. It was not so much coordinated defensive measures as the death of Mehmed II, the domestic wars of succession between Bayezid II and Cem Sultan, and to a much lesser extent Neapolitan counterattacks that put an end to the extremely threatening Ottoman offensive. In the crisis of 1480/81, the fault lines between the Italian territories became all too clear: Venice maintained strict neutrality, having fought the Turks largely on its own, save for initial papal assistance, from 1463 to 1479, suffering severe financial and territorial losses. Moreover, Naples had undermined the Venetian positions in Albania and Herzegovina by cultivating relations with the Ottoman Empire. Towards the end of the century, the Venetian-Neapolitan conflict escalated with the Venetian conquest of Apulian ports (such as Trani, Brindisi, Otranto, which was then lost during crisis of the League of Cambrai in 1509). While the Ottoman threat gave rise to the Italic Leagues, they remained unstable, precarious and weak. The Pentarchy powers feared domestic competition more than they did the Ottomans, who were not the only power threatening to intervene in Italy either – France proved a much greater danger, and indeed took the war with Turkey as a pretext to launch an assault in 1494, destroying the system that had been in place since Lodi. As a result, the fragile domestic balance of power lay in tatters, and Italy became the arena for Franco-Habsburg competition. From 1499–1503, Venice, again having to fight alone, suffered a decisive naval defeat at the hands of the Ottomans. From this point on, the Republic would hardly be able to hold out against the Empire without a stronger ally. A new epoch had dawned, in which Venice sought to prevent the constant decline of its position in the Levant via unstable alliances with the Spanish Habsburgs – the political heirs of the Neapolitan Aragonese.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> E. Basso, “De Boucicault à Francesco Sforza. Persistance et changements dans la politique orientale des seigneurs étrangers de Gênes au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in: M. Balard / A. Ducellier (ed.), *Le partage du monde, échanges et colonisation dans la Méditerranée médiévale*, Paris, 1998, p. 63–77; idem, “La Maona di Chio, Genova e l’Impero Ottomano : relazioni commerciali e intrecci diplomatici fra Tardo Medioevo e prima Età moderna”, in: S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Relazioni economiche tra Europa e mondo islamico secc. XIII–XVIII*, Varese, 2007, p. 315–324; J. Paviot, “Gênes et les Turcs (1444, 1453). Sa défense contre les accusations d’une entente”, in: *La storia dei Genovesi*, vol. 9. Genoa, 1989, p. 129–137; G. Pistarino, “Chio dei Genovesi”, *Studi Medievali* ser. 3a 10/1, 1969, p. 3–68; A. Mazarakis, *Πρακτικά συνεδρίου Οι Γατελούζοι της Λέσβου*, Athens, 1996; G. Olgiati, “Il commercio dell’allume nei domini dei Gattiluso nel XV secolo”, in: Mazarakis, *Οι Γατελούζοι*, p. 373–398; Ch. Wright, *The Gattiluso Lordships and the Aegean World 1355–1462*, Leiden–Boston, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> H. Houben (ed.), *La conquista turca di Otranto (1480) tra storia e mito*, 2 vols., Galatina, 2008, therein E. Orlando, “Venezia e la conquista turca di Otranto (1480–1481): incroci, responsabilità, equivoci

2) A second geopolitical complex whose significance for the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans must not be underestimated emerged in *East-Central Europe*: the interplay between the crowns of Hungary, Bohemia and Poland, for which the large Jagiellonian, Luxemburg and Habsburg dynasties and the emerging Hunyady dynasty were vying. Regional actors like George of Podiebrad in Bohemia also had their designs. As in the case of the entanglement between the triangular conflict in the Adriatic and Italian politics, the East Central European conflict zone was related to a further political macro-region, the Holy Roman Empire. In the fourteenth century, Hungary had become the undisputed great power in Southeastern Europe under Louis the Great, but its zenith around 1365 was soon followed by its direct clash with the Ottoman Empire. In 1395, King Sigismund embarked on a policy of making the Ottoman threat a pan-European affair – it failed in 1396 and led Western Europe, with the exception of Burgundy, to be much more reticent about offering military assistance; the defeats at Nikopolis and the huge ransom the French aristocracy had to pay the Ottomans were not forgotten. Sigismund, King of Hungary from 1387, King of Germany from 1411, King of Bohemia from 1419, and Roman Emperor from 1433, was the first to attempt to create an East-Central European power bloc that would offer protection from the Ottomans. In Southeastern Europe, he pursued an extensive preliminary policy in Bosnia, Serbia and Walachia, and also recognised the importance of Anatolian alliances.<sup>23</sup> But it was already clear then that combining the East-Central European crowns created more conflicts than it solved: one need only think of the Hussite wars, which cost the emperor a lot of energy and prevented him from stronger efforts on the southern frontier – there was already talk of conflict with Venice in the Adriatic.

The issue of the Bohemian crown occupied not only the Luxemburgs, but also the Jagiellonians, the Hunyadi and the Habsburgs. The question of the Hungarian succession following the death of Sigismund in 1437 created a severe crisis resulting in decades of conflict between the Habsburgs and the Hunyadi, which had a decisive impact on the Ottoman advance in the Balkans, especially under Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490). It was no coincidence that Hungarian succession crises and dynastic feuds arose at the same time as Ottoman advances,

negli equilibri europei”, p. 177–209; E. Piva, “L’opposizione diplomatica di Venezia alle mire di Sisto IV su Pesaro e ai tentativi di una crociata contro i Turchi 1480–1481”, *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* n.p. 5/1, 1903, p. 49–204; A. Bombaci, “Venezia e l’impresa turca di Otranto” *Rivista Storica Italiana* 66, 1954, p. 159–195; D. Abulafia (ed.), *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494–1495*, London, 1995; O.J. Schmitt, “Geschichte Lepantos unter der Venezianerherrschaft 1407–1499”, *Südost-Forschungen* 56, 1997, p. 43–103, here p. 70–76; G. Cogo, “La guerra di Venezia contro i Turchi (1499–1503)”, *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* 18, 1899, p. 5–76, 348–421; 19, 1900, p. 97–138 (source section).

<sup>23</sup> P. Engel, “Zur Frage der bosnisch-ungarischen Beziehungen im 14.–15. Jahrhundert”, *Südost-Forschungen* 56, 1997, p. 27–42; cf. the monumental work by D. Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti (Sveta kruna ugarska i sveta kruna bosanska). 1387–1463*, Zagreb, Sarajevo, 2006 and most recently Filipović, *Bosansko kraljevstvo*.

first in 1382–1387, most disastrously after Sigismund's death in 1437, when Murad II overran Serbia, and around twenty years later, when the entire Serbian Despotate was conquered during the chaos of Matthias Corvinus' first months on the throne (1459). The Habsburg–Hungarian conflict (especially Frederick III's election as Hungarian king by the aristocrats who opposed the Hunyadi and the question of his returning the crown of St. Stephen to the Hunyadi king) impeded the Hungarian response to the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia in 1463. Moreover, it prevented any combined Austro-Hungarian effort against the Ottomans for decades. During his own lifetime, Matthias Corvinus had to face criticism that he neglected the southern frontier in favour of his policy of conquest in the Austrian hereditary lands, in Bohemia and Silesia. The king's defence, that only a strong East-Central European power bloc could resist the Ottomans, has been a matter of controversy for centuries— what is certain is that during the fifteenth century, the internal conflicts in East-Central Europe were just as strong as in the Italian domestic power complex; additional issues were the Hungarian–Polish competition in the foothills of the Carpathians (Moldova) and in the Danube and the Dniester estuaries, which dated back to the mid-fourteenth century and were not settled by the Treaty of Lublau (1412).<sup>24</sup>

Not only the Luxemburgs, but also the Jagiellons showed that uniting the crowns alone was not the same thing as developing a unified East-Central European bloc that could withstand the Ottomans – as evidenced by the Polish resistance to the young Hungarian-Polish King Ladislaus's crusades (1443/1444) or the later phase of Jagiellonian rulers on the Hungarian throne (1490–1526), when loyalty throughout the dynasty was in short supply.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, it was ultimately the unification of East-Central European crowns (Hungarian, Bohemian and Croatian, the latter of more symbolic than practical importance) under a single dynasty – the Habsburgs – that finally hemmed in the Ottoman advance. Successful defence was predicated, and this was the decisive condition for success, on the consolidation of these crowns with the German lands of the Habsburgs and the financial, military, technological and demographic resources of the Holy Roman Empire. The Habsburg managed to pull off what the Jagiellonians, defeated at Mohács in 1526, failed to achieve, repelling the assaults by Süleyman the Magnificent in 1529 and above all in 1532. Recently, 1532 has quite rightly

<sup>24</sup> See the detailed discussion in Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*; on the Lower Danube, along with the latest study by Pilat/Cristea, *Ottoman Threat*, see also Ş. Papacostea, "The Black Sea in the Political Strategies of Sigismund of Luxemburg", in: Ch. Gastgeber *et al.* (ed.), *Church Union and Crusading in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, p. 279–290; idem, "Gênes, Venise et la croisade de Varna", *Balcenia Posnaniensia* 8, 1997, p. 27–37; idem, *Marea Neagră. Puteri maritime – puteri terestre (sec. XIII-XVIII)*, Bucharest, 2006; V. Ciocîltan, "Competiția pentru controlul Dunării inferioare (1412-1420) II.", *Revista de istorie* 11, 1982, p. 1191–1203.

<sup>25</sup> See the above bibliography in fn. 3 and K. Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III. und das Reich*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Munich, 1989; on Varna, see esp. C. Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–1445*, Aldershot, Burlington, 2006.

been considered the real turning point in the Ottoman conquest: Süleyman the Magnificent overextended himself before the small fortress of Güns/Kőszeg, an imperial army defeated Ottoman troops south of Vienna, while the exits to the Lower Austrian alpine valleys were covered by heavy cavalry and considerable artillery. The sultan avoided a larger field battle and refrained from a second siege of Vienna.<sup>26</sup> But this was only because the burden of the defence was shouldered not only by the East-Central European crowns, but also by the Empire's much larger demographic, economic and technological forces, whenever it actually chose to muster them.

This now leads us to a debate that runs parallel to that concerning Italian domestic policy and the interplay between the Ottoman question and the political structures of European macro-regions. Like Italy, the Holy Roman Empire had a symbolic head who was expected to coordinate policy but was not granted *de facto* political leadership – the emperor was to the Empire what the pope was to Italy. The emperor also remained an important figure in Italy in the fifteenth century: key events include the Milanese investiture, the Roman coronation of Frederick the III and his marriage to Eleonore of Portugal, a relation of Alfons V's. It should also be recalled that Hungary pursued its own Italian policy in order to secure its East-Central European position, also via an Aragonese marriage, between Beatrix of Aragon and Matthias Corvinus in 1476.

Just as Italy had its fractured leagues, the Empire had its diets: the Ottoman threat accelerated the rhythm of these congresses, which often resembled European conferences, since they included representatives from Italian states and Burgundy, but also Northern European kingdoms such as Denmark, not to mention the East-Central European states like Hungary or the Teutonic Order in Prussia. Indeed, the diets discussed not only the Ottoman threat, but the many, often entangled, conflicts throughout the empire and on its western (Burgundian) and eastern (Prussian) peripheries.

Hitherto, Ottoman studies and Southeastern European history have largely neglected the diets, probably because they ostensibly produced few immediately tangible results – the 'Turkish diets' of Regensburg, Frankfurt and Wiener Neustadt (1454/1455) were already a great disappointment to contemporaries. Later diets too (1469, 1471) only seemed to drag on, and Emperor Frederick III never became a driving force of the war with the Turks. The emperor principally pursued dynastic goals, competing with the Hunyadi for the Hungarian crown, which went a long way to forcing them to expend many of their energies in the west instead of on the southern frontier; in his inner, i.e. his hereditary lands, Frederick III faced Hungarian-backed opposition and even lost Vienna to Matthias

<sup>26</sup> Pál F., *The Unbearable Weight of Empire. The Ottomans in Central Europe – A Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390–1566)*, Budapest, 2015, p. 81; H. Delfiner, "Nikolaus Jurischitz 1490–1543, Soldier Diplomat", *East European Quarterly* 28/1, 1994, p. 1–47; Ch. Turetschek, *Die Türkenpolitik Ferdinands I. von 1529 bis 1532*, Vienna, 1968; G. Gerhartl, *Die Niederlage der Türken am Steinfeld 1532*, Vienna, 1974.

Corvinus between 1485 and 1490. The death of the Hungarian king, who was without a legitimate son and had failed to obtain foreign recognition of his bastard, triggered the collapse of Corvinus' impressive East-Central European power structure and opened the door for the Jagellions, who also proved unable to bring stability to the region's resistance to the Ottomans after 1490 however.<sup>27</sup>

But what the diets did achieve only became clear towards the end of the fifteenth century: resistance to the Ottomans and imperial reform, so often debated in dogged negotiations, had become interlaced core issues of imperial policy.<sup>28</sup> The imperial reform of 1495 would have been impossible without forty years of rising awareness and the development of political consensus in the empire's complex constitutional structure – and the hard-won compromise laid the foundations for the Empire to become the power bloc that finally clipped the wings of the Ottoman conquest in 1529 and 1532, despite the religious tensions of the early Reformation. Much more so than the Italic Leagues, which were unable to repel the French King Charles VIII's Italian campaign of 1494 and had been extremely fragile even prior to that, the ostensibly cumbersome mechanisms of the Holy Roman Empire had created a defence system able to raise large armies via fixed taxes and ensure forefield resistance on the emerging military frontier.

Finances, frontier fortifications, forefield policies in the Balkans – none of this was new, since the Hungarian crown had long attempted such measures, but had always been hampered by limited resources. The cost of building and manning fortresses had overstretched the Hungarian budget. Hungarian armies were inferior to the Ottomans not technologically, but mostly in number. With the resources of the Holy Roman Empire and the East-Central European crowns of Bohemia and (royal) Hungary dynastically tied to the Habsburgs, sufficient critical mass was

<sup>27</sup> For a recent reassessment of Frederick's policy s. C. Märkl, "Habsburger und Osmanen bis zum Ende der Zeit Maximilians I. († 1519)", in: B. Schneidmüller (ed.), *König Rudolf I. und der Aufstieg des Hauses Habsburg im Mittelalter*, Darmstadt, 2019, p. 439–458.

<sup>28</sup> H. Weigel / H. Grüneisen, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III. Fünfte Abteilung. Erste Hälfte 1453–1454*, Göttingen, 1969; J. Helmraath with G. Annas, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III. Fünfte Abteilung, zweiter Teil. Reichsversammlung zu Frankfurt 1454*, Munich, 2013; G. Annas, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III. Fünfte Abteilung, dritter Teil. Reichsversammlung zu Wiener Neustadt 1455*, Munich, 2013; H. Wolff / G. Annas, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III. Abteilung 8 (1468–1471), Hälfte 2 (1471)*, Göttingen, 1999–2001; G. Annas, *Hoftag – Gemeiner Tag – Reichstag. Studien zur strukturellen Entwicklung deutscher Reichsversammlungen des späten Mittelalters (1349–1471)*, 2 vols., Cologne, 2004; J. Helmraath, "Pius II. und die Türken", in: idem, *Wege des Humanismus. Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, Tübingen, 2013, p. 279–342; M. Bacsoka / A.-M. Blank / Th. Woelki (eds.), *Europa, das Reich und die Osmanen. Die Türkenreichstage von 1454/55 nach dem Fall Konstantinopels*, Frankfurt/Main 2014; S. Wefers, *Das Primat der Außenpolitik. Das politische System des Reichs im 15. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 2013; J. Dücker, "Von Konfrontation und Kooperation. Matthias Corvinus und die Reichstage der Jahre 1479 bis 1481", in: Ch. Gastgeber et al. (eds.), *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit*, Vienna, 2011, 23–32; J. Reissermayer, *Der grosse Christentag zu Regensburg 1471. 2. Teil. Programm zum Jahresberichte über das K. neue Gymnasium zu Regensburg für das Studienjahr 1887/88*, Regensburg, 1888.

achieved.<sup>29</sup> Whereas Corvinus himself pursued an imperial policy, had designs on the German crown, was represented at the diets and also vehemently complained whenever his emissaries were not heard, none of his efforts yielded a political breakthrough in the Empire, and his attempts to court the Habsburg's (intermittent) opponents in the west, Burgundy and the Swiss Confederacy were just as unsuccessful. His (East-) Central European empire was built on shaky grounds.

This admittedly cursory comparison of Hunyadi and Habsburg (East-) Central European policy shows the reason why Ottoman expansion was ultimately repelled: the Empire and its tools of power and finance, which the Habsburgs had built up over four decades of painstaking negotiations and, in 1495, political concessions which Emperor Frederick III had not been prepared to make up to his death in 1493.

3) The third concentrated political space is the *Pontic* region comprising the conflicts on the western shore of the Black Sea and their occasional extension to Anatolia via various alliances. Essentially, this area involved the Hungarian–Polish rivalry touched on above, which centred on hegemony over the West Pontic ports of Chilia and Akkerman between the Danube and the Dniester estuaries. In the first third of the fifteenth century, the situation was further complicated by the two youngest Orthodox principalities in the Southeastern European region, Walachia and Moldavia, which had emerged on the territory abandoned by the Golden Horde on its retreat from the Lower Danube and the Eastern Carpathians around the mid-fourteenth century. Walachia and Moldavia were both formed by secession from the Hungarian crown, which did not mean a complete break however, since the Walachian princes held fiefdoms on Hungarian soil in Transylvania (Omlás/Amlaş and Fogaras/Făgăraş). The Serbian despots of the fifteenth century also held fiefdoms on Hungarian territory, and like them the Walachian and Moldavian princes had one foot in the Hungarian political world and another on the unstable ground of their own principalities, where the Ottomans had installed pretenders since the late fourteenth century. Walachia and Moldavia had a vassal-like relationship with Hungary, and Moldavia had the same obligations to Poland too. Often mentioned in the same breath, the two principalities were by no means a single unit, nor even allies: on the contrary, in an exposed region of world politics, they not only had to assert themselves against the Ottomans, the Hungarians and the Poles, but on the regional level often did battle with each other – including at decisive moments. For instance, in 1462, Stephen the Great of Moldavia turned against the Walachian prince Vlad the Impaler when the latter was fighting for his survival against the sultan. Stephen was acting on behalf of Polish interests; the

<sup>29</sup> Fodor, *Unbearable weight*, p. 51–52, 77; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, p. 445–462 (Why did Hungary loose?); G. Ágoston, “Firearms and Military Adaptation: The Ottomans and the European Military Revolution 1450–1800”, *Journal of World History* 25/1, 2014, p. 85–124; G. Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the sixteenth century*, Budapest, 2009, p. 23–27.

aim was to conquer the Hungarian-controlled harbour of Chilia. The two principalities thus showed solidarity with none of their neighbours.<sup>30</sup>

Hence due to its location alone, Walachia was tied much more closely to the Balkans and the Pontic region, where it pursued its own policies from the early fifteenth century onwards. As early as around 1400, the principality had to contend much more than its Moldavian neighbour with competing pro- and anti-Ottoman factions among the boyars, Walachian troops joining the large Ottoman assaults on Moldavia (for instance under Basarab the Elder in 1476 or Vlad the Monk with a reported 20,000 men in 1484, while Radu the Handsome was defeated while fighting for the Ottomans against his Romanian adversaries in early 1475).<sup>31</sup>

The Hungarian – Polish competition had fewer repercussions for Hungary itself than its conflict with Venice or the Habsburgs – but there was barely any sustained collaboration between the two Catholic kingdoms; we have already seen the Polish assessment of the Jagiellonian crusade of 1443/44. Both Hungary and Poland had tangible economic interests on the Black Sea. They sought to control the trade routes connecting the Danube and Dniester estuaries with their trade cities in their own empires – in Transylvania and further west in the case of Hungary, and Lemberg and Cracow in the case of Poland – trade heavily influenced by the Genoese on the sea and, especially in the Polish economic system, the Armenians on the land.

On the regional level, Walachia and Moldavia, in close intertwinement with the two kingdoms, vied for access to these ports – on which the Ottoman Empire had also set its sights, particularly in the last years of Mehmed I's reign and then under Murad II. Both sultans made several attempts to gain a foothold on the West Pontic coast. These assaults did not abate until Bayezid took Chilia and Akkerman in 1484.<sup>32</sup> For Hungary, access to the Black Sea proved to be not only of economic,

<sup>30</sup> Șt.S. Gorovei / M.M. Szekely, *Princeps omni laude maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare*, Sf. Mănăstire Putna 2004, p. 42–43; Șt. Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș Dracula*, Bucharest, 2015, p. 108; on the two principalities, see Șt.S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei. Probleme controversate*, expanded edition, Iași, 2014; M. Coman, *Putere și teritoriu. Țara Românească medievală (secolele XIV–XVI)*, Iași, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> See the recently published volume: L. Pilat / O. Cristea, *From Pax Mongolica to Pax Ottomanica*, Leiden, 2020; Pilat / Cristea, *Ottoman threat*; Pippidi, “Taking possession”; on Pontic policy, see the bibliography in fn. 24 and esp. Gemil, *România și Otomanii*; Gorovei / Szekely, *Princeps omni laude maior*, p. 116, 152, 216; on the Walachian boyars, see M. Cazacu, “Marche frontalière ou Etat dans l’Etat ? L’Olténie aux XIV<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles”, in: idem, *Des Balkans à la Russie médiévale et moderne. Hommes, images réalités*, Brăila, 2018, p. 383–423; Cristea, “The Friend of my Friend”; L. Câmpeanu, « Basarab Laiotă, domn al Țării Românești. Preliminarii la o monografie », *Studii și materiale de istorie medie* 32, 2014, p. 145–172.

<sup>32</sup> P.P. Panaitescu, “La route commerciale de Pologne à la Mer Noire au moyen âge”, *Revista istorică română* 3, 1933, p. 172–193; E.A. Zachariadou, “Ottoman Diplomacy and the Danube Frontier (1420–1424)”, in: eadem, *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans*, Aldershot, 2007, part XIV; M. Cazacu, “Les Ottomans sur le Bas-Danube au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Südost-Forschungen* 41, 1982, p. 27–34; N. Beldiceanu, “La campagne ottomane de 1484. Ses préparatifs militaires et sa chronologie”, *Revue des études roumaines* 5–6, 1957/58, p. 67–77; idem, “La conquête des cités

but also geopolitical importance, since they could thus trump two opponents – Venice, with whom King Sigismund waged an extensive trade war with the aim to establish a comprehensive embargo on the Adriatic and the Black Sea, and the Ottomans, repeatedly cultivating ties with the sultan’s Anatolian rivals. In 1419, for instance, the Hungarian emissary Gereczi succeeded in persuading Kara Yülük, the ruler of the Turkoman tribal alliance of the White Sheep, and Timur’s son, Shah Rukh, to attack Sultan Mehmed I in order to relieve the Danube border. John Hunyadi also took root on the Black Sea, in the important fortress of Chilia, whence the Hungarians were driven out in 1462 by a Moldavia aligned with Poland, as outlined above.<sup>33</sup> With the exception of this manoeuvre, Poland had little influence on the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans however, and it was Stephen the Great who dashed one of Poland’s most important campaigns against the Ottomans at Codrii Cosminului in 1497, since it represented a threat to his rule.<sup>34</sup>

In comparison with the Italian and (East-) Central European political nexus, the West Pontic complex is less significant for the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans however; Pontic ports were too far from Poland and Hungary’s real centres of power, and after 1450 campaigns in the southern and eastern Carpathian foothills were too dangerous for an undertaking. Indeed, the Ottoman influence in Walachia was already too strong in the first half of the fifteenth century. However, this did not diminish the strategic importance of Walachia; like the Kingdom of Bosnia and the Serbian Despotate, in the first half of the fifteenth century it was part of an extensive Ottoman–Hungarian buffer zone, and, incidentally, the only such territory to retain its sovereignty, avoiding becoming an Ottoman province even at the height of sultanic power.

If these three political spaces are viewed in comparison, it becomes clear that Hungary was of key importance. Not only was the Crown of St. Stephen the Ottoman’s main, immediate opponent in the Balkans, but in pursuing interests in

marchandes de Kilia et de Cetatea Albă par Bayezid II”, *Südost-Forschungen* 23, 1964, p. 36–90; O. Cristea, *Acest domn de la miazănoapte*, Bucharest, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> W. von Strome, “Diplomatische Kontakte des Herrschers vom Weißen Hammel, Uthman, genannt Qara Yuluq, mit dem Deutschen König Sigismund im September 1430–März 1431 zu gemeinsamem Vorgehen mit dem Timuriden Schah-Ruch gegen die Türken”, *Südost-Forschungen*, 20, 1961, p. 267–272; L. Tardy, “Ungarns antiosmanische Bündnisse mit Staaten des Nahen Ostens und deren Vorgeschichte”, *Anatolica* 4, 1971/1972, p. 139–156; L. Tardy, *Beyond the Ottoman Empire: 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century. Hungarian diplomacy in the East*, Szeged, 1978; G. Ágoston, “Karamania, the Anti-Ottoman Christian diplomacy and the non-existing Hungarian-Karamanid diplomatic relations of 1428”, *Acta orientalia Academiae scientiarum hungaricae* 48/3, 1995, p. 267–274; F. Pall, *România și Cruciada târzie*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, especially p. 186–248 (“Stăpânirea lui Iancu de Hunedoara asupra Chilie și problema ajutorării Bizanțului”; “Relazioni di Giovanni di Hunedoara con Bisanzio negli anni 1452–1453”; “Byzance à la veille de sa chute et Janco de Hunedoara (Hunyadi)”; M. Cazacu, “La Valachie et la bataille de Kosovo (1448)”, *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 9/1, 1971, p. 131–152; M. Cazacu / P.Ș. Năsturel, “Une démonstration navale des Ottomans devant Constantinople et la bataille de Chilia (1448)”, in: Dumitran / Mády / Simon, *Extincta est lucerna orbis*, p. 323–331.

<sup>34</sup> Gorovei / Szekely, *Princeps omni laude maior*, p. 319–340.

the Adriatic, East-Central Europe and in the Black Sea region, it also had to assert itself against strong and tenacious rivals. It is also clear that Hungary, instead of consolidating its efforts in warding off the Ottomans, was distracted by other political spheres, partly Bohemia and the Austrian lands of Frederick III. At times this was a conscious decision by the Hungarian rulers; at others, it was due to external pressure, albeit to a lesser extent. But it is also clear that the actions of all the other powers affected by the Ottoman expansion can only be understood if we examine their immediate political environment. This especially holds for Venice, which was not only a maritime power; during the fifteenth century, it established itself as a northern Italian territorial state and as part of the Italian Pentarchy. A combination of factors – manifold involvement in political spheres, the rising dominance of the Ottomans, the clear failure of anti-Ottoman alliances, be they crusading or purely profane, the resulting need to go it alone, and hence the experience of inevitable defeat – explains why the rival Catholic flanks of Venice and Hungary were increasingly disinclined to fight and preferred to seek ceasefires and treaties with the Ottomans.

As far as Anatolia is concerned, it is important to our discussion in connection with events in the Balkans. The Balkan Orthodox princes and states like Venice and Hungary principally looked to non-Ottoman Anatolian princes as enemies of the Ottomans, as outlined above. Anatolia's entanglement with the Ottoman-conquered Balkans is not restricted to anti-Ottoman alliances however. A more important aspect, since it was more successful and long-term in its impact, was the Ottoman demographic policy of targeted settlement of both nomadic and non-nomadic Anatolian Turks in the Balkans, especially eastern Bulgaria, the southern Macedonian region and Thessaly. The South-Eastern Balkans bore a strong Turkish-Islamic influence due to both organised and spontaneous immigration. This is not to say that there had not been a local Turkish population prior to that, but Turkish-speaking migrants had come predominantly from the Pontic region and been Christianised, as evidenced e.g. in the villages in the Struma region, whose fifteenth-century inhabitants had Turkish names but worshipped in Christian churches – and had no connection to the Muslim Turks from Anatolia in a society structured along confessional lines. The extensive migration from Anatolia reinforced the pre-existing entanglement of the Balkans and Asia Minor – but now the main connection was no longer Byzantine Greeks, but Muslim Turks and Yürüks. Despite the influence the Balkan elites gained within the power structures of the Ottoman Empire during the fifteenth century, confirming the impression of a *Byzance après Byzance*, one should not overlook the ethnic Turkification of the Aegean arc and the southwestern Black Sea region with their orientation towards Constantinople.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> N. Manolova-Nikolova – P. Jéléva, “Les localités au courant de Gorna Strouma pendant les 15-17ème siècles (Histoire brève)”, *Bulgarian Historical Review* 38/1–2, 2010, p. 16–42; Kiel, “Incorporation”, 146–151; A. Kaljonski, *Jurucite*, Sofia, 2007; Werner, *Die Geburt einer Großmacht*,

So far, we have considered two types of spaces, namely spaces of political entanglement and the two flanks of the empires centred on Constantinople/Istanbul, i.e. the Balkans and Anatolia. Our purpose was to illustrate the sheer extent of this entanglement. Let us now consider a further type of space that has received much attention in recent years, although the concept itself is nothing new: the frontier space (uç) as a constantly expanding organism of Ottoman actions at the expense of their opponents.<sup>36</sup> The development of a system of marches goes back to the early days of the Ottoman conquest, when in order to take Thrace, Süleyman emulated the Mongolian tradition of establishing three flanks to drive further advances. Another Mongolian tradition he embraced was taking over, as supreme commander, the middle flank following the course of the Marica, while the right flank advanced into the Tundža region and the left along the Via Egnatia. After taking Edirne (1369), Sultan Murad I appointed Lala Şahin as Beylerbey of Rumelia. In the 1360s, other warrior leaders who had arrived in the Balkans from Anatolia operated with and alongside the Ottomans, figures such as Hacı İlybeyi, Ece bey oder Evrenos. Evrenos belonged to the first generation of frontier commanders to settle in Thrace (Ipsala and Komotini); this period saw the emergence of the dynasty of the conqueror of Skopje, Paşa Yiğit, whose descendent Turahan founded his own dynasty in Thessaly, whence he attacked the Morea and southern Albania, while another son, Ishak, marched from Skopje on Albania, Bosnia and Serbia. The eastern Balkans saw the rise of the Mihaloğlu, with their centre in Pleven in Bulgaria – their radius comprised the lower and mid Danube region, i.e.

189–198 ; N. Antov, *The Ottoman “Wild West”. The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Cambridge, 2017; M. Kiel, “Anatolia Transplanted? Patterns of demographic, Religious and Ethnic Changes in the District of Tozluk (N.E. Bulgaria) 1479–1873”, in: idem, *Turco-Bulgaria. Studies on the history, settlement and historical demography of Ottoman Bulgaria*, Istanbul, 2013, p. 13–42; idem, “The Dobrudja, a bridge and meeting point between the Balkans, Anatolia and the Ukraine. The Ottoman-Turkish Sources for the History and the Historical Demography and Settlement History of the Dobrudja and how they can be used”, in: Kiel, *Turco-Bulgaria*, p. 167–186; K. Tomovski *et al.* (eds.), *Etnozogeneza na jurucite i nivnoto naseluvanje na Balkanot. Materijali od Trkaleznata masa, održana vo Skopje 17 i 18 noemvri 1983 godina*. Skopje, 1986, therein: V. Dimitriadis, “The Yürüks in Central and Western Macedonia”, p. 9–15; E. Grozdanova, “Novi svedenija za jurucite v Bălgarskite i njakoi ot sāsednite im zemi prez XV–XVII v.”, p. 17–27; A. Stojanovski, “Nekolku prašanja za Jurucite vo Kjustendilskiot sandžak”, p. 29–37; M. Petkova, “The Process of Sedentarization of Semi-nomadic Groups of the Yörüks in Parts of 16<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Rumeli: Migration Control or Tax Control?”, *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies* 2/3, 2019, 25–43; for a comprehensive discussion of the Turkish dimension, see the recent study by P. Fodor, “The Formation of Ottoman Turkish Identity (Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)”, in: P. Fodor / P. Ács (eds.), *Identity and Culture in Ottoman Hungary*, Berlin, 2017, p. 19–54.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. İnalçık, “Methods”; Evgeni Radoushev, “Ottoman Border Periphery (Serhad) in the Nikopol Vilayet, First Half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century”, *Études balkaniques* 3–4, 1995, p. 140–160; A. Kayapınar, *Le sancağ ottoman de Vidin du XVe à la fin du XVIe siècle*, Istanbul, 2011; N. Antov, “The Ottoman State and Semi-Nomadic Groups along the Ottoman Danubian Serhad (Frontier Zone) in the Late 15<sup>th</sup> and the First Half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Challenges and Politics”, *Hungarian Studies* 27/2, 2013, p. 219–235.

the frontier with Hungary and Walachia. Ottoman court historiography strongly played down the significance of the frontier commanders; it is only in recent years that research has examined the construction programmes under these actors and demonstrated that during the reign of Murad II, they built up genuine regional principalities from which they embarked on independent conquests. But they also cultivated foreign relations with Dubrovnik or Venice and the many Christian petty lords close to their respective marches, from Morea to Bosnia and as far as Walachia. Many cities in the Ottoman Balkans were either founded or architecturally transformed by frontier commander dynasties: Larisa, Trikala, Skopje and Ochrid were heavily influenced by the Turahans, Jannitsa, Serres and Komotini by the Evrenos, and, later, Nikopolis, Plevna and Silistra by the Malkoçoğlus. Their building programmes comprised the classical combination of mosques, Islamic schools, baths, soup kitchens and bridges. Not all frontier commanders established dynasties, but nevertheless left their mark, for instance Mehmed bey Minnetoğlu, whose forefathers had been deported from Anatolia to the Plovdiv regions in the Balkans and whose campaigns as leader of the *akıncı* included attacks on Serbia and Hungary in 1458. In 1459, he became the first sancakbey of the newly conquered Serbian Despotate and in 1463 governor of the Ottoman part of Bosnia, another recent conquest. He influenced the architecture of Sarajevo, Smederevo and Niš.<sup>37</sup> While comparative research on these regional princes is still in its infancy, it is clear that they represented the driving force behind the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. Their conquests pushed back the frontiers: Thrace, the first *uç* region of the 1360s, had become one of the core Ottoman territories by the 1390s, with Edirne the empire's centre. Southern Macedonia too was soon one of

<sup>37</sup> M. Kiel, "Das türkische Thessalien. Etabliertes Geschichtsbild versus osmanische Quellen", in: R. Lauer / P. Schreiner (eds.), *Die Kultur Griechenlands in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Göttingen 1996, p. 109–196; idem, *Un héritage non désiré. Le patrimoine architectural islamique ottoman dans L'Europe du Sud-Est, p. 1370–1912* (Études balkaniques – Cahiers Pierre Belon 12), Paris, 2005, p. 17–82; M. Kiprovska, "The Mihaloğlu Family. Gazi, Warriors and Patrons of Dervish Hospices", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 32, 2008, p. 193–222; eadem, "Shaping the Ottoman Borderland. The Architectural Patronage of Frontier Lords from the Mihaloğlu Family", in: M. Barāmova / G. Boykov / I. Pärvev (eds.), *Bordering Early Modern Europe*, Wiesbaden, 2015, p. 185–220; G. Boykov, "Reshaping Urban Space in the Ottoman Balkans. A Study on the Architectural Development of Edirne, Plovdiv, and Skopje (14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> Centuries)", in: M. Hartmuth (ed.), *Centres and Peripheries in Ottoman Architecture. Rediscovering a Balkan Heritage*, Sarajevo, 2011, p. 32–45; idem, "The Borders of the Cities. Revisiting Early Ottoman Urban Morphology in Southeastern Europe", in: Barāmova / Boykov / Pärvev, *Bordering Early Modern Europe*, p. 243–255; Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans 1350–1500*; Lowry / Erünsal, *Notes & Documents on the Evrenos Dynasty*; I. Mélikoff, Lemma "Ewrenos", *Encyclopedia of Islam online* Ausgabe; F. Babinger, "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Geschlechtes der Malkoc-oghlu's", in: idem, *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen zur Geschichte Südosteuropas und der Levante*, vol. 1 Munich, 1962, p. 355–377; M. Kiprovska, *The military organization of the akıncıs in Ottoman Rumelia*, Master's dissertation, Bilkent University, Ankara, 2004, available at <http://repository.bilkent.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/11693/17136/0008017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>; G. Boykov, "In search of vanished Ottoman monuments in the Balkans: Minnetoğlu Mehmed Beg's complex in Konuş Hisarı", in: M. Hartmuth / A. Dilsiz (eds.), *Monuments, Patrons, Contexts: Papers on Ottoman Europe presented to Machiel Kiel*, Leiden, 2010, p. 47–67.

the zones of concentrated Ottoman hegemony oriented around the capital. With the conquest of Morea, Thessaly lost its frontier status; the uç region of Skopje shifted towards the centre when Bosnia, Serbia and Skanderbeg's territory were taken between 1459 and 1467, and when the Venetians were forced to withdraw from Shkodra in 1479, the last significant gap in the South Adriatic frontier was plugged. After the conquest of the Balkans south of the Danube and the Save, the frontier regions remained the Danube line (until the Hungarian advance of 1526) and the long frontier zone with the Venetian Adriatic areas, which due to Venice's weakness on land did not require much bolstering until the mid-seventeenth century however. The system of frontier commanders came to an end under Mehmed II – firstly because the sultan would not compete for admiration with great regional figures, and secondly because most of the centres of important border marches (Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly) were now located in the inner reaches of the Empire. This did not apply as strongly to the Danube line, where Vlad the Impaler wrought severe destruction on Ottoman territory in 1462. But with the conquest of the Moldavian Black Sea ports, a new, sustained frontier zone emerged on the edge of the steppe which with collaboration from the Crimean Tatars pushed the Christian states (Hungary, Poland and the two principalities of Moldavia and Walachia back into the interior.<sup>38</sup>

While the frontier thus constantly advanced, one might ask whether all of the former peripheries became internal spaces. The frontier commanders contributed in no small measure to societal change; they usually transformed their enlarged property into religious foundations that attracted and protected peasants and especially nomadic or semi-settled settlers not registered for tax (haymane). But it was not just in the cities that the commanders drove societal change, but also on their estates, along with the remaining local lords, whose timar benefices were much less secure than the property of the new regional dynasties protected in the religious foundations.<sup>39</sup> But not all of the apparently de-peripherised regions came under imperial control; there remained zones which the central administration was able to bring under its command only gradually, if at all. It is no coincidence that these were classical outposts such the highland regions of the western Balkans (Montenegro, northern Albania) or the periphery of the Eurasian step, in Dobruja. Here, internal colonisation by the Ottomans was a much more drawn-out process or, in the western Balkans, never reached the levels witnessed in the eastern part of the peninsula.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> M. Kiel, "Krieg und Frieden an der Unteren Donau. Siedlungsgeschichtliche und demographische Bemerkungen über die Kaza Zıştova – Svištov 1460–1878 anhand osmanischer administrativer Quellen", in: R. Lauer / H.-G. Majer (eds.), *Osmanen und Islam in Südosteuropa*, Göttingen, 2014, p. 285–301.

<sup>39</sup> Kiprovská, "Shaping the Ottoman Borderland", p. 208–209.

<sup>40</sup> B. Đurđev, *Turska vlast u Crnoj Gori u XVI i XVII veku*, Sarajevo, 1953.

It is only recently that thorough research has been conducted on the interplay between colonising anti-nomic dervishes who did not strictly observe *şeriat* and *Yürüks* in northeastern Bulgaria, who proved equally difficult to integrate. In an initial phase from the late fourteenth century onwards, dervishes and *Yürüks* conquered this sparsely populated area; in the early sixteenth century, the Empire deported *Kızılbaş* from eastern Anatolia, who further strengthened the non-conformist religious character of the region. Imperial rule was established only gradually, being consolidated in the few towns in a region that was ethnically Turkish yet religiously and socially headstrong.

While an Ottoman administration covered large swathes of the Balkans in the second half of the fifteenth century, closer inspection reveals various regional and local forms of rule that existed alongside one another, albeit in a process of dissolution: the important regional principalities of the frontier commanders; the few remaining long-established regional dynasties, some of whom had aligned themselves with the Ottomans; remote mountainous zones (for instance the Vlachs of the western Balkans, even if they were subject to the *timar* system) and on the edge of the steppe; and then the more centralised regions, i.e. those administered as sultanic domains and *timar* zones. In the case of the latter, a key difference was whether the *timariots* came from abroad (to Albania from Anatolia; to Bosnia from Anatolia, the southern Balkans or Hungary, i.e. as Islamised Magyars) or were defeated local rulers. Another important factor was the extent to which the system of rotating beneficiaries was actually implemented, that is, whether there was a genuine break with the local power structures; in some cases, the *Sipahi* were transferred to other regions, while in others they could continue to run their old fiefdoms. A further point to note is that this was anything but a static system. Rather, there was a development towards stronger centralisation that was accompanied by a break with pre-Ottoman power relations.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> K. Moustakas, “Early Evidence on the Introduction of *Timar* in the Balkans and its Use as a Means of Incorporation. The *pronoia* of Laskaris”, *Südost-Forschungen* 68, 2009, p. 63–95; I. Beldiceanu-Steinherr – Raúl Estangüi Gómez, “Autour du document de 1386 en faveur de Radoslav Sablja (Şabya/Sampias): du beylicat au sultanat, étape méconnue de l’État ottoman”, *Turcica* 45, 2014, p. 159–186; H. Inalcik, “Timariotes chrétiens en Albanie au 15e siècle”, *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 4, 1952, p. 118–138; F. Duka, “Muzakajt – një lidhëz e fuqishme midis kohëve paraosmane dhe osmane”, in: idem, *Shekujt osmane në hapësirën shqiptare*, Tiranë, 2009, p. 27–40; N. Beldiceanu, “Timariotes chrétiens en Thessalie (1454/55)”, *Südost-Forschungen* 44, 1985, p. 45–81; N. Filipović, “Vlasi i upostava timarskog sistema u Hercegovini I”, *Godišnjak Akademije nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine 12/Centar za balkanološka istraživanja* 10, 1974, p. 127–221; S. Rudić, “Bosnian Nobility after the fall of the Kingdom of Bosnia in 1463”, in Rudić / Aslantaş, *Establishment*, 103–127; M. Premović, “Settlements and Population of the Present-Day Montenegrin Polimlje in the Second Half of 15<sup>th</sup> Century”, *Belleten* 83, 2019, p. 555–584; G. Boykov, “Karlzâde ‘Ali Bey: An Ottoman Dignitary’s Pious Endowment and the Emergence of the Town of Karlova in Central Bulgaria”, in: C. Kafadar / G.A. Tekin (eds.), *Defterology. Festschrift in honor of Heath Lowry*, Harvard, 2013, p. 247–267.

The Ottoman frontier region must be seen as complementary to its Christian counterpart: both Hungary and, to a lesser extent, Venice tried to halt Ottoman expansion with their own extensive defence of the frontier. Hungary relied on both vassal states from Bosnia to Walachia and the establishment of frontier banats from Slavonia to Temes. Of central importance was the voivodship of Transylvania, which under John Hunyadi not only repelled Ottoman invasions but also embarked on its own offensive forays into the Ottoman Balkans. Other players of great importance to domestic politics were the banats of Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia and Macsó/Maçva. After the Hungarian retreat from Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia were merged in 1476 and new banats were created in Jajce, Srebrenik and Šabac. As on the Ottoman side of the frontier, the Hungarian areas also saw the development of an aristocratic elite whose importance and power derived from the war: besides Hunyadi, around the mid-fifteenth century these dynasties included the Újlakis (for instance Miklós, Voivode of Transylvania and King of Bosnia), the Tallócis or the Rozgonyis<sup>42</sup>. The protagonists on both sides were well acquainted and had a similar style of combat, and both sides had a culture of the epic – for instance Hunyadi as Sibirjanin Janko in the Serbian heroic epic or the glorification of the Mihaloğlu by the poet Suzi from Prizren.<sup>43</sup> A regional elite defined by fighting on the frontier also emerged in the particularly exposed Venetian Albania, especially in the Shkodra region, where Venice recruited local pronoiars and patricians along with entire village communities and tribes. Marinus Barletius produced a literary monument to this society in his *De scodrensi obsidione*.<sup>44</sup>

This outline is intended to demonstrate that however important the studies on the Ottoman serhad as a fluid frontier region may be, they must be complementary to analysis of the equally fluid – i.e. receding – frontier regions of Hungary and Venice; the military frontier with the Ottomans existed long before the Habsburgs. The backbone of the Hungarian defence of its frontier was formed by a combination of mobile frontier troops led by regional aristocrats, supported by a (double) line of frontier redoubts and castles with a forefield of vassal lords. And as in the early modern period, the militarised societies on both sides of the frontier had much in common in terms of their organisation, style of combat, habitus, concepts of honour and their self-image in epic poetry.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, p. 11–13.

<sup>43</sup> Kiprovska, “Shaping”, p. 196–197, A. Sirri Levend, *Gazavât-nâmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Gazavât-nâmesi*, Ankara, 2000, reprint of 1956; cf. the discussion by A. Tietze: “overall, it cannot be rated very highly as a work of poetry, even if there is no shortage of formally elegant verses carried by the zest of folk poetry. Nor will the narrative embellished with fairytale elements offer much that is new to the pragmatic historian”; *Oriens* 10/2, 1957, p. 306).

<sup>44</sup> Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, p. 476–502; 521–528; St. Zahammer, *De obsidione scodrensi / Über die Belagerung von Skutari*, Vienna, 2017.

<sup>45</sup> M. Köhbach, “Gellérthegy-Gerz Ilyas Tepesi. Ein Berg und sein Heiliger”, *Südost-Forschungen* 37, 1978, p. 130–144 on the excellent example of Gerz Ilyas, who was immortalised as Gjergj Elezi in the Albanian epic. For a reinterpretation of the Hungarian frontier system which was far less systematic than

Finally, let us consider another space: the diaspora. With the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, there emerged for the first time in the region's history what one might call a political diaspora, that is, a political Balkan beyond the Balkans themselves in the form of political refugees who sought to influence their old homeland and gain status in their new environment by pointing to their noble origins and suffering in battle with the Turks.

The advancing frontier region also brought with it constantly shifting zones of devastation. It generally took around eighty years from the first Ottoman attack for a region to be completely conquered. During these eighty years, the affected areas were exposed to relentless plundering by the Ottoman frontier commanders, whose prime aim was abduction. Fear of capture, enslavement and pillaging drove thousands to flee their towns and villages for local sanctuaries: from Serbia over the Danube, where the Hungarian crown awarded Serbian noblemen fiefdoms; from Albania, Herzegovina and Bosnia to the Albanian and Dalmatian coast, where they seldom remained however due to limited resources, and the Venetian parts of Greece; Albanians settled in nearby Corfu, Moreots on the Ionian islands, while Byzantines went to Venetian Crete. Whenever possible, they returned to their homelands once the Ottoman troops had left, both the Herzegovinians who sought protection for their families and cattle in the Ragusan city of Ston, and the Albanian nobles who returned from Corfu. It was certainly not the case, then, that those seeking help immediately turned to Catholic Europe. Recent studies have shown just how close trade relations, but also cultural ties between Crete and late Byzantine Constantinople were. Cretans sought careers in Constantinople, as did men from Monemvasia. Conversely, Byzantium scholars well-disposed to Church union sought shelter in Venetian Crete, where they were protected from harassment by Orthodox zealots. From the Slavic regions of the eastern Balkans, on the other hand, there was gradual migration to the two young principalities of Walachia and Moldavia, which took in at least some of the old courtly and monastic Serbian and Bulgarian elite. In sum, those who fled remained, whenever possible, close to their homelands and those who could return did so.<sup>46</sup>

usually assumed and which followed spatial patterns sometimes overlooked by research s. D. Salihović, *Definition, extent, and administration of the Hungarian frontier toward the Ottoman Empire in the reign of Matthias Corvinus, 1458–1490*, PhD dissertation, Cambridge, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Th. Ganchou, "La fraterna societas des crétois Nikolaos et Géorgios Polos (Polo), entre Constantinople et Moncastro: affaires, dévotion et humanisme", *Thesaurismata* 39/40, 2009/10, p. 111–228; idem, "Sujets grecs crétois de la Sérénissime à Constantinople à la veille de 1453 (Iôannès et Nikolaos Polos): une ascension sociale brutalement interrompue", in: G. Ortalli / O.J. Schmitt / E. Orlando (eds.), *Il Commonwealth veneziano*, Venice, 2015, p. 339–390 ; C. Delacroix-Besnier, *Les Dominicains et la Chrétienté grecque aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Rome, 1997; eadem, "Les Grecs unionistes réfugiés en Italie et leur influence culturelle", in: M. Balard / A. Ducellier (eds.), *Migrations et diasporas méditerranéennes.*, Paris, 2002, p. 59–73; eadem, "Manuel Calécas et les frères Chrysobergè, grecs et prêcheurs", in: *Les échanges culturels au Moyen Âge. XXXII<sup>e</sup> congrès de la SHMES*, Paris, 2002, p. 151–16; Th. Ganchou, "Démétrios Kydonès, les frères Chrysobergès et la Crète (1397–1401): de nouveaux documents", in: Ch. Maltezou / P. Schreiner (eds.), *Bisanzio, Venezia e il mondo franco-*

Thus, a space emerged in an arc around the Ottoman Balkans, stretching from Crete to Dubrovnik and Dalmatia and further on to Hungary and Walachia, that was sought out by those who did not wish to submit to or compromise with the Ottomans, but intended to continue fighting them (→ cf. the contribution of Aleksandar Krstić and Adrian Magina in this volume). Hungary and Venice incorporated anyone who was fit for action into their armies, but not only to do battle with the Ottomans. Thus, while Serbs fought in the Hungarian army against Ottoman Bosnians, they were also deployed against the Habsburgs; Orthodox Albanians and Greeks served as *stradioti* (light cavalry) in Venice's campaigns not only against the sultans, but also in the wars of the Italian Renaissance; Albanians and Greeks who fled to Lower Italy, often aristocrats, served in the armies of Spain. The soldiers thus followed the political logic of their new masters (just as the inhabitants of the Balkans who went over to the Ottomans had to march on Anatolia)<sup>47</sup>. Venice, Spain and Hungary accepted highborn refugees into their aristocracy or patriciates; some nobles continued to be prominent figures in the fight against the Ottomans from their new homes: Vuk Grgurević or Dmitar Jakšić fought on the southern Hungarian frontier, and in 1481, a group of young political refugees from the Dukagjin, Kastrioti and Crnojević families set out from Italy to regain their dynasties after the death of Mehmed II. Others appointed themselves political and symbolic representatives of the Balkan diaspora at the European courts, for instance Konstantin Araniti in the Papal States.<sup>48</sup>

Some of the political diaspora did indeed attempt to influence events – but they lacked a clearly recognisable figurehead; many of the most gifted Balkan princes had either been killed or had died of natural causes during the war (in the

*greco*, Venice, 2002, p. 435–494; G. Saint-Guillain, “La carrière d’un prélat unioniste au milieu du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle et l’établissement du culte grec à Venise”, *Thesaurismata* 39/40, 2009/10, p. 91–110; L. Cotovanu, “L’émigration sud-danubienne vers la Valachie et la Moldavie et sa géographie (XV<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles): la potentialité heuristique d’un sujet peu connu”, *Cahiers balkaniques* 42, 2014, online edition; F. Solomon, *Politică și confesiune la început de ev mediu moldovenesc*, Iași, 2004; E. Völkl, *Das rumänische Fürstentum Moldau und die Ostslaven im 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden, 1973; K. Zach, *Orthodoxe Kirche und rumänisches Volksbewußtsein im 15. bis 18. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden, 1977.

<sup>47</sup> That many Sipahi did not wish to leave the Balkans during the Ottoman campaigns in Anatolia, such as that fought against Uzun Hasan in 1473, provides considerable insight into the question of Ottomanisation; they were local lords who entered into Ottoman service in order to retain their property, not to follow the sultan eastwards. Just how dangerous the war in the east was is demonstrated by the death of Mihailo Angelović, brother of Grand Vizier Mahmud, in battle with Uzun Hasan; Sigismund alias Ishak Bey Kraloğlu (“King’s Son”), son of the Bosnian King Stefan Tomaš, also took part in the campaigns; Rudić, “Bosnian Nobility”, p. 109–110, 117; A. Krstić, “Prilog biografiji velikog vojvode Mihaila Anđelovića”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 52, 2015, p. 359–379.

<sup>48</sup> Krstić, “Which realm will you opt for?”, p. 148–150; P. Petta, *Stradioti, soldati albanesi in Italia, sec. XV–XIX*, Lecce, 1996; idem, *Despoti d’Epiro, Principi di Macedonia*, Lecce, 1999; F. Babinger, *Das Ende der Arianiten*, Munich, 1960; J. Harris, “Despots, Emperors, and Balkan Identity in Exile”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 44/3, 2013, p. 643–661; idem, *Greek Emigrés in the West, 1400–1520*, Camberley, 1995.

fifteenth century, e.g. Emperor Constantine XI, Skanderbeg, and the Walachian princes Mihai, Dan II and Vlad the Impaler who all fell on the battlefield– the Walachian losses on this level were higher, then, than those of the Serbs). The majority, however, had sided with the Ottomans. Many of the non-clerical refugees were minors and their mothers (for instance the Araniti and Kastioti), wives of fallen rulers (the Queen of Bosnia), or regional princes in their autumn years (Thomas Palaiologos); few were in a position to act.

It was a different situation with the clerics however, particularly the Byzantine Unionists: first the Cretan Dominicans, and later two outstanding Renaissance figures, the Greek cardinals Bessarion and Isidore of Kiev. It was not the princes, but these two men who headed the political diaspora: Isidor was not only a man of letters, but did not shy from danger either, neither in Moscow nor in his final months in Constantinople; he knew his head would be a prized trophy for Mehmed II, and in a daring escapade fled in disguise while the sultan was a presented with the severed head of a Greek monk as proof of the cardinal's death in battle.<sup>49</sup> Bessarion on the other hand relentlessly advocated crusades in Italy and the Holy Roman Empire; he was the great speechmaker of the Ottoman wars, whose rousing rhetoric long shaped the occidental image of battle with the Turks.<sup>50</sup> Along with the Greek cardinals, one should not forget those Dalmatian and Albanian scholars who confronted Catholic Europe with their experiences, urging their hosts to defend themselves: one of the most successful books of the European early modern period was the life of Skanderbeg by the Shkodran exile Marinus Barletius, whose integration has a priest in Veneto is now well documented.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> A monograph on Isidor has yet to be written; see the detailed studies by P. Schreiner, "Ein byzantinischer Gelehrter zwischen Ost und West. Zur Biographie des Isidor von Kiew und seinem Besuch in Lviv (1436)", *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* ser. 3, 3, 2006, p. 215–228; idem, "Geträumte Topographie. Isidor von Kiew, ein unbekanntes Kloster und die Justinianssäule zu Beginn des 15. Jahrhunderts im Vat.Gr. 1891", *Travaux et Mémoires* 14, 2002, p. 553–560; idem, "Ein seltsames Stemma. Isidor von Kiew, die Leichenrede Kaiser Manuels II. auf seinen Bruder Theodoros und eine moderne Ausgabe", in: I. Vassis et al. (ed.), *Lesearten. Festschrift für Athanasios Kambylis zum 70. Geburtstag*, Berlin, 1998, p. 211–225; idem, "Neues zu Leben und Werk des Isidor von Kiew. Kritische Bemerkungen zu zwei Biographien", *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 69, 2019, p. 289–301; O.J. Schmitt, "Kaiserrede und Zeitgeschichte im späten Byzanz. Ein Panegyrikos Isidors von Kiew aus dem Jahre 1429", *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 48, 1998, p. 209–242.

<sup>50</sup> C. Märkl / Ch. Kaiser / Th. Ricklin (eds.), *"Inter Graecos latinissimus, inter Latinos graecissimus". Bessarion zwischen den Kreuzzügen*, Berlin/Boston, 2013, therein: Th. Ricklin, "Bessarions Türken und andere Türken interessierter Kreise. Von der Schwierigkeit, ein Feindbild gelehrt zu plausibilisieren", p. 277–300; P. Kourniakos, *Die Kreuzzugslegation Kardinal Bessarions in Venedig (1463–1464)*, PhD thesis, University of Cologne, 2009; L. Mohler, "Bessarions Instruktion für die Kreuzzugspredigt in Venedig (1463)", *Römische Quartalschrift* 35, 1927, p. 337–349; J. Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II.", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49, 1995, p. 111–207, here p. 116–120.

<sup>51</sup> L. Nadin, *Shqipëria e rigjetur: zbulim gjurmësh shqiptare në kulturën dhe artin e Venetos në shek. XVI = Albania ritrovata: recuperi di presenze albanesi nella cultura e nell'arte del cinquecento veneto*, Tirana, 2012.

During the fifteenth century, there also emerged the figure of the itinerant religious refugee who, in exchange for humanist teaching, or by pointing to his aristocratic origins, or offering conspiratorial plans, earned his keep at the courts of Europe. From the Holy Roman Empire to Burgundy, France and England, diaspora's clerical circles contained, then, Orthodox Unionists, converted Orthodox and Catholics. Such figures would characterise courtly life in the Mediterranean for the next two hundred years.<sup>52</sup> This heterogeneous diaspora elite were supported by many of their compatriots who had fled to Italy, the Kingdom of Naples, the ports of the Papal States and to Venice, which Bessarion called a "second Byzantium". From the southern Italian Arbëresh to the Burgenland Croats, these minority populations are a reminder of the Balkan exodus triggered by the Ottoman conquest.<sup>53</sup>

But the conquest triggered other migrations too, within the Ottoman Balkans themselves; not only did refugees leave their homelands in droves for the west and north, but there was also mass resettlement in the region, and not only from Anatolia. There is insufficient research on migrations and reconfigurations of settlement structures in the militarily stabilised Balkans under Ottoman rule; here we can only outline the potential for further studies: there was an Ottoman equivalent to the political pensioners at the European courts, namely those dethroned Orthodox princes who were tolerated by the sultans, such as the Despot of the Morea, Demetrios Palaiologos, or those ladies who flocked to the Eževo court of Sultana Mara Branković in Macedonia. Family members could go their separate ways: Thomas Palaiologos went to Rome, Demetrios to Thrace; the last queen of Bosnia, Queen Jelena, daughter of Lazar Branković and Helena Palaiologina, was remembered as the "evil woman" who together with Mara Branković and Katharina, the widow of Ulrich of Cilli, formed a female Serb triumvirate within in the Ottoman Empire that hatched poisonous intrigues. Mara and Katharina, both daughters of the Despot of Serbia Georg Branković, had been married to the west (Cilli) and east (Murad II) and rejoined in their later years. Mara ensured via her will that her sister enjoyed tribute from Dubrovnik.<sup>54</sup> These cases pale into insignificance however compared with the migration of Islamised high nobles to the court of the sultan, where they

<sup>52</sup> P. Bartl, *Der Westbalkan zwischen Spanischer Monarchie und Osmanischen Reich*, Wiesbaden, 1974; N. Malcolm, *Agents of Empire*, London, 2015.

<sup>53</sup> B. Imhaus, *Le minoranze orientali a Venezia 1300-1510*, Rome, 1997; A. Ducellier / B. Doumerc / B. Imhaus / J. de Miceli, *Les chemins de l'exil. Bouleversements de l'Est européen et migrations vers l'Ouest à la fin du moyen âge*, Paris, 1992; Lovorka Čoralić, *U gradu Svetoga Marka*, Zagreb, 2001; L. Nadin, *Migrazione e integrazione. Il caso degli albanesi a Venezia (1479-1552)*, Rome, 2008; O. Katsiardi-Hering, "Migrationen von Bevölkerungsgruppen in Südosteuropa vom 15. bis zum Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts", *Südost-Forschungen* 59/60, 2000/2001, p. 125-148.

<sup>54</sup> Đ. Tošić, "Poslednja bosanska kraljica Mara (Jelena)", *Zbornik za istoriju BiH* 3, 2002, p. 29-60.

entered into active service, the labour migration of the itinerant Sipahi, for which the source material is very sparse, or Vlach settlement in the western Balkans.<sup>55</sup>

This attempt to outline the age of the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans in its spatial dimension collates perspectives that may be very well researched in their own right, but have yet to be considered collectively. They demonstrate that while the history of the Ottoman conquest is certainly regional history, that is not its only, nor indeed its primary status. Furthermore, they also illustrate the extent to which the history of the Balkans can only be understood and written as European, Mediterranean and European history.

oliver.schmitt@univie.ac.at

<sup>55</sup> H. Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid. Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Bayezids II. (1481–1512)*, Berlin, 1983.



CONQUERED BY SWORD, SUBDUED BY CHARITY?  
GEOSPATIAL AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF LAND WAQFS  
IN OTTOMAN BULGARIA

GRIGOR BOYKOV  
(Austrian Academy of Sciences, ÖAW)

The article focuses on the study of the landed estates of the Islamic pious endowments (waqfs) in Bulgaria by, on the one hand, building a complete database of the settlements under the control of the waqfs, and on the other by attributing a spatial reference to those villages whose precise locations were identified. Taking non-aggregated microdata from the Ottoman tax registers as a point of departure, the study aims at demonstrating a novelty approach towards the spatial analysis of data extracted from the Ottoman primary sources and at proposing a methodology that can be used in other parts of the Balkans. Focusing on a territory, which roughly constitutes 1/5 of the Balkan peninsula, the study regards Bulgaria as a sample that has the potential to shed light on the significance of the *waqf* institution in administering, revitalizing, repopulating, and maintaining the social order in the Ottoman Balkans. General conclusions about the spatial distributions of the landed possessions, the social stratification of the endowers, and quantitative analysis of the revenues and population under the control of the *waqfs*, presented in the article signal the necessity for more studies that can widen the territorial perspective and demonstrate the pivotal role of the Islamic endowments in establishing firm control over the newly conquered territories in the Balkans.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Balkans, Bulgaria, *waqf*, settlements, GIS, spatial analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

In a seminal paper written more than seven decades ago, the father of modern Ottoman social and economic history Ömer Lütfi Barkan stressed the important role played by Islamic pious foundations (*waqf*/pl. *awqaf*) in colonizing, reviving, and administering the newly conquered territories in the Ottoman Balkans.<sup>1</sup> In Barkan's view, shared by other pioneering scholars after him, the central Ottoman authority facilitated and encouraged the establishment of Muslim charitable foundations in the then Christian Balkans by allotting landed properties to selected trusted individuals, who subsequently transformed their possessions into pious

<sup>1</sup> Ö.L. Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler. İstilâ Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zâviyeler", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 2, 1942, p. 279–386.

endowments.<sup>2</sup> Normally these were badly ravaged, depopulated territories, which were revitalized thanks to purposefully directed colonization by the Anatolian Muslim population and the forced settlement of war captives. Thus, the Ottoman state secured loyal enclaves and contact zones within the dominantly Christian surrounding territories, which facilitated the introduction and establishment of the Ottoman institutions and ruling order in the region.<sup>3</sup> While historians like Halil İnalçık were inclined to regard the establishment of Ottoman rule in the Balkans as a gradual, multistage process in which gaining of the goodwill of the indigenous people, termed by him “*istimâlet*”, played a major role,<sup>4</sup> others view it as delicate balancing in the application of a “carrot and stick” approach.<sup>5</sup>

The Islamic charity in the Ottoman context and the *waqf* institution related to it have long attracted scholarly attention.<sup>6</sup> Bulgarian historiography on the subject is especially prolific and has produced multiple fine studies, discussing subjects such as the legal status and land ownership of the pious endowments, the various taxes imposed on the population residing in the territories controlled by *waqfs*, and the economic role of these foundations in the urban centers, all of which have triggered further scholarly debates.<sup>7</sup> The general importance of the *waqfs* for the history of Bulgaria in the first centuries after the Ottoman conquest of the country was thus understood early on. Nevertheless, the studies on the Islamic pious endowments in Bulgaria, especially these in possession of landed territories, suffer

<sup>2</sup> M.T. Gökbilgin, “Les Institutions sociales et culturelles de la colonisation et leur action spirituelle dans la péninsule balkanique : les zavviyes (les couvents) et les muallimhane (les écoles primaires)”, in H.Z. Ülken, ed., *Communication du XV<sup>e</sup> Congrès international de sociologie, organisé à Istanbul (11–17 septembre 1952) au nom de l’Institut international de sociologie*, Istanbul, 1952, p. 256–260.

<sup>3</sup> H. İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I: 1300–1600, Cambridge, 1994, p. 120–132.

<sup>4</sup> H. İnalçık, “Ottoman Methods of Conquest”, *Studia Islamica*, 2, 1954, p. 103–129.

<sup>5</sup> H.W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, Albany, 2003, p. 68; H. W. Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350–1550: The Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece*, Istanbul, 2008. See the recent overview of the major trends, approaches, and terminology related to the Ottoman conquest, in O. J. Schmitt, ed., “Introduction”, *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans: Interpretations and Research Debates*, Wien, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Recent overviews of the literature on the theme in western languages and Turkish are provided in A. Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem*, Albany, 2002; A. Singer, “Serving Up Charity: The Ottoman Public Kitchen”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 35:3, 2005, p. 481–500; A. Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, Cambridge; New York, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> V. Mutafchieva, *Le vakif, un aspect de la structure socio-économique de l’Empire ottoman, XV<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> s.*, Sofia, 1981; V. Mutafchieva, *Osmanska socialno-ikonomičska istorija*, Sofia, 1993; E. Radušev, *Agrarnite institucii v Osmanskata imperija prez XV–XVIII v.*, Sofia, 1995; B. Cvetkova, “Harakterni čerti na osmanskija feodalizăm v bălgarskite zemi”, *Istoričeski pregled*, 4–5, 1950, p. 380–392. For a very detailed overview of the literature related to *waqfs* in Bulgaria and the Balkans, see S. Ivanova, “Introduction”, in E. Radušev, S. Ivanova, and R. Kovačev, eds., *Inventory of Ottoman Turkish Documents about Waqf Preserved in the Oriental Department at the St. Cyril and Methodius National Library*, Sofia, 2003.

from two significant weaknesses. Firstly, a genuine attempt to collect data for all villages under the control of the *waqfs* was never attempted. Undoubtedly this is not an easy task, and conditions during the Cold War were not very favorable for the scholars in Bulgaria, but as this paper demonstrates the task is certainly not impossible and does not take a lifetime to achieve. In short, in spite of the many merits that the studies on *waqfs* in Bulgaria possess, and their undoubted success in establishing that the *waqfs* were important, they fall short in providing an answer to the question “how important”, simply because sufficient quantitative data were never collected. Secondly, as a rule almost all studies on the pious endowments in Ottoman Bulgaria lack a spatial reference to the data analyzed; and those studies that do provide some reference to a space, do so in a tentative manner, which makes their information and often their conclusions very difficult to use.

This paper attempts to compensate for these two historiographic deficiencies by on the one hand building a complete database of the settlements under the control of the *waqfs*, and on the other by attributing a spatial reference to those villages whose precise locations were identified in the study. The spatially referenced database of the study covers only the territories that fall within the modern borders of Bulgaria. There are apparent issues with such a choice for territorial spread for the study, but the lack of usable digital resources forced the author to restrict the study to the confines of Bulgaria. Nonetheless, hopefully this paper, which is merely a preliminary report of ongoing research, demonstrates the validity of the methodological approaches. The study on *waqf* possessions in territories outside Bulgaria will continue, and hopefully national cadasters of Turkey, Greece, Northern Macedonia, and Serbia will make the access to cadastral data much easier in the near future. A digital historical gazetteer of the Ottoman Empire may also become available in coming years, which will make the process of identification of villages much easier and faster.

#### **LANDED POSSESSIONS OF THE *WAQFS*: RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This article addresses and seeks to provide answers to several research questions related to the role of the Islamic pious endowments in establishing control over and administering the lands of a considerable part of the eastern Balkans, i.e., the territory of modern Bulgaria. As stated above, the scholarship has long argued that the *waqfs* were a major player that took an active part in the redistribution of arable lands, pastures, and forests in the conquered territories, but a systematic effort to collect and aggregate the rich microdata from the Ottoman tax registers has not to date been made, nor has a spatial contextualization of the quantitative evidence upon which the thesis rests even been attempted. Therefore, the first research question in this paper is to determine what portion of the territory

of Bulgaria was held and controlled by one of the many pious endowments established in the course of the first two centuries of Ottoman rule. Furthermore, by giving a precise spatial reference to the data extracted from the Ottoman primary sources, the paper observes the spread of the landed possessions of the *waqfs* across the territory of Bulgaria and seeks to highlight the spatial patterns in their distribution. Secondly, since it has long been evident that the founders of pious endowments were far from socially homogeneous, the paper focuses on sorting the available data in accordance with the stratified groups of endowers, thus discerning behavioral patterns within the different groups. Particular attention is paid to the *waqf*-turned landed estates of the mighty noble Ottoman-era dynasties of commanders of the frontier raiders (*akıncı*), who not only conquered territories for the Ottoman household but also established a tradition in administering and ruling the semi-autonomous enclaves that lasted until the creation of the modern Bulgarian state. Thirdly, once the actual territorial spread of the *waqf* lands becomes known, the paper turns toward a qualitative analysis of the revenues collected from the territory of Bulgaria in the 1530s and will demonstrate the weight of the revenue share collected by the pious endowments in comparison to the shares of the sultanic domains (*hass-i hümayun*),<sup>8</sup> large prebends (*hass*), and the *timar* system. Answering the question of how much of the total revenues collected from Bulgaria were reserved for the endowments, the paper demonstrates the position of *waqfs* within the administration practices for the territories under Ottoman control. Lastly, the paper focuses on the available population data and examines the proportional distribution of taxpayers, Muslim and Christian alike, within the territories of the four different land regimes, namely the *waqfs*, sultanic domains, large prebends, and the regular *timars*. A focus on the qualitative share and the spatial distribution of the population residing in lands owned by the pious endowments offers a closer and more precise picture of the role of the *waqfs* as agents of revitalization and resettlement of territories depopulated prior to or during the Ottoman conquest.

#### SOURCES, METHODOLOGY, AND RESEARCH STRATEGY

For many of the other fundamental themes examined in modern Ottoman studies, a researcher attempting to attain greater analytic depth must inevitably come up against the discouraging lack of organized data suitable for elaborate quantitative or spatial analysis. The present study on the *waqfs* of Bulgaria is no exception: it too lacked any readily usable material and had to turn first to the Ottoman primary sources for collecting and curating usable data. Quite naturally, the sources that have the potential to furnish easily manageable data on the

<sup>8</sup> The revenues from the sultanic domains or more precisely the imperial demesne were not meant for the rulers' private use, but were reserved for the central treasury. See H. İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History*, p. 141.

settlements owned by the *waqfs*, their populations and revenues, are the Ottoman tax registers, the so-called *tahrir defterleri*. In the second half of the sixteenth century, their sections dealing with the possessions of the pious endowments were often bound as separate *evkaf defters*.<sup>9</sup> These sources offer the opportunity for the extraction of non-aggregated data per settlement or even in greater detail per individual household level, and therefore do not suffer from possible manipulations or mistakes effected by the imperial administration in the process of aggregating data.<sup>10</sup> A typical registry record in these taxation documents consists of: (i) information about the endower and often a short history of the creation of the *waqf*; (ii) the name of the settlement owned by the endowment, and information about the three-tier administrative unit to which it belonged (*sancak-kaza-nahiye*); (iii) a list

<sup>9</sup> The bulk of the data used in the paper is extracted from the large synoptic (*icmal*) registers compiled in 1530 that cover most of the territory of the Ottoman state in what must have been an empire-wide attempt to update the taxation information. Many of these registers are published in facsimile and supplied with indexes by the General Directorate of the archives in Turkey. *167 Numaralı Muhâsebe-i Vilâyet-i Rûm-ili Defteri (937/1530)*, vol. 1: Paşa Livâsı Solkol Kazâları: Gümülcina, Yeñice-i Kara-su, Drama, Zihne, Nevrekop, Timur-hisârı, Siroz, Selanik, Sidre-kapsi, Avrat-hisârı, Yeñice-Vardar, Kara-verye, Serfiçe, İştin, Kestorya, Bihilişte, Görice, Florina ve Köstendil Livâsı, Ankara, 2003; *370 Numaralı Muhâsebe-i Vilâyet-i Rûm-ili Defteri (937/1530)*, vol. 1. Paşa (Sofya) ve Vize Livâları ile Sağkol Kazâları: Edirne, Dimetoka, Ferecik, Keşan, Kızıl-ağaç, Zağra-i Eski-hisâr, İpsala, Filibe, Tatar-bâzârı, Samakov, Üsküb, Kalkan-delen, Kırçova, Manastır, Pırlepe ve Köprülü, Ankara, 2001. Further data checks and extractions were done in the following registers: BOA TD 311 (1557); TD 382 (1555–56); TD 470 (1596); TD 521 (1570); TD 542 (1566–69); TD 566 (1596); TD 713 (1579–80) and Tapu ve Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi, KuK 61 (1570). I take the opportunity to express my gratitude to Hristo Hristozov (Sofia U.) for his data extraction work conducted under the project “The Fate of the Waqf Properties in Bulgaria during the Transitional Period from Imperial to National Governance”, funded by Bulgaria’s Science Fund, ДН 10/14–17.12.2016.

<sup>10</sup> These registers exclude the social categories in the Ottoman state, which were not subject to taxation, like the military class (*askeri*) or the religious personnel (*ulema*). Subjects (*reaya*) who rendered specialized services to the state and respectively enjoyed a favorable taxation status as a rule are registered in separate registers. The limitations of the *tahrir* registers have long been pointed in the relevant literature, see for instance H.W. Lowry, “The Ottoman Tahrir Defterleri as a Source for Social and Economic History: Pitfalls and Limitations”, *Studies in Defterology. Ottoman Society in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Istanbul, 1992; G. Dávid, “The Age of Unmarried Male Children in the Tahrir Defters (Notes on the Coefficient)”, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 31:3, 1977, p. 347–357; G. Dávid, “Tahrir Defterlerinin Neşri Hakkında Notlar”, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 13, 1993, p. 45–48; K. Çiçek, “Osmanlı Tahrir Defterlerinin Kullanımında Görülen bazı Problemler ve Metod Arayışları”, *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 97, 1995, p. 93–111; F. Emecen, “Mufassaldan İcmale”, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 16, 1996, p. 37–44; G. Káldy-Nagy, “Quellenwert der Tahrir Defterleri für die osmanische Wirtschaftsgeschichte”, in H.G. Majer, ed., *Osmanistische Studien zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte: in memoriam Vančo Boškov*, Wiesbaden, 1986; B. Cvetkova, “Osmanskite Tahrir Defterleri kato izvori za istorijata na Bălgarija i balkanskite strani”, *Izvestija na dăržavnite arhivi*, 3, 1975, p. 127–157; E. Miljković, “Osmanske popisne knjige defteri kao izvori za istorijsku demografiju – mogućnosti istraživanja, tačnost pokazatelja i metodološke nedoumice”, *Teme*, 34:1, 2010, p. 363–373. For a recent overview of tahrir-based literature that puts a strong emphasis on data reliability issues, thus drastically undermining the potential use of the tahrirs, see S. Faroqhi, “Ottoman Population”, in S. Faroqhi and K. Fleet, eds., *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 2 – *The Ottoman Empire as a World Power, 1453–1603*, Cambridge, 2012.

of the taxpayers – heads of households, bachelors, and widows – residing in the settlement, divided by confession into Muslims and Christians; (iv) a synopsis of the expected revenues, based on estimated average predictions for various dues and taxes. The task of this paper therefore is to extract reliable micro-level data from these sources and, by attributing a spatial reference to the thus-assembled data, to aggregate them and subject them to further spatial and quantitative analysis. While the data extraction from the sources is a time-consuming but relatively easy process for a qualified Ottomanist, the spatial distribution of data is, on the contrary, an extremely difficult task, due to the lack of any gazetteer of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, every settlement toponym derived from the Ottoman tax registers which this study uses had to be subjected to a detailed analysis, allowing the identification of its precise location in Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup> The spatial identification of the settlements recorded in the Ottoman registers was done thanks to the usage of multiple historical maps that contain rich toponymic information, predating the systematic obliteration of Turkish toponymy effected in several campaigns by the modern Bulgarian state.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> A general historical gazetteer of the Ottoman Empire is not accessible in any form, but two recent publications on Upper Thrace make a small but certainly pioneering step for the territory of Bulgaria. D. Borisov, *Spravochnik za selišta v Severna Trakiya prez XVI vek. Chast I: kazite Filibe i Tatar Pazarā, Asenovgrad*, 2014; D. Borisov, *Spravochnik za selišta v Severna Trakiya prez XVI vek. Chast II: kazite Zagra-i Eski Hisar i Kāzāl Agač, Vekiko Tārnovo*, 2016. The Ottoman settlement toponymy in Macedonia is covered by A. Stojanovski and D. Gjorgiev, *Naselbi i naselenie vo Makedonija – XV i XVI vek*, Skopje, 2001. The Tabula Imperii Byzantini (TIB) project of the Austrian Academy of Sciences contains data on the Ottoman period, but with regard to the focus of the project the data for the Ottoman period is not entirely systematic. The recently launched Digital TIB has the potential to offer more to the researchers of the Ottoman period.

<sup>12</sup> In spite of these efforts, close to a third of the settlements remained without a spatial reference. Future work that results in a comprehensive historical gazetteer of the Ottoman Empire might reveal the location of those settlements that remained unidentified in this study.

<sup>13</sup> The standard work, indicating many of the changes in macro toponymy in Bulgaria, is P. Koledarov and N. Mičev, *Promenite v imenata i statuta na selištata v Bālgarija: 1878–1972 g.*, Sofija, 1973. It however does not cover the changes effected in the 1980s during the anti-Turkish campaign of the communist government of Bulgaria. The toponymy “glossary” of S. Andreev, *Glossary of Settlement Names and Denominations of Administrative Territorial Units in Bulgarian Lands in 15<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Sofia, 2002 does not include any information about the sources, used by the author for extracting the Ottoman toponyms. The lack of possibility of validating the information and numerous wrong identifications makes the usage of this publication very uncertain. The historical maps used in the study are of various scales and qualities. The three main maps are *The Russian 3-verst military map* from 1877–78 (1:126 000); The Generalkarte von Mitteleuropa (1:200 000), result of the 3rd Military Mapping Survey of Austria-Hungary (1869–1887); and the *Erkân-i harbiye-i Umumiye Rumeli şahane haritası* (1:210 000) of the Ottoman army (from h. 1317/1901–02). The information from these maps was supplemented by smaller-scale maps such as the Ottoman map prepared by Mehmed Nusred Paşa. *Filibe Sancağının Harita Umumiyesi*, h. 1279/1862, a copy of the map is available in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul, BOA, HRT 220. This map is more popular in Heinrich Kiepert’s translation. *Karte des Sandjak Filibe (Philippopolis) aufgenommen nach Anordnung des dortigen Provinzial-Gouverneurs Mehemed-Nusret-Pascha*, 1876. The Soviet headquarters 1:50,000 map from the 1980s also proved an extremely useful tool. On data collection and the production of this map, see J. Davies and A.J. Kent, *The Red Atlas: How the Soviet Union Secretly Mapped the World*, Chicago; London, 2017. The modern Bulgarian 1:5000 map contains

Every settlement identified by the study as belonging to the landed properties held by one of the pious foundations received accurate XY coordinates, based on the Unified Classification of Administrative-Territorial and Territorial Units (EKATTE), the register number of places provided by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute (NSI) for the settlements that are extant today, and WGS-84 latitude and longitude coordinates based on satellite imagery for those settlement that are no longer extant.<sup>14</sup> The emerging database of identified *waqf* settlements was imported into ArcGIS Pro and a point layer was created. The metadata extracted from the Ottoman tax registers was attributed to each individual point and thus received a spatial reference. The illustration below (Fig. 1) is a visualization of the spatial spread of the identified settlements owned by pious endowments, represented as objects on a point layer, prepared for further manipulation of its metadata.

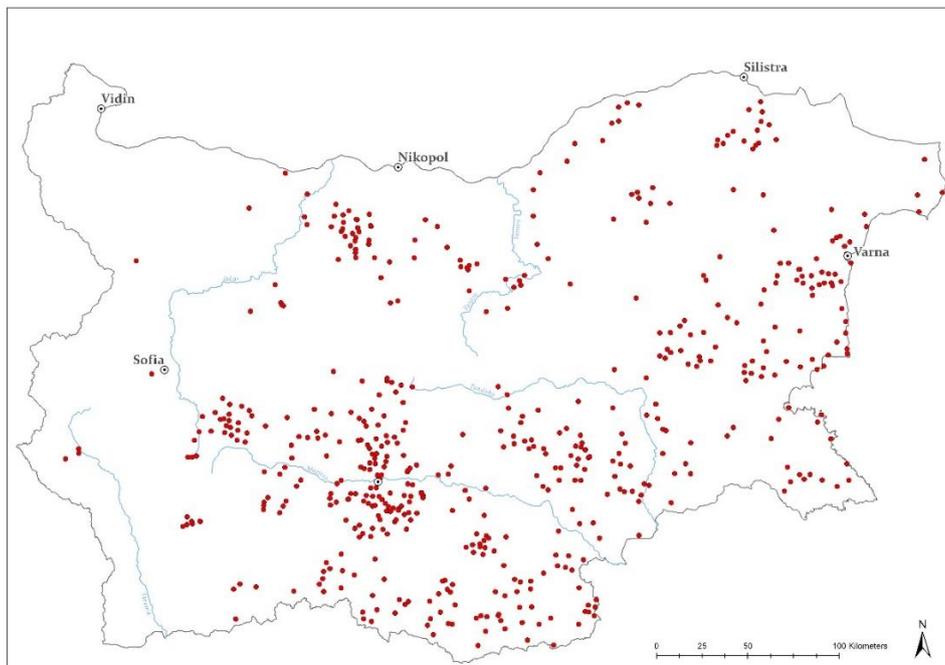


Fig. 1. Database of *Waqf* settlement in Bulgaria – point layer visualization.  
Created by G. Boykov (2020)

micro toponymy that often helps establishing the location of vanished settlements. This map was made available online by Vedrin Zhelyazkov – [www.kade.si](http://www.kade.si) (last visited on 15 May 2020).

<sup>14</sup> Precise locations of vanished settlements were established on basis of the geo-referenced detailed historical maps or modern Bulgarian cadastral information, which often indicates the names of vanished villages as local toponyms. Some of the thus identified vanished settlements were checked by field trips in the course of which precise ground control points were taken.

The point data presents the researcher with a good opportunity for observations of the spatial distribution of the *waqf* villages, but does not have the potential to offer much more in terms of research that aims at determining what was the actual amount of land in Bulgaria that was under the control of the endowments. Consequently, in order to build a layer that can provide a firm ground for an analysis of the land surface occupied by the *waqf* possessions, the point data was transferred to polygons using the Spatial Join function in ArcGIS. The polygons used for this data join originate from Bulgaria's Geodesy, Cartography, and Cadaster Agency and reflect the land surface areas of individual villages in accordance with the electronic land registers of the country, launched in 2009. The usage of modern land polygons in the analysis certainly might raise questions about their suitability for studying a far earlier period, because the data for the areas covered by the cadastral polygons is modern by nature. As much as this issue clearly deserves close attention, one can quite confidently state that in spite of the possible discrepancies that can arise from the usage of modern cadastral data, this is, in fact, the only currently available database of village lands in Bulgaria. Moreover, it is very improbable that even in the future scholarship will have access to cadastral data from the Ottoman period. Unlike the neighboring Habsburg Monarchy, which conducted its first cadastral surveys in the eighteenth century and continued to carry out further surveys in the course of the nineteenth century,<sup>15</sup> the Ottoman Empire never even attempted to produce a systematic cadaster of its European and Asian territories.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, there are no available data that can furnish a reconstruction of an Ottoman-era cadaster and accordingly provide

<sup>15</sup> E. Hofstätter, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der österreichischen Landesaufnahmen: ein Überblick der topographischen Aufnahmeverfahren, deren Ursprünge, ihrer Entwicklungen und Organisationsformen der vier österreichischen Landesaufnahmen*, Wien, 1990. Different parts of the cadastral surveys were georeferenced and made available by the MAPIRE project – <https://mapire.eu/en/browse/cadastral/> (last visited on 15 May 2020). G. Timár and S. Biszak, “Digitizing and Georeferencing of the Historical Cadastral Maps (1856–60) of Hungary”, *5th International Workshop on Digital Approaches in Cartographic Heritage. Vienna, Austria, 22–24 February 2010*, p. 559–564; E. Biszak et al., “Historical Topographic and Cadastral Maps of Europe in Spotlight – Evolution of the MAPIRE Map Portal”, *Proceedings 12<sup>th</sup> ICA Conference Digital Approaches to Cartographic Heritage, Venice, 26–28 April 2017*, p. 204–208.

<sup>16</sup> The Ottoman government ordered the cadastral survey of some of the large cities of the empire, such as Izmir (1850–56); Thessaloniki (1850–53); Bursa and Ioannina (1856–60). A. Y. Kaya, “Politics of Property Registration: Cadastre of Izmir in the Mid-Nineteenth Century”, *New Europe College Yearbook*, 2006 2005, p. 149–179; A. Y. Kaya, “Les villes ottomanes sous tension fiscale: les enjeux de l'évaluation cadastrale au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles”, in F. Bourillon and N. Vivier, eds., *La mesure cadastrale: estimer la valeur du foncier en Europe aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Rennes, 2012. The cadaster of Bursa expanded in 1858 and covered a small section of the rural surroundings, but this seems to be the only preserved evidence for a rural cadaster. I am grateful to M. Erdem Kabadayı (Koç University and PI of ERC-StG-2015 UrbanOccupationsOETR) for informing me about the existence of such a rural cadastral survey and for sharing digital copies of it. Istanbul's case is studied by P. Pinon and S. Yerasimos, “Relevés après incendie et plans d'assurances: les précurseurs du cadastre stambouliote”, *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre*, 1–2, 1993, p. 112–129.

contemporary polygons of village lands in the Ottoman period. The endowment deeds (*vakfiye*) and also some registers contain information about the extent of village lands by providing narrative delimitations of their borders based on the title deed (*sinurname/hududname*), which at a first glance appear to have considerable potential. However, a closer look at these narrative maps shows that they cannot be used for precise spatial studies, because the total amount of *sinurnames* that are preserved represents an insignificant fraction of all *waqf* villages in Bulgaria. Furthermore, even more importantly, the usage of the little-preserved *sinurnames* gives results with very low precision, because a good portion of the micro toponymy that appears in these documents, such as for instance “Hasan’s watermill,” “Mehmed’s field,” or “Yovan’s vineyard,” cannot be identified today even on the most detailed modern maps.<sup>17</sup>



Fig. 2. Spatial join of *waqf* point data with village land polygons.  
Created by G. Boykov (2020)

Last but not least, modern village land polygons are not only far superior in precision compared to the Ottoman sources, but also they are likely in most of the cases to present a relatively accurate picture of what the spread of the village land must have historically been. Documentary evidence shows that neighboring villages might have disputed the exact boundaries of their lands and contested the same territory often over centuries, which illustrates convincingly that the area coverage of the village land territory is a very conservative phenomenon that changes only under the pressure of extreme circumstances.<sup>18</sup> Such circumstances

<sup>17</sup> A. Zlatanov, “Lokalizacija na granicite na Karlovo spored vakfieto na Karlāzade Lala Bey ot 1496 g.”, *Proceedings of the Regional Museum of History – Gabrovo*, 4, 2016, p. 27–38; V. Mutafchieva, “Kām vāprosa za statuta na bālgarskoto naselenie v Čepinsko pod osmanska vlast”, *Rodopski sbornik*, 1, 1956, p. 115–126. Published the *sinurname* of several villages in the Rhodope Mountains that belonged to the *waqf* founded by Sultan Süleyman I. S. Trako, “Hududnama čifluka Kizlarage Mustafe iz 1591. godine na kojem je osnovan Mrkonjić-grad”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, 31, 1981, p. 179–188; S. Husedžinović, “Les vakoufnamas, sources historiques importantes pour la connaissance de la topographie urbaine de Banjaluka du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles”, in V. Han and M. Adamović, eds., *La culture urbaine des Balkans (XV<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, vol. 3 *La ville dans les Balkans depuis la fin du Moyen Âge jusqu’au debut du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Recueil d’études*, Belgrade – Paris, 1991.

<sup>18</sup> The lands of the *waqf* village Sušice, the town of Karlovo (Central Bulgaria) to be, can serve as a good example. It appears that a dispute with the neighboring village over the exact borders of the lands owned by the *waqf* lasted throughout the Ottoman period and caused several inspections by the

could include a permanent abandonment of a neighboring settlement, which leads to the gradual incorporation of its associated lands by the nearby settlements, or a creation of a new settlement within the boundaries of the village lands, which over time carves out a piece from the territory of the old village.

The so-constructed spatially referenced database was subjected to quantitative and spatial analysis with regards to the research questions, namely what part of the territory of Bulgaria was under the direct control of the pious endowments; who were the individuals who created these *waqfs* by endowing their landed properties; what portion of the revenues collected from the then Ottoman Bulgaria were held by the *waqfs*; and finally how this relates to the number of taxpayers residing on *waqf* lands. Answering these questions on the basis of the analysis of data extracted directly from the Ottoman primary sources offers the opportunity to place the *waqf* institution within the larger framework of the social order established by the Ottomans after the conquest of the Balkans. It tests the dominant idea of the utmost importance of the *waqfs* as one of the key agents of Ottoman rule, and as having facilitated the establishment of the new power in the region. Furthermore, observations concerning the social origin of the endowers is a means not only to try to diversify the currently dominant center-weighted historiographic focus on the almighty sultans, who allegedly directed almost every process in the Ottoman polity, but also to accentuate the importance of the powerful provincial elites, particularly the members of the *akıncı* dynasties and former Balkan aristocratic families, by demonstrating the relative weight that they had in possessing and administering substantial parts of Ottoman Bulgaria.

#### LANDED POSSESSIONS OF THE ISLAMIC PIOUS ENDOWMENTS: A SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The polygonal data of *waqf* land possessions allow close observations concerning the spatial distribution of the settlements and their lands, but more significantly also offer the opportunity to make precise estimates of total amount of land in control of the endowments. The present study extracted data from the Ottoman tax registers for 927 *waqf* villages settlements (towns, villages, and *mezari*' – uninhabited arable lands) that were in all likelihood located within the territory of present-day Bulgaria, but because of the lack of reference works on

local authorities. Sultanic orders were issued accordingly, but in spite of this, the dispute outlived the empire and it was inherited by the administration of Eastern Rumelia and later by the Bulgarian state. The fact that a dispute between two villages over the demarcation line of the same pasture lands can last for centuries bespeaks the durability of the village land borders in most cases and therefore the usability of modern village land polygons. On the Ottoman documents about the dispute see G. Gălabov, "Tureckie dokumenty po istorii goroda Karlovo (ranee selo Sušica, Plovdivskij okrug, Bolgarija)", in A. S. Tveritina, ed., *Vostočn'e istočniki po istorii narodov ũgo-vostočnoj i centralnoj Evropy*, Moskva, 1964, p. 162–185; G. Boykov, "Grad Karlovo i karloskijat vakāf", *Istorija*, 26:5, 2018, p. 461–496.

Ottoman toponymy it succeeded in identifying with a reasonable degree of certainty only 622 of them, i.e. 2/3 of the settlements. The spatial analysis could only take into consideration those settlements whose location was identified, and therefore one must bear in mind that the results and the visualizations shown below represent a 75% sample from all settlements in control of the pious foundations.

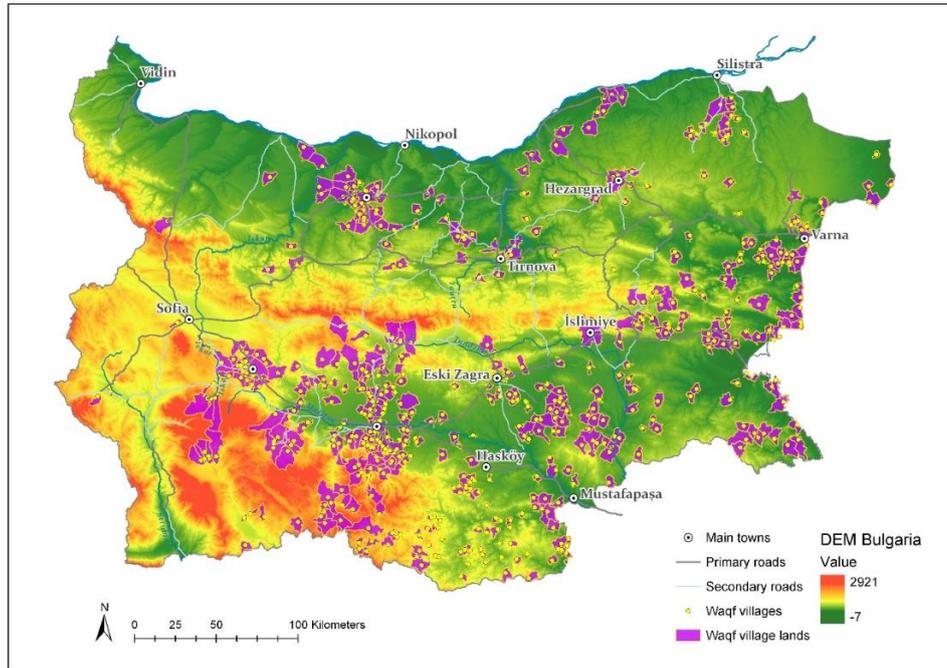


Fig. 3. Surface area coverage of the identified settlements owned by *waqfs*.  
Created by G. Boykov (2020)

The area of each of the *waqf* village land polygons was calculated and converted to sq. kilometers in ArcGIS. Subsequently these data were aggregated to country level in order to give the total land surface in the hands of the pious foundations. Thus, the results show that the *waqfs* possessed 19,634 km<sup>2</sup> of land, which constitutes roughly 17.69% of the territory of Bulgaria. As much as these figures, taken as they are, convincingly demonstrate that the pious foundations were a substantial factor in Bulgaria's land distribution, they certainly underrepresent the actual share which the *waqfs* occupied in the land market. As mentioned above, the spatial analysis could only use the data of the identified villages, and therefore the estimates do not include the lands of the unidentified villages. Nevertheless, if one would like to reach a relatively realistic assessment about the actual weight of the *waqfs* in Ottoman Bulgaria's system of land ownership, the share of the 1/3 unidentified settlements must be added to these estimates. Thus, presuming that the usage of a simple arithmetic progression must somewhat adequately represent the

part of villages that are missing from the estimates due to the lack of spatial reference, and will therefore compensate for them in the total land coverage estimates, we can reach a more realistic assessment of the actual amount of *waqf* lands. A rough estimate that also includes the unidentified villages shows that, more realistically, Islamic pious endowments were in control of about 29,451 km<sup>2</sup>, which comprises more than ¼ of the entire territory of Bulgaria (26.53%).

The fact that *waqfs* controlled such a substantial part of the lands in Bulgaria establishes them as a significant factor in the management of the newly conquered territories. In the course of the first century and half after introducing Ottoman rule and institutions in the region, a quarter of the land was taken out of the state-controlled regime (*miri arazi*) and given in proprietorship to the *waqfs*.<sup>19</sup> The lack of administrative documents from the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century makes it very difficult to trace the chronology of the development of this process, but even a brief look at the map is enough to establish the uneven spatial distribution of the settlements controlled by the *waqfs*. Thus, if using the Balkan range (Stara Planina) as a dividing line that splits Bulgaria into a northern and a southern part, it becomes apparent that a far greater part of the settlements (67%) are located in the south. They are densely concentrated in the low lands of Upper Thrace, but also occupy the higher plain of Ihtiman and go deeper into the Rhodopes, especially in the central and eastern part of the mountain. The disproportionate spatial distributions of the *waqf* settlements becomes even more evident when the territory of the country is divided into its traditional eastern, central, and western parts. Eastern Bulgaria, which includes Dobrudja, the Deliorman, the entire Bulgarian Black Sea coast, eastern parts of Upper Thrace, and northern parts of the Strandja Mountain, had 31% of the villages. The lion's share of the *waqf* settlements (61%) went to Central Bulgaria, which stretches from the Danube in the north, encompassing most of what was the Ottoman *sancak* of Niğbolu, and runs south via the Balkan range to the Rhodopes, including the large *kaza* of Filibe and its smaller neighbors of Tatarpazarı, Eski Zagra, and Hasköy. Western Bulgaria, which covers roughly the Bulgarian part of the *sancak* of Vidin, the region of Sofia, and the valley of the Struma River, hosts an insignificant fraction of the *waqf* villages in Bulgaria, merely 8%. This insignificant presence of *waqf* settlements in the western parts of Bulgaria is to large extent due to the Mihaloğlu family's enclave of 18 villages and the town of Ihtiman, located southeast of Sofia. If this *waqf*-turned large family estate is taken out of the picture there remain only 27 villages in Western Bulgaria, which were part of the landed possessions of the pious endowments. Finally, the hypsographic distribution of the *waqf* settlements also naturally shows an uneven distribution. The large majority of them, 40%, were located in the planare zone (max. altitude of 200 m), with 43% in the coline zone (altitude 200 to 600 m).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> On the land regimes in the Ottoman Empire, see İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History*, p. 103–131.

<sup>20</sup> Settlement elevation extraction was done in ArcGIS using a 30m raster of Digital Elevation Model by the Space Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) of NASA and then results were zonally classified.

Those in the submountain zone (600 to 1000 m) constitute a share of 13% from all settlements owned by the pious endowments, and only 4% lay in the mountain zone of above 1000 m elevation.<sup>21</sup>

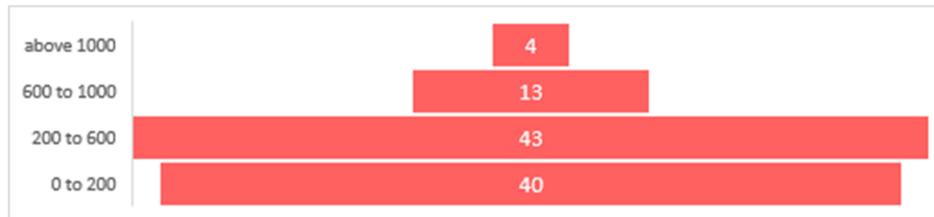


Fig. 4. Distribution of *waqf* settlements by elevation (% from *waqf* settlements)

When the distribution of the *waqf* settlements by elevation is juxtaposed to that of the entire country, the preference of the pious foundations for the ownership of settlements located in lowest zone becomes clear. While 40% of the *waqf* possessions were in the planare zone at an altitude below 200 m, only 27% of the entire country's settlements fell in the same zone.<sup>22</sup>

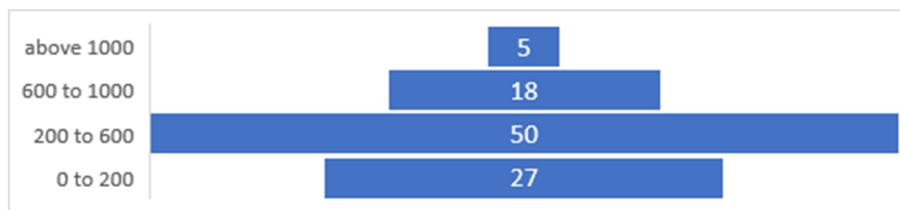


Fig. 5. Distribution of all settlements in Bulgaria by elevation (% from all settlements)

<sup>21</sup> The highest villages Lilkova, Çurin, and Çuryane, situated in the Central Rhodopes, laid in the subalpine zone at an altitude above 1400 m. Today in drastic economic decline and almost completely abandoned by their residents, many of these high land villages played an important role in the animal husbandry industry of the region during the Ottoman period and had vast pasturelands used by the transhuman *yürüks*. Two dissertations that still await publication focus on the population, economy, and human-caused ecological changes in the same region and highlight the significant input of the pious endowments. H. Hristozov PhD Dissertation, *Okrážavaštoto prostranstvo i planinskoto naselenie v Ropopite prez XVI–XVII vek*, PhD Dissertation, Sofia University, 2017; D. Borisov PhD Dissertation, *Vakāfskata institucia v Rodopite prez XV–XVII vek*, PhD Dissertation, Plovdiv University, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> I was unable to find any secondary literature on Bulgaria's Ottoman-era settlement distribution by elevation. The only monograph that focuses on the spatial history of Ottoman Bulgaria, in spite of its all other merits, does not offer adequate data on the distribution of the settlements by elevation. C. Georgieva, *Prostranstvo i prostranstva na bălgarite prez XV–XVII vek*, Sofia, 1999. Therefore the estimates on the hypsographic distribution of all Bulgaria's settlements is based on the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century data, extracted from the Austrian Generalkarte von Mitteleuropa (1:200 000). The database includes 6239 points of towns, villages, large farms (*çifliks*), and huts (*koliba/mahalle*) analyzed in ArcGIS and subsequently classified. I would like to thank Hristo Hristozov (Sofia U.) and Alexander Zhabov (CEU) who worked on the map mining of the data.

The uneven distribution of the *waqf* villages, and especially the almost complete lack of such villages in the western parts of the country, calls for caution, and signals possible spatial considerations that the Ottoman rulers might have applied when lands were distributed and later allocated to become the property of pious endowments. It appears that these considerations might be directly linked to the compactness of the pre-existing settlement networks and to the density of local population there. These aspects will be examined in detail below, but with regard to the spatial distribution of the *waqf* settlements it is important here to underline another significant characteristic – the relationship between the contemporary road infrastructure and the location of the *waqf* villages.

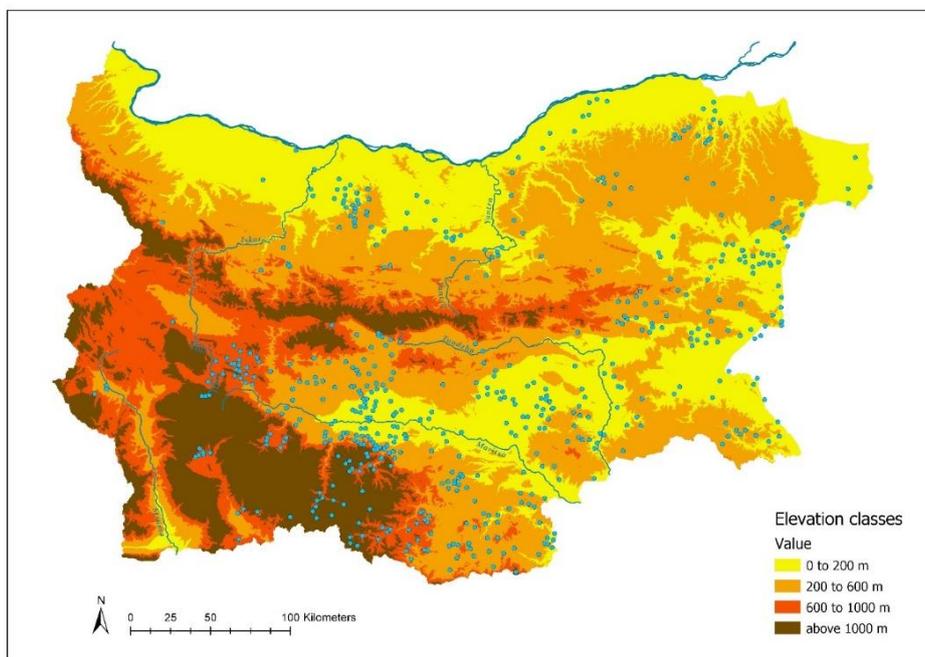


Fig. 6. Distribution of all settlements in Bulgaria by elevation.  
Created by G. Boykov (2020)

The available data on the functioning historical road infrastructure in Ottoman Europe is extremely scarce and as a rule lacks any precision in spatial terms. Roads are most often drawn, if at all, as approximative lines connecting two spatial points, because whenever historical data was collected it dealt with particular points of interest and offered very little about determining the precise path of the route. Narrative sources, such as various chronicles and travelogues,<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> C.J. Jireček, *Die Heerstrasse von Belgrad nach Constantinopel und die Balkanpässe. Eine Historisch-Geographische Studie*, Prag, 1877; O. Zirojević, “Carigradski drum od Beograda do Sofije

registers of the Ottoman postal service,<sup>24</sup> and campaign itineraries<sup>25</sup> constitute the bulk of the primary sources utilized by the historians in their studies on movement of people and goods in the Ottoman Empire. Georeferenced historical maps of suitable scale, however, allow the extraction of historical roads in the shape of relatively precise polylines, which have the potential to frame the traditional historical data, for example in terms of times and distances, in a far more elaborate fashion. Studies on the neighboring empires, notably the Habsburg and Russian Empires, have progressed significantly in extracting the road networks from historical maps, but the reconstruction of the historical road infrastructure in the Ottoman empire is still in its infancy.<sup>26</sup> In view of the lack of a readily available database of the historical road infrastructure, this paper utilized data about the primary and the secondary (Hauptstraße and Landstraße) roads as they appear on the Generalkarte von Mitteleuropa.<sup>27</sup>

(1459–1683)”, *Zbornik Istorijskog muzeja Srbije*, 7, 1970, p. 3–196; S. Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs dans l’Empire ottoman, XIV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles: Bibliographie, itinéraires et inventaire des lieux habités*, Ankara, 1991; M. Popović, *Von Budapest nach Istanbul: die Via Traiana im Spiegel der Reiseliteratur des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> C. Heywood, “The Ottoman Menzilhane and Ulak System in Rumeli in the 18th Century”, in O. Okyar and H. İnalçık, eds., *Social and economic history of Turkey (1071–1920). Papers presented to the first International Congress on the Social and Economic History of Turkey, Hacettepe University, Ankara, July 11–13, 1977*, Ankara, 1980; C. Heywood, “Some Turkish Archival Sources for the History of the Menzilhane Network in Rumeli During the Eighteenth Century”, *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi*, 4–5, 1976, p. 39–55; C. Heywood, “The Evolution of the Courier Order (*ulak hükmi*) in Ottoman Chancery Practice (Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)”, in J. Zimmermann, C. Herzog, and R. Motika, eds., *Osmanische Welten: Quellen und Fallstudien: Festschrift für Michael Ursinus*, (Bamberg, 2016); S. Altunan, “XVII. Yüzyıl Sonlarında İstanbul-Edirne Arasındaki Menziller ve Bazı Menzilköyler”, *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 25:39, 2006, p. 75–99; S. Altunan, “XVIII. Yy’da Silistre Eyaletinde Haberleşme Ağı: Rumeli Sağ Kol Menzilleri”, *OTAM*, 18, 1992, p. 1–20; Y. Halaçoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Ulaşım ve Haberleşme (Menziller)*, İstanbul, 2014; A. Antonov, “Vremeto e pari. Osmanskata kurierska služba v kraya na XVII i prez XVIII vek”, in R. Zaimova and N. Aretov, eds., *Pari, dumi, pamet*, Sofia, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> N. Aykut, “IV. Murad’ın Revan Seferi Menzilnamesi”, *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi*, 34, 1984, p. 183–246; M. A. Erdoğan, “Kanuni Sultan Süleyman’ın 1532 Tarihli Alman Seferi Ruznâmesi”, *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 29:1, 2014, p. 167–187; M.A. Erdoğan, “Kanuni Sultan Süleyman’ın 1538 Tarihli Karaboğdan Seferi Ruznâmesi”, *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 29:2, 2014, p. 515–524; M. İpçioğlu, “Kanuni Süleyman’ın Estergon (Esztergom) Seferi 1543”, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 10:10, 2015, p. 137–159; H. A. Arslantürk and G. Börekçi, *Nüzhet-i esrârü’l-ahyâr der-ahbâr-ı sefer-i Sigetvar Sultan Süleyman’ın son seferi*, İstanbul, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> The Imperia Project, directed by Kelly O’Neill from the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies of Harvard University deserves mention here. See the interactive map available at <https://worldmap.harvard.edu/maps/886> (last visited on 15 May 2020).

<sup>27</sup> The digital road network covering Bulgaria was manually map mined by the project ERC-StG-2015 UrbanOccupationsOETR, <https://urbanoccupations.ku.edu.tr/> (last visited on 15 May 2020). I express my gratitude to the PI of the project M. Erdem Kabadayı (Koç University) for sharing these data with me.

Even a simple visualization of the primary and secondary roads in Ottoman Bulgaria, along with the polygons of the *waqf* village land such as in Fig. 3 above, demonstrates the evident connection and possibly even interdependence of the two. There is a high concentration of *waqf* villages in practically every major intersection of primary and secondary roads in Bulgaria. This is probably best seen in the region of Filibe (Plovdiv) in Thrace or the region of Plevne (Pleven) in Danubian Bulgaria, which was almost entirely owned by the pious endowment of the Mihaloğlu family. Both regions had been important transportation and communication hubs ever since Late Antiquity, and the high concentration of *waqf* villages there clearly demonstrates the intention of the pious endowments to obtain lands in territories that have an easy access to major communication arteries. The pattern is repeated at other important junctures, such as Eski Zagra (Stara Zagora), İslimiye (Sliven), and Karınabad (Karnobat) in Southern Bulgaria, and Tirnova (Veliko Tŕrnovo), Hezargrad (Razgrad), and Silistra in Northern Bulgaria, which clearly demonstrates the predisposition of the *waqfs* towards the communication hubs of the region. Running an analysis in the GIS software demonstrates that 30% of the territories of the villages controlled by the pious endowments were crossed by primary or secondary roads, which clearly bespeaks an intentional spatial orientation towards regions that are well connected. Although the fact that close to 1/3 of the *waqf* villages lay directly on the highways of the time is highly instructive, it is also crucially important to learn what proportion of the villages had easy access to the main roads, although not laying directly on them, and therefore saw similar transportation costs for their agricultural production. By readjusting the algorithm in the GIS software to select and count not only the settlements located directly on the roads, but also to include the villages whose lands lay at a maximum distance of 15 km from a primary or secondary road, the picture changes drastically. The spatial analysis shows that 61% of the *waqf* settlements lay in very close proximity (max. 15 km) to a primary road, when secondary roads are also added to the picture it appears that, in sum, 70% of the villages in the possession of a pious endowment had almost direct access to a major communication artery and could therefore easily and at a lower cost transport their production to the local markets, or to the institutions they supported in Edirne, Istanbul, or elsewhere. This is probably best exemplified by the high density of *waqf* villages in Upper Thrace, concentrated on the rice-growing regions, whose production supplied the large charitable complexes in the Ottoman capitals. The only group of settlements that does not seem to be well connected with the major road infrastructure were the villages located in the higher parts of the mountains. These, however, are predominantly less active in agricultural production but mostly occupied with animal husbandry, especially sheep breeding. In this case, easy access to a major road does not seem to have been a necessity, the production of the village not requiring transportation since it can move on its own feet.

### THE ENDOWERS AND PATTERNS OF DISTRIBUTION OF PIOUS FOUNDATIONS IN OTTOMAN BULGARIA

The data presented above clearly point to the importance of the *waqfs* in establishing the Ottoman political order in Bulgaria. After all, the pious endowments controlled a quarter of the territory of the country and occupied lands that were either in direct connection with or in close proximity to main communication arteries of that time: the *waqfs* therefore were in a good position to administer power. This fact, however, does not tell us much about the social origin of the individuals who established pious foundation by endowing the lands held by them in proprietorship, and whether there were perceptible patterns in this respect. Historiography to date has argued that the Ottoman sultans were naturally the biggest endowers, since they had control over state land and were in a position to change the land regime as pleased, but the studies fall short of demonstrating the real weight of the sultanic endowments in the *waqf* system in the Ottoman realm. Other important groups of individuals who established pious endowments have received inadequate attention in the scholarly literature, a lack of detail which makes the overall picture insufficiently nuanced and often very simplistic.

Taking the territory of Bulgaria as one entity, as problematic as such an approach might be, the currently available and classified data allow a closer look at the distribution of the *waqf* properties within the different strata of Ottoman society. The georeferenced data was classified into seven different categories/classes with regards to the origin of the endower and the subsequent ownership of the settlements and lands: (i) *waqfs* established by the Ottoman rulers themselves (labeled in the classification *Sultan*); (ii) endowments created by the female members of the royal household (labeled *Princess*); (iii) those of high-ranking Ottoman officials, most often grand viziers, but also viziers and provincial governors, such as *beylerbeyis* and *sancakbeyis* (labeled *Officials*); (iv) endowments established by the dynasties of frontier raider commanders (*akıncı ucbeyis*) – these are endowments established predominantly by the male but also by some of the female members of the families (labeled *Akıncı*); (v) mostly smaller *waqfs* created by various local notables, some of whom were descended from Balkan and Anatolian nobility (labeled *Notables*); (vi) endowments established in support of one of the multiple dervish convents in Bulgaria – in this database this mostly reflects the dervish convents of itinerant dervishes who in the course of the sixteenth century were incorporated by the developing Bektashi order (labeled *Zaviye*); (vii) finally, unlike the previous cases, mostly very small pious endowments whose founders do not fall in any of the abovementioned categories (labeled *Other*).

After the data were classified according to the scheme described above, precise information about the area of the lands occupied by the different classes was extracted by the GIS software. As can be seen on the chart below, the analysis

shows that the pious foundations established by the sultans controlled the largest share (39%) of the *waqf* lands in Bulgaria, which seems natural enough.<sup>28</sup>

Examination of the spatial distribution of the sultanic *waqf* settlements and their lands shows that they were dispersed, but predominantly located in Southern Bulgaria. A very few villages were scattered in the northern part of the country without having a discernible connection to one another.

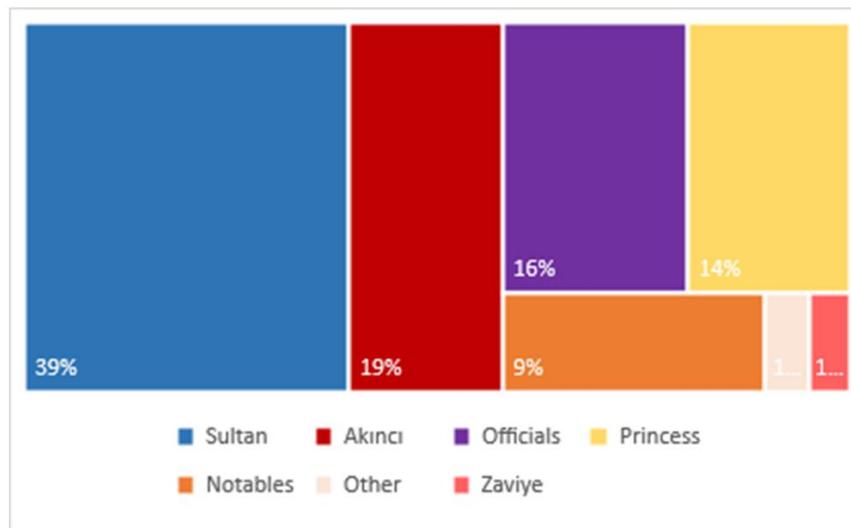


Fig. 7. Quantitative distribution of *waqf* land ownership by classes

Two zones with a high concentration of villages owned by the sultanic endowments can nevertheless clearly be detected. The first was in the eastern part of the country, where these settlements stretched along and occupied almost the entire Black Sea coast extending from Kaliakra Cap in the north to the foothills of Strandja Mountain in the south. The second zone where sultanic *waqfs* were concentrated was in the south-central part of the country in the area around Filibe (Plovdiv) and further south in the Rhodope mountains. From the groups of villages in the Rhodopes, those located in the southeast belonged to the foundation of Murad II<sup>29</sup> and those in the central and western parts of the mountains to the rich endowment established by Süleyman I for the upkeep of his complex in Istanbul.<sup>30</sup> The villages of Süleymaniye, especially the enclave of Çepino region southwest of

<sup>28</sup> This makes precisely 7704 km<sup>2</sup>. However, seen at the scale of the entire country, the land possessions of the sultanic pious endowments occupy a mere 7% of the territory of Bulgaria.

<sup>29</sup> M.T. Gökbilgin, *XV.–XVI. asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livâsı: vakıflar, mülkler, mukataalar*, İstanbul, 1952, p. 203–210.

<sup>30</sup> G. Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire*, London, 2005, p. 207–222; K. E. Kürkçüoğlu, *Süleymaniye vakfiyesi*, Ankara, 1962.

Filibe (see map on Fig. 7), have attracted scholarly attention because they are the stage where an alleged forced mass-conversion to Islam took place.<sup>31</sup>

With the exception of eight villages in the Danubian plain, the *waqf* lands of the Ottoman royal women were also located primarily in the southern part of the country. Moreover, their concentration in the highlands clearly shows a focus on areas of intensive sheep breeding such as Strelča and Klisura in Sredna gora (Ott. Karacadağ), the heart of the Central Rhodopes with the highland pastures near Devin (Ott. Dövlén), or the lower eastern part of the mountains near Svilengrad (Ott. Mustafapaşa köprüsü). Occupying 14% of the territory in the control of the *waqfs*, the landed domains of the Ottoman princesses in Bulgaria certainly call for a more detailed analysis and deserve an independent study. The scholarship to date has focused almost exclusively on the prolific architectural patronage of the royal women, but has done very little in terms of studying the territorial and financial might at their disposal, which not only allowed the construction of their edifices, but also assured the availability of enough funding for the upkeep of these buildings, the salaries of the personnel, and the charity institutions.<sup>32</sup> Future studies on the network of royal female endowments, which were often connected to the *waqf*-turned landed estates of their distinguished husbands, normally grand viziers, have the potential to examine in detail and demonstrate the usage of economic resources originating from rural Bulgaria for changing the urban landscape of the imperial capital. The pious endowments of the high-ranking Ottoman officials can also be seen as a cautious attempt at changing the political and religious environment in the provinces. These encompass 16% of all *waqf* lands in Bulgaria, but their concentration in key locations such as Dobruđja and the Deliorman bespeaks a clear intention for possible closer involvement in local affairs. It might be not just coincidental that the endowments of the Çandarlı family of grand viziers<sup>33</sup> and of Şihabeddin Paşa<sup>34</sup> almost completely encircled Filibe, the most

<sup>31</sup> The debate was triggered by an allegedly historical note included in the nineteenth-century work of S. Zahariev, *Geografsko-istoriko-statističesko opisanie na Tatarpazardžiškata kaza*, Vienna, 1870, 67–68, which describes the forced conversion to Islam, which must explain the presence of a compact Bulgarian-speaking Muslim community in these villages. Incorporated in the “official” narrative of Bulgarian history under Ottoman rule, the authenticity of the narrative has been challenged by a number of specialists: see the overview in A. Zhelyazkova, “The Problem of the Authenticity of Some Domestic Sources on the Islamisation of the Rhodopes, Deeply Rooted in the Bulgarian History”, *Etudes balkaniques*, 4, 1990, p. 105–111; A. Zhelyazkova, “Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: The Southeast-European Perspective”, in S. Faroqi and F. Adanır, eds., *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, Leiden, 2002. In spite of the questionable authenticity of the narrative, the account of forced mass conversion to Islam of the population of villages in the pious endowment of Süleyman I still has advocates.

<sup>32</sup> Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 268–376; L. Thys-Şenocak, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan*, London, 2016; Gökbilgin, *XV.–XVI. asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livası*, 498–502.

<sup>33</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Çandarlı Vezir Ailesi*, Ankara, 1974; Borisov, “Vakâfskata institucia v Rodopite prez XV–XVII vek”, 188–196.

important town of Upper Thrace, or that these of Rüstem Paşa<sup>35</sup> were in close proximity to Târnovo, the capital of medieval Bulgaria; but the most illustrative example of changing local dynamics appears to be the case of Hezargrad (Razgrad) in the northeastern part of the country. The very founding of the town in 1533 is associated with the establishment of a pious endowment by the grand vizier Ibrahim Paşa, who arranged with the central administration an exchange of his private estates in other parts of the empire for landed properties in the Deliorman region, which he subsequently endowed to his foundation.<sup>36</sup> The town, centered on the Friday mosque complex of the Ottoman grandee, soon became a seat of a judge (*kaza*) and within several decades grew into a major regional Sunni Islamic urban center.<sup>37</sup> The massive investment in Sunni religious infrastructure done by Ibrahim Paşa along with the support of the central power, which altered the regional administrative division in order to integrate and give more weight to the newly founded town and its surrounding *waqf* villages, bespeaks a coordinated effort. It is difficult to tell whether the act was an independent initiative of the grand vizier or rather an action closely coordinated with the sultan, but nevertheless the establishment of Ibrahim Paşa's pious endowment undoubtedly aimed at creating and promoting a Sunni focal point in the northeastern part of Bulgaria, which was inhabited predominantly by Muslims who had a very vague connection to Islamic orthodoxy.<sup>38</sup> This endowment can be seen as an emblematic case of the influence of the *waqfs* in administering the provincial affairs and distributing power. Created from scratch by the grand vizier, the town Hezargrad quickly became and still

<sup>34</sup> H. Oruç and K. Orbay, "Filibe'de Şehabeddin Paşa Vakfı 1632–1641 (H. 1041–1051)", *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 18, 2010, p. 19–57; G. Boykov, "The Waqf and the Complex of Şihabeddin Paşa in Filibe", in M. Kurtoğlu, ed., *Balkanlarda Osmanlı Vakıfları ve Eserleri Uluslararası Sempozyumu, İstanbul-Edirne, 9–10–11 Mayıs 2012*, Ankara, 2012; H. İnalıcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara, 1954), p. 84–85; E. Zachariadou, "Another Document of Shehab Al-Din Pasha Concerning Mount Athos (1455)", in B. Kellner-Heinkele, ed., *Studia Ottomanica. Festgabe Für György Hazai Zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden, 1997, p. 217–222.

<sup>35</sup> M. T. Gökbilgin, *XV.–XVI. asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livâsı*, 518–519; G. Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, p. 296–330.

<sup>36</sup> The endowment deed (*vakfiye*) was first published by L. Mikov, *Džamijata na Ibrahim paşa i "Ibrahim paşa" džamija v Razgrad*, Sofia, p. 35–67 and also commented upon in detail by N. Antov, *The Ottoman "Wild West": The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Cambridge, 2017, p. 168–72, who seems to not have been aware of Mikov's publication. M.T. Gökbilgin, *XV.–XVI. asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livâsı*, p. 504–506.

<sup>37</sup> M. Kiel, "Hrâzgrad-Hezargrad-Razgrad. The Vicissitudes of a Turkish Town in Bulgaria", *Turcica*, 21–23, 1991, p. 495–569.

<sup>38</sup> Recent overview of the literature and the primary sources in N. Antov, "Demographic and Ethno-Religious Change in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-Century Ottoman Dobrudja (NE Balkans) and the Related Impact of Migrations", *Radovi – Zavod za Hrvatsku Povijest* 51:1, 2019, p. 57–101. Cf. S. Dimitrov, *Istorija na Dobrudža*, vol. 3. *Istorija na Dobrudža ot načaloto na XV do kraja na XIX v.*, Sofia, 1988; N. Antov, "The Ottoman State and Semi-Nomadic Groups Along the Ottoman Danubian Serhad (Frontier Zone) in the Late 15<sup>th</sup> and the First Half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Challenges and Policies", *Hungarian Studies*, 27:2, 2014, p. 219–235; A. Cebeci, "Silistre Sancağı Vakıfları ve H. 1006 (1597–1598) Tarihli Silistre Livası Vakıf Defteri (No: 561)", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 20, 1988, p. 443–466.

remains the provincial center of the region, thus giving to the then Sunnizing empire a stronger foothold in the non-Sunni majority of the surrounding territories.

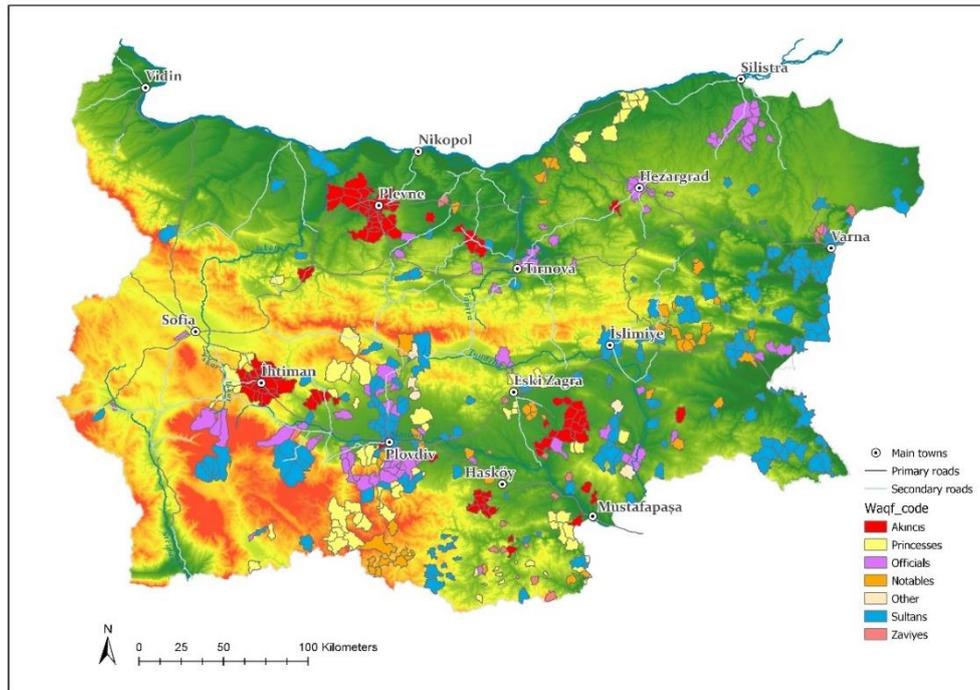


Fig. 8. Spatial distribution of *waqf* land ownership by classes.  
Created by G. Boykov (2020)

But the clearest example of the influence of *waqfs* in provincial politics might possibly be the pious foundations established by the members of the powerful families of raider commanders. Taken as whole, after the sultans the *akıncı* families were the second-largest land owners in Bulgaria, controlling 19% of all *waqf* lands, which makes an area of 3,639 km<sup>2</sup> or roughly 3.3% of the territory of the country. Unlike the sultanic *waqfs*, the ones established by the raider commanders were spatially very concentrated and reflect the vast landed estates over which the families had established full control that lasted for centuries, up until the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Even from a quick look at the map (Fig. 8), the territories in the control of those illustrious families, labeled by İnalçık “autonomous enclaves,” are easily identifiable.<sup>39</sup> By far the largest land owner was the Mihaloğlu family, which

<sup>39</sup> H. İnalçık, “Autonomous Enclaves in Islamic States: Temlik, Soyurgals, Yurdluk-Ocaklıks, Mâlikâne-Mukâta’as and Awqâf,” in Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn, eds., *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East. Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, Wiesbaden, 2006, p. 112–134.

possessed multiple villages in both the northern and southern part of the country.<sup>40</sup> The members of this family were responsible for the creation of the towns of İhtiman and Plevne, which they systematically developed from scratch, establishing their households within them and utilizing the revenues from the surrounding rural areas for the upkeep of the public buildings and charitable institutions patronized by the family.<sup>41</sup> The town of Plevne, which is better studied and therefore presents more information, was a real provincial seat of power, hereditarily administered by the Mihaloğlu family via a highly elaborate hierarchical household structure, centered on their castle-like palace in the town.<sup>42</sup> Taking into consideration the fact that Mihaloğlu family members often served as provincial governors (*sancakbeyis*) of Niğbolu (Nikopol) makes the presence of their large estate in the province even more prominent and certainly establishes the family as the true masters of the region in the first centuries of Ottoman rule in Bulgaria.

From a spatial perspective, the *waqf*-turned domains of the Mihaloğlus bore some similarities but also important differences. They shared the feature of lying on the main roads and thus being very well connected with the capital and the rest of the country, but also differed significantly in their geographical and ecological settings. The southern estate was situated in and practically occupied the high plain of İhtiman, which is enclosed by high mountains from all sides. This makes the region particularly suitable for animal husbandry and seasonal pastoralism, and therefore it is unsurprising that the population residing there was mostly composed of the transhuman Anatolian *yürüks*, who are also likely to have provided raiders for the military contingents of the Mihaloğlus. The northern estate of the family, centered on Plevne, was spread out over the lowlands of the Danubian plain and therefore on the contrary was more suited for agriculture. The population there was

<sup>40</sup> On this family, see O. Sabev, “The Legend of Köse Mihal”, *Turcica*, 34, 2002, p. 241–252; M. Kiprovska, “Byzantine Renegade and Holy Warrior: Reassessing the Character of Köse Mihal, a Hero of the Byzantino-Ottoman Borderland”, S. Kuru and B. Tezcan, eds., *Defterology: Festschrift in Honor of Heath Lowry/Journal of Turkish Studies*, 40, 2013, p. 245–269.

<sup>41</sup> M. Kiprovska, “Shaping the Ottoman Borderland: The Architectural Patronage of the Frontier Lords from the Mihaloğlu Family”, in M. Baramova, G. Boykov, and I. Parvev, eds., *Bordering Early Modern Europe*, Wiesbaden, 2015, p. 185–220; V. Yančev and M. Kiprovska, “Povratni vremena: İhtimanskijat vakāf na Mihaloğlu Mahmud bey ot negovoto säzdavane prez XV do načaloto na XX v.”, *Istorija*, 27:6, 2019, p. 559–598.

<sup>42</sup> M. Kiprovska, “Power and Society in Pleven on the Verge of Two Epochs: The Fate of the Mihaloğlu Family and Its Pious Foundations (Vakf) during the Transitional Period from Imperial to National Governance”, *Bulgarian Historical Review* 1–2, 2017, p. 172–204; M. Kiprovska, “Plunder and Appropriation at the Borderland: Representation, Legitimacy, and Ideological Use of Spolia by Members of the Ottoman Frontier Nobility”, in I. Jevtic and S. Yalman, eds., *Spolia Reincarnated - Afterlives of Objects, Materials, and Spaces in Anatolia from Antiquity to the Ottoman Era*, Istanbul, 2018, p. 51–69; O. Sabev, “Osmanlıların Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi (XIV.–XIX. Yüzyıllar): Mülkler, Vakıflar, Hizmetler”, *OTAM (Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi)*, 33, 2013, p. 229–244; A. Kayapınar, “Kuzey Bulgaristan’da Gazi Mihaloğulları Vakıfları (XV.–XVI. Yüzyıl)”, *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1:10, 2005, p. 169–181.

made up predominantly of Christian farmers, a good portion of whom were brought from the Western Balkans as war captives and slaves, garnered from the numerous raids of the commanders of the family.

Landed estates comprising several neighboring villages that were brought together and unified into a single *waqf* was not a phenomenon peculiar to the Mihaloğlu family alone. On the contrary, almost without exception other *akıncı* family *waqfs*, such as the ones established by Firuz Bey northwest of Târnovo, or by Yahya Paşa and his son Bali Bey northeast of Filibe, followed the same pattern.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the precise spatial identification of the territories of the endowments of other *akıncı* families provides connections that have remained overlooked in the historiography to date. The large estate of the Gümlüoğlu invites further and more elaborate studies on this family, whose members were actively involved in Ottoman politics and served as provincial governors in different Balkan regions.<sup>44</sup> A closer look at the family possessions shows that the estate practically bordered the village Musaça Tekke (mod. Kalugerovo), where once stood the convent of Mümin Baba. The patron dervish was one of the companions of the most influential itinerant *abdal* in Ottoman Rumili in the fifteenth century, Othman Baba, but it is not known who commissioned and built his convent.<sup>45</sup> The proximity of the estates of the Gümlüoğlu family and the strong ties between the itinerant dervishes and the *akıncı* *beys* strongly suggests the possibility that a member from this strong local family could have been the actual benefactor of Mümin Baba's convent.

The case of Gümlüoğlu does not seem to have been an exception. On the contrary, it appears that the frontier lords might have intentionally sought to obtain

<sup>43</sup> A. Fotić, “Yahyapaşa-Oğlu Mehmed Pasha's Evkaf in Belgrade”, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 54:4, 2001, p. 437–452; P. Fodor, “Wolf on the Border: Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali Bey (?–1527). Expansion and Provincial Elite in the European Confines of the Ottoman Empire in the Early Sixteenth Century”, in P. Fodor, N. E. Kovács, and B. Péri, eds., *Şerefe. Studies in Honour of Prof. Géza Dávid on His Seventieth Birthday*, Budapest, 2019, 57–87; C. Römer and N. Vatin, “The Lion hat was Only a Cat: Some Notes on the Last Years and Death of Arslan Pasha, Bey of Semendire and Beylerbeyi of Buda”, in P. Fodor, N. E. Kovács, and B. Péri, eds., *Şerefe. Studies in Honour of Prof. Géza Dávid on His Seventieth Birthday*, Budapest, 2019, 159–182.

<sup>44</sup> Very few studies have engaged with the history of this otherwise very important family, which may have been present in the Bulgarian territories since the earliest Ottoman incursions, if not originating from the very region. M.T. Gökbilgin, *XV.–XVI. asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livâstı*, p. 229–231; A. Pala, “Rumeli'de bir Akıncı Ailesi: Gümlüoğulları ve Vakıfları”, *Hacı Bektaş Veli Dergisi*, 43, 2007, p. 137–144. In the early sixteenth century the family members, along with many other prominent Balkan families, sided with Selim I in his struggle for power with his father Bayezid II. H. E. Çıpa, *The Making of Selim: Succession, Legitimacy, and Memory in the Early Modern Ottoman World*, Bloomington, 2017, p. 93–96. A copy of the *vafiye* of Gümlü bey is kept in Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi in Ankara, D. 734, s. 77, no. 49.

<sup>45</sup> Mümin Baba is mentioned in the *vita* of Othman Baba, see N. Gramatikova, *Neortodoksniat islyam v bălgarskite zemi: minalo i săvremennost*, Sofia, 2011, p. 445; L. Kayapınar, “Osmanlı Döneminde Bulgaristan Eski Zağra'da Bir Bektaşî Merkezi: Mü'min Baba ve Zaviyesi”, *Uluslararası Hacı Bektaş Veli Sempozyumu Bildirileri. Hacı Bektaş Veli: Güneşte Zerresinden, Deryada Katresinden*, Ankara, 2010, 164–196.

landed estates in close proximity to popular sites of the antinomian dervishes. The *waqf* of the Malkoçoğlu family, located a few kilometers south near the town of Hasköy (Haskovo), can furnish another example. The estate of the family was spread around the *zaviye* of Othman Baba, built in the second half of the fifteenth century most probably by the members of the Mihaloğlu family.<sup>46</sup> Six kilometers southeast of Beyköy (mod. Golemanci), the main village of the estate, Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey, son of Murad Bey, the then acting *sancakbeyi* of Çirmen, himself commissioned and built a convent dedicated to another antinomian dervish, a companion and follower of Othman Baba.<sup>47</sup> The tekke of Hasan Baba v. Yağmur was located in the nearby village Bashtino, and the alleged tomb of the patron still remains a popular pilgrimage site where annual festivities are held.

The *waqf* of the Malkoçoğlu family<sup>48</sup> near Haskovo clearly deserves more scholarly attention, because it has the potential to reveal another provincial powerbase, probably used by the family for centuries. Analogies with better-studied families show that the center of the estate, Beyköy, must have served as a residence for the members of the family administering the endowment. A field trip to the village in 2011 discovered a half-ruined public bath (*hamam*), dating possibly from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Cleaning the vegetation around it and conducting a proper study on its architectural features will certainly offer more information, but the presence of a domed stone-built *hamam* in a remote village indicates that a larger complex built by the Malkoçoğlu family may have once stood there. The presence of distinguished members in this rural estate is also attested by a tombstone placed in a garden near the convent of Othman Baba. A very elaborate marble tombstone reading “Mustafa Bey, son of Bali Bey, year H. 995/1587–1588,” undoubtedly belonging to a deceased member of the Malkoçoğlu family, indicates that the estate served as the provincial residence and seat of the power of this family until the end of the sixteenth century, but possibly also later.

<sup>46</sup> H. İnalçık, “Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of the Otman Baba Vilāyetnāmesi”, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society*, Bloomington, 1993, p. 19–36; Z. Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire: The Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age*, Farnham, Surrey, 2012, p. 72–73, 129–132; M. Kiprovskā, “The Mihaloğlu Family: Gazi Warriors and Patrons of Dervish Hospices”, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 32, 2008, p. 173–202.

<sup>47</sup> Ö.L. Barkan, “Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zâviyeler”, p. 341. Bali Bey commissioned and built at least two more convents for antinomian dervishes in the Balkans, that of Pırzade in Tatar Pazarı, and Bayezid Baba near Yenice-i Vardar (Giannitsa). G. Boykov, *Tatar Pazardzik: ot osnovavaneto na grada do kraya na XVII vek. Izsledvaniya i dokumenti*, Sofia, 2008, p. 39–40; L. Kayapınar, “Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey Vakfı ve Bayezid Baba Âsitanesi”, *Alevelik – Bektaşilik Araştırma Dergisi*, 1, 2009, p. 105–115.

<sup>48</sup> On the Malkoçoğlu family, see F. Babinger, “Beiträge zur Geschichte des Geschlechtes der Malqoc-oghulus”, *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen zur Geschichte Südosteuropas und der Levante*, München, 1966, 355–375; B. Zlatar, “O Malkočima”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, 26, 1978, p. 105–114. The two pioneering studies focus primarily on the role of the family in the Western Balkans. The importance of Malkoçoğlu for the history of the eastern parts of the peninsula remains understudied.

### DISTRIBUTION OF REVENUES IN OTTOMAN BULGARIA IN THE 1530S AND THE PLACE OF THE *WAQFS*

The large synoptic registers compiled in 1530 allow a relatively easy extraction of revenue data per administrative unit, and facilitate its subsequent quantitative and spatial analysis. The lack of any polygons reflecting the Ottoman administrative division of that time forced the present study to use later administrative units, which were modified in ArcGIS to accommodate the data extracted from the Ottoman tax registers and better reflect the sixteenth-century administrative divisions.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the borders of the administrative units (*kaza*) shown on the map below must not be considered as absolutely precise, but rather as tentative approximations based on modifications of later administrative borders. As such, they can serve as relatively accurate visualizations, but certainly lack the precision of the village land polygons, and therefore an analysis of the land surface area (in sq. km) for individual administrative units has not been carried out in this study. Data concerning the revenues collected from the territory of Bulgaria were distributed into four classes in accordance with their origin: (i) revenues of the sultanic domains (*hass-i hümayun*); (ii) revenues of the large prebends (*hass*) held by the high-ranking officials in the Ottoman provincial and central administration; (iii) revenues collected under the *timar* system that went to the cavalry members (*sipahi*) and various personnel, garrisoning the castles in the Balkans; (iv) revenues received by the pious endowments. A good portion of these revenues was formed by the various tithes paid by the *reaya*, as well as other taxes such as for instance the poll-tax (*cizye*) contributed by non-Muslims, but also by different market and custom dues and various taxes levied on revenue-producing industries such as mining, iron production, irrigation access, etc.

The aggregated data for Bulgaria's territory shows that in the early 1530s the Ottomans collected altogether 28,500,000 *akçe* split among the four categories described above. Breaking this sum into classes shows the wealth distribution in sixteenth-century Ottoman Bulgaria and allows closer observations of the place of the pious endowments. The largest share of the revenues (41%) went to the domains of the Ottoman sultans. Another substantial part (38%) was collected by the *timar* holders and apportioned to hundreds of smaller or larger fiefs, assigned in exchange for service in the imperial military contingents. The large prebends of the high-ranking Ottoman officials, such as the members of the sultan's council (*Divan*) and mostly provincial governors (*sancakbeyi*), occupied an 11% share of

<sup>49</sup> Polygons used in the study have been created through map mining the historical map published by Hristo Danov, *Karta na Bălgarija i priležaštite nej dăržavi*, 1:420 000, Plovdiv, 1892, which draws the then administrative division relatively precisely.

the revenues collected from Bulgaria. As demonstrated above, the pious endowments were a major player in the land marked, and controlled  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the land in the country: but the vast landed estates of the *waqfs*, however, did not necessarily mean a similar share in the revenue distribution. Despite being mighty land magnates, the pious endowments appear to have received a far more modest portion of the revenues, merely 10% from the all cash collected from Bulgaria.

This is a striking disbalance between the quantity of land possessions and the actual revenues retrieved by the *waqfs*, which poses the question of whether this reflects the situation in Bulgaria alone, or whether the relative proportions of revenue distributions were also similar at a Balkan-wide scale. A document composed in all likelihood on the basis of the data from the synoptic registers from 1530, can provide a glimpse into the contemporary revenue distribution in Rumili and place the observations on Bulgaria in the wider context. The document is a register of a rare nature, if not indeed unique, and summarizes in a very aggregated fashion various data about the European possessions of the Ottoman Empire that were important to the central administration; this makes it suitable for quick statistical checks just as required here.<sup>50</sup> According to the document, the total revenues from Rumili amounted to 203 million and 245 thousand *akçe*. The lion's share (52%) was collected for the central treasury by the imperial demesnes, 31% distributed among the *timar* holders, 6.2% reserved for high-ranking officials who were in control of large prebends, and finally 10.8% of the revenues from Rumili was assigned to the pious endowments. The figures of revenues shares of the *waqfs* in Bulgaria and in the entire territory of Rumili are so remarkably similar that they raise the question whether the Ottoman central power did not control the process of establishing new pious endowments more closely than has previously been supposed in the scholarly literature. Further studies are needed to determine whether there were changes over time, but the unusual concurrence of the revenue totals' shares might suggest a very closely monitored process of giving away *miri* lands and donating revenues, which was orchestrated by the administration of the Ottoman sultans.

<sup>50</sup> The document indicates aggregated figures for revenues, individuals on a state payroll, and other important details about provincial affairs, including an inventory of the public buildings. It has no date, but the hasses of some high-ranking officials allow us to place it with a high degree of certainty in the early 1530s. İBK, MC. Evr. 37/7. The balance sheets of the imperial budget, published by Barkan and utilized by İnalçık, were composed earlier and therefore less adequately represent the situation in the 1530s. Ö.L. Barkan, "H. 933–934 (M. 1527–1528) Malî Yılına Ait Bir Bütçe Örneği", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 15:1–4, 1954, p. 251–329; H. İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History*, p. 82. Overview of the aspects of Ottoman budgetary policy in M. Genç and E. Özvar, *Osmanlı maliyesi: kurumlar ve bütçeler*, İstanbul, 2006.

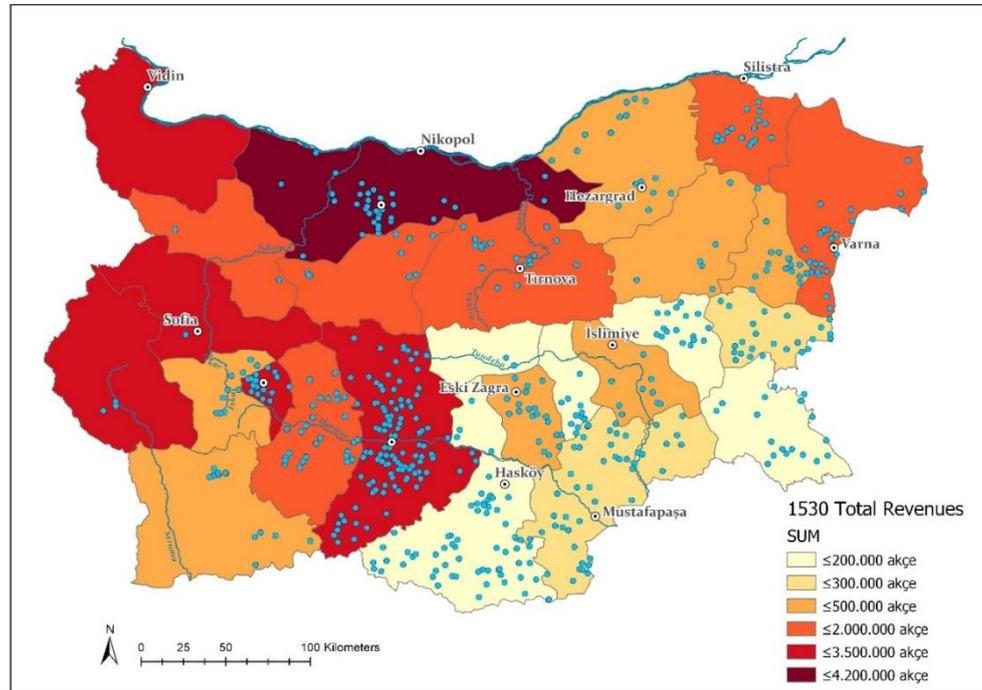


Fig. 9. *Waqf* settlements and spatial distribution of revenues in 1530s Ottoman Bulgaria.  
Created by G. Boykov (2020)

A spatial approach to the distribution of the revenues in Bulgaria demonstrates that the discrepancy between the amount of land and the actual revenues in the control of the *waqfs* was due to the uneven distribution of the settlements owned by the pious endowments with regard to the relative wealth of the regions. The wealthiest district in 1530s Bulgaria was Niğbolu (Nikopol) on the Danube, which yielded annually above four million *akçe*. Most its revenues, however, were reserved for the sultan's estates and for the *hasses* of the *sancakbeyi*. Except for the notable exception of the Mihaoğlu family enclave in Plevne, there were almost no *waqf* villages there, and consequently the endowments did not profit much from the rich resources available.<sup>51</sup> The district of Sofia and neighboring Köstendil were also very prosperous,<sup>52</sup> but again with the exception of the Mihaloğlus' estate in İhtiman the presence of *waqf* villages there was insignificant. The revenues from these two *kazas* were almost exclusively reserved for the Ottoman cavalry members, and judging from the substantial amount of revenues collected, they constituted the backbone of the *timar* system in Bulgaria. The same was also largely true for the northeastern district of Vidin,

<sup>51</sup> R. Kovačev, *Opis na Nikopolskija sandžak ot 80-te godini na XV v.*, Sofia, 1997.

<sup>52</sup> H. Matanov, *Vāznikvane i oblik na Kjustendilski sandžak (XV–XVI vek)*, Sofia, 2000.

where not even a single *waqf* village was ever registered. In the region of Vidin, however, the revenues were split more proportionally between the imperial treasury, the *hass* of the *sancakbeyi*, and the *timar* system.<sup>53</sup> The district from which the *waqfs* collected most revenues, close to 800 thousand *akçe* annually, was clearly Filibe. Located at the heart of Bulgaria, the region stretched across the Thracian plane between the Balkan range in the north and the Rhodopes in the south and had the highest density of *waqf* villages. A more detailed analysis of the structure of the revenues is certainly necessary before definitive conclusions can be drawn, but one might suggest that a significant part of the wealth accumulated by the pious endowments in the district was due to the highly intensive rice cultivation there.<sup>54</sup> A comparison with the district of Hasköy, its southeastern neighbor, whose ecological characteristics favored animal husbandry and where commercial crops like rice were never introduced, convincingly demonstrates the importance and financial weight of the *waqf* properties in the region of Filibe.

At first glance, the spatial distribution of the revenues in sixteenth-century Bulgaria overall appears somewhat odd. The richer regions were concentrated in the western part of the country while the fertile plane of Upper Thrace in the southeast, which would be normally expected to be a prosperous place, seems to have brought far less revenues to the masters of the land there. Yet no matter how rich the land of a region might be, if the territory is not sufficiently inhabited it will not be able to yield substantial revenues for its owner. In spite of this, the high concentration of *waqf* villages specifically in this area is noteworthy as regards the last research question of the present study, namely what was the spatial distribution of the population of Bulgaria, and how population figures related to the nearly thousand settlements under the control of pious endowments.

#### QUANTITATIVE AND SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF BULGARIA'S POPULATION IN THE 1530S

The data extracted from the synoptic registers from 1530 demonstrate that a little over one million tax-payers resided in the territory of Bulgaria (approx. 110 994 sq. km), with an average density of 10.2 persons per square kilometer.<sup>55</sup> Classifying the

<sup>53</sup> D. Bojanić-Lukać, *Fragmentsi jednog zbirnog i jednog opširnog popisa Vidinskog sandžaka iz druge polovine XV veka*, Beograd, 1973; A. Kayapınar, *Le sancak ottoman de Vidin du XVe à la fin du XVIe siècle*, Istanbul, 2011; R. Kovačev, *Opis na vidinskija sandžak ot p̄rvata četv̄rt na XVI v. Stopanska i voenno-administrativna struktura*, Sofia, 2016; M. Soyudoğan, “Reassessing the Timar System: The Case Study of Vidin (1455–1693)”, PhD Dissertation, Bilkent University, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> N. Beldiceanu and I. Beldiceanu-Steinherr, “Riziculture dans l’Empire ottoman (XIV<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)”, *Turcica*, 9–10, 1978, 9–28; H. İnalçık, “Rice Cultivation and the Çeltükçi-Re’âyâ System in the Ottoman Empire”, *Turcica*, 14, 1982, p. 69–141; A. Shopov, ‘Cities of Rice: Riziculture and Environmental Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Balkans’, *Levant*, 2020, p. 1–15.

<sup>55</sup> For literature and a data overview of Bulgaria’s population history, see G. Boykov, “The Human Cost of Warfare: Population Loss During the Ottoman Conquest and the Demographic

population data in accordance with the land regime, as was done above for the revenues data, allows us to see a striking disbalance in the distribution of population between classes on the one hand, and in the proportion of revenues to taxpayers on the other.

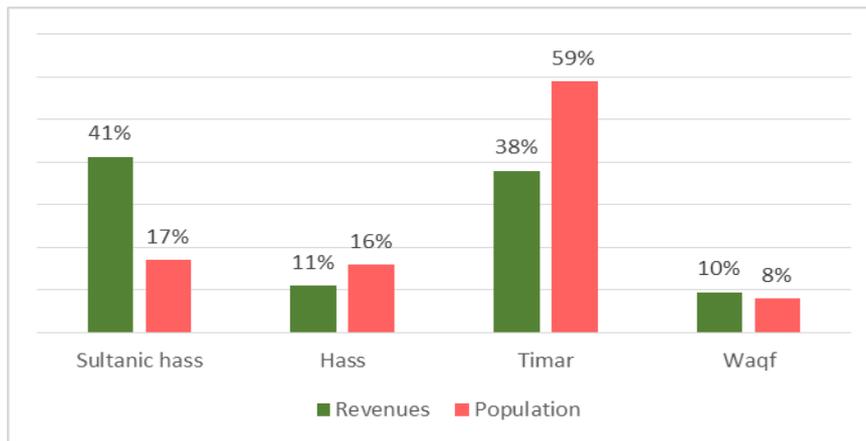


Fig. 10. *Waqf* settlements and spatial distribution revenues in 1530s Ottoman Bulgaria

Figure 10 demonstrates that in spite of the fact that the *timar* system collected only 38% of the revenues from the country, a substantial part of the taxable population (59%) actually resided in lands controlled by *timar* holders. This demonstrates the almost exclusive dependence of the *timar* system on taxpayers' tithes for raising the necessary resources for equipping cavalry members and dispatching them on campaign, and therefore shows that a large segment of the population was attached to the *timars*. The same correlation was true for the prebends of the high-ranking officials and the *sancakbeyis*, who were the individuals in charge of leading the *timar* holders to war. The relative share of revenues collected by the *hass* holders was lower than the portion of the taxable population that resided within their domains. If these two are taken together it becomes evident that 75% of the population in 1530s Bulgaria resided within the estates and was contributing their dues and taxes to the *timar* and *hass* holders. The proportions not only change drastically, but completely reverse when the sultan's domains are taken into consideration. The imperial treasury reserved and collected 41% of Bulgaria's revenues, but at the same time only 17% of country's total population resided within the sultan's *hasses*. This fact clearly indicates that the central authority had lower interest in revenues that were based on taxing the population's agricultural production, but rather reserved for itself important sources of revenues, especially those bringing in liquid cash, like the customs or market dues and the poll-tax on the non-Muslim

History of Bulgaria in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Era", in O.J. Schmitt, ed., *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans: Interpretations and Research Debates*, Vienna, 2016, p. 103–166.

subjects in the country. This might explain the disproportionate difference between the share of revenues and the taxable population attached to the imperial domains.

The disconnection between revenue and population share for the pious endowments' possessions resembled that of the sultanic *hasses*, although the discrepancy here was not so drastic. Taken as a whole the *waqfs* controlled a larger share (10%) of the overall country's revenues, but a lesser segment (7%) of the entire taxable population, and therefore their position looks more similar to that of the imperial domains and not to the estates of the high-ranking officials and *timar* holders. The *waqfs* must have managed to bring under their control valuable sources of income which made their share of revenues larger. Without detailed studies on each particular *waqf* it is impossible to state with any certainty what these revenues were, but the fact that some of the endowments, especially those established by the *akıncı* families, retained control and actually collected the *cizye* of the non-Muslims, can indicate a direction for further research.

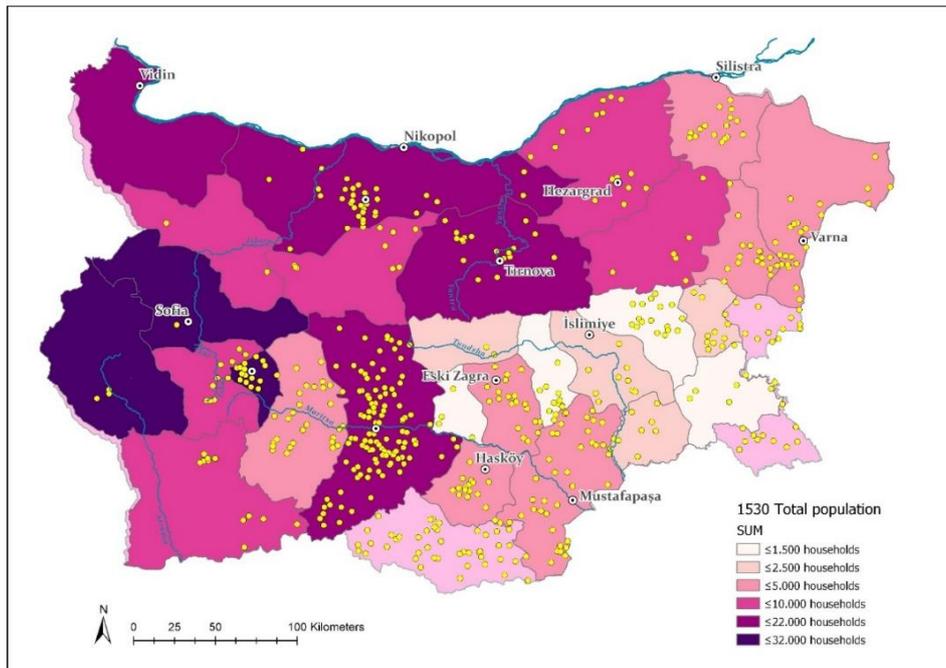


Fig. 11. *Waqf* settlements and spatial distribution of population in 1530s Ottoman Bulgaria.  
Created by G. Boykov (2020)

The analysis of the spatial distribution of Bulgaria's population also provides important hints as to why the *waqfs* retrieved a larger share of the revenues while a smaller portion of the total population actually resided in the lands under their control. The data extracted from the 1530 register was spatially referenced to the

same polygon units which the study utilized for the illustration of the revenue distribution, thus making the two datasets visually comparable. The largest concentration of population was clearly in the Sofia and K stendil regions, which almost completely lacked *waqf* villages, but the taxpayers there were distributed across hundreds of *timars*. Niğbolu, the richest district in terms of revenues, had fewer people in comparison to the western regions and was part of a large stretch of northern Bulgaria that was still highly populated. In southern Bulgaria only the region of Filibe falls in the same category, having close to 15,000 households of taxpayers, or a total population of about 75,000. Along with Trnovi and Niğbolu the district of Filibe was among the few highly populated districts where there was also a high concentration of *waqf* villages. The larger share (74%) of the settlements that were in the possession of the pious endowments was dispersed across the eastern and southeastern parts of the country, which were in fact very sparsely inhabited. It is unlikely that such a concentration of *waqf* villages in territories with lower populations was coincidental. On the contrary, the spatial patterns of settlement distribution show that the high density of villages owned by the *waqfs* must be due to a systematic and very likely coordinated effort, which highlights the role of the *waqf* system as one of the primary agents used by the Ottomans for establishing their rule in the newly conquered territories in the Balkans.

The crescent-shaped territory which extends from Upper Thrace in the south along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast to the steps of Dobrudja in the north was badly ravaged before and during the Ottoman conquest of Bulgaria, and for this reason the entire region was very sparsely populated, some parts of it indeed having been completely voided of population. After establishing full control over the region, the Ottomans, i.e., the sultans and their central administration but also various members of the local nobility and newly arrived elites, had to find suitable means for restoring life to those territories that had been laid waste by centuries of continuous war. Various methods for revitalizing (*şenlendirme*) the newly conquered land were employed by the Ottomans,<sup>56</sup> ranging from forced relocation (*sürg n*) of Anatolian population,<sup>57</sup> the settling of war captives to work as sharecropper slaves,<sup>58</sup> granting

<sup>56</sup> İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History*, p. 167–171.

<sup>57</sup>  .L. Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İsk n ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak S rg nler: 1”, *İstanbul  niversitesi İktisat Fak ltesi Mecmuası* 11, 1950, p. 524–569;  .L. Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İsk n ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak S rg nler: 2”, *İstanbul  niversitesi İktisat Fak ltesi Mecmuası* 13, 1952, p. 56–79;  .L. Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İsk n ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak S rg nler: 3”, *İstanbul  niversitesi İktisat Fak ltesi Mecmuası* 15, 1954, p. 209–237.

<sup>58</sup>  .L. Barkan, “XV. ve XVI. Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Toprak İşçiliğinin Organizasyonu Şekilleri. I. Kulluklar ve Ortakçı Kullar”, *İstanbul  niversitesi İktisat Fak ltesi Mecmuası*, 1, 1939, p. 29–74; H. İnalçık, “Servile Labor in the Ottoman Empire”, *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic History*, London, 1985, p. 25–52; K. Moustakas, “Slave Labour in the Early Ottoman Rural Economy: Regional Variations in the Balkans during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century”, in M. Hadjianastasis, ed., *Frontiers of the Ottoman Imagination: Studies in Honour of Rhoads Murphey*, Leiden, 2015, p. 29–43.

deserted villages in freehold to distinguished individuals who later on revitalized them by securing settlers, and offering tax exemptions thus stimulating an influx of population from other regions. The region in question seems to have been particularly attractive to the Muslim sedentary and semi-nomadic populations, who in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth century left Anatolia and settled there *en masse*. Detailed studies on individual cases are necessary in order to bring to light the exact mechanisms for revitalization used by the Ottomans and the roles of the pious foundations in the process, but given the present state of knowledge it can be stated that most of the oldest endowments, established in the late fourteenth and the fifteenth century, are concentrated precisely in this region. The *waqfs*, and especially their charitable institutions, must have played a significant role in stimulating migration towards these territories. Moreover, the itinerant dervishes from various antinomian Sufi orders were also a highly influential factor, as demonstrated long ago by the seminal studies of Barkan, who also examined them in close conjunction with the *waqfs*.<sup>59</sup> In spite of the general validity of most of its conclusions, the pioneering study by Barkan lacks a systematic curation of the rich data collected by the author, but more importantly does not provide any spatial reference to the locations examined in the study. Even modern historical research often falls short in this respect, and valuable studies completely ignore the spatial aspect.

Placing on the map the precise locations of the principal dervish convents in Bulgaria and the settlements in control of the pious endowments, one notices the clear connection between the two, which corroborates Barkan's important point that the *waqfs* and the related dervish convents together constituted one of the chief agents used by the Ottomans for the organized colonization of the territories of the Balkans after the conquest. Even a superficial look at the map shows that the dervish convents were built along the main arteries of communication in Ottoman Bulgaria, and that in most cases they were surrounded by dozens of *waqf* villages. Future studies may be able to reveal how the changing social alliances and patron-client networks that implemented the Ottoman ruling strategies on a provincial level were built up over time. For now it suffices to recall the contrasting examples of architectural patronage discussed in this paper: that of the Malkoçoğlu family, who clearly aimed at supporting the non-Sunni antinomian Sufis in the eastern Rhodopes, and that of the grand vizier Ibrahim Paşa, who founded a new town based on the Sunni-affiliated institutions in the predominantly non-Sunni region of

<sup>59</sup> Ö.L. Barkan, "Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zâviyeler". On the importance of the convent of Kızıl Deli for the incorporation of the region of Dimetoka (Byz. Dydimoteichon) into the Ottoman administrative and ruling system, see R. Yıldırım, "History Beneath Clouds of Legend: Seyyid Ali Sultan and His Place in Early Ottoman History According to Legends, Narratives, and Archival Evidence", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 15:1–2, 2009, p. 21–57; R. Yıldırım, "Dervishes, Waqfs, and Conquest: Notes on Early Ottoman Expansion in Thrace", in P. Ghazaleh, ed., *Held in Trust: Waqf in the Islamic World*, Cairo, 2011, p. 23–40; I. Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "Seyyid 'Ali Sultan d'après les registres ottomans: l'installation de l'Islam hétérodoxe en Thrace", in E.A. Zachariadou, ed., *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman rule (1380–1699)*, Rethymnon, 1996, p. 45–66.

Deliorman. The pious endowments constituted the core instrument utilized in these two cases, but in many other cases they undoubtedly played the role of an active agent that introduced the alien Ottoman political order in the newly conquered territories.

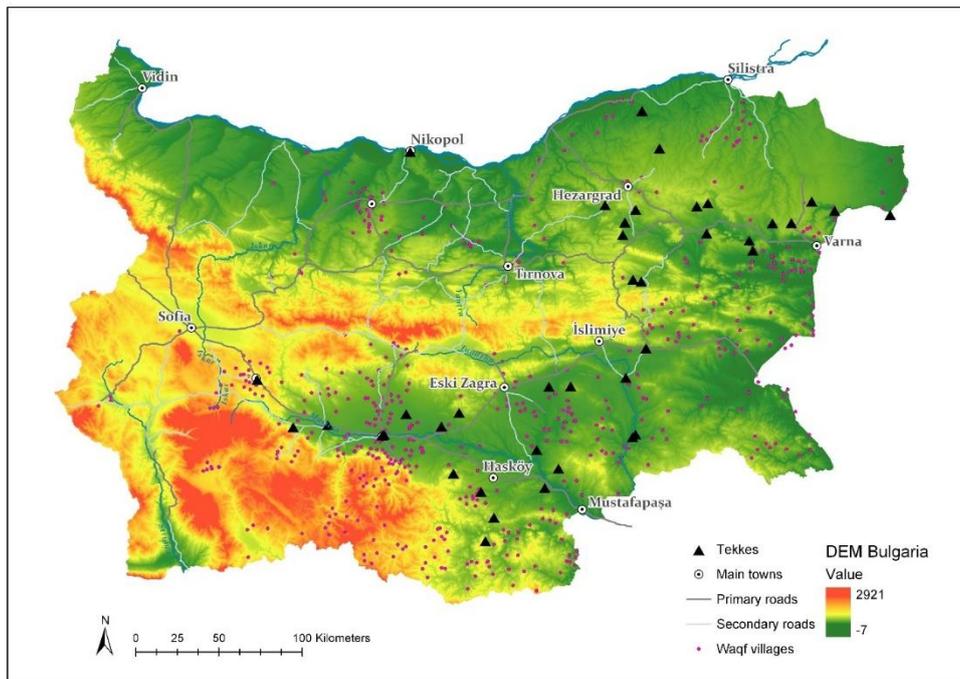


Fig. 12. Principal dervish convents in Bulgaria built prior to 1600, and *waqf* villages.  
Created by G. Boykov (2020)

## CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on the landed possessions of the Islamic pious endowments located in the territory of modern Bulgaria. It is clear that setting modern national borders as the territorial scope of any study related to the Ottoman Empire is difficult to justify, but the current inaccessibility of digital resources that cover neighboring Turkey, Greece, Northern Macedonia, and Serbia forces the author to restrict the spatial and quantitative analysis to the confines of Bulgaria. Nevertheless, the data and results presented in the paper have the potential to be regarded as a highly representative sample, because the territory of Bulgaria covers roughly 1/5 of the Balkans peninsula, which anyway was never under Ottoman control in its entirety. Furthermore, the Bulgarian sample appears more representative if only the eastern parts of the Balkans are taken into consideration. Thanks to the superior source base, the western parts of the Balkans during the

Ottoman period are far better studied in modern scholarship and therefore better known, but despite this fact if one is interested in studying how the Ottoman institutions and social order were implemented in Europe, the eastern Balkans represent a much more propitious arena for such observations. It was there that the so-called “classical” Ottoman institutions were fully introduced and functioned well for centuries, and it was again only in the Eastern Balkans that the Ottomans succeeded in developing a system that must have been close to the envisaged ideal ruling concept of the Ottoman dynasty. Therefore, a study of the *waqfs* of Bulgaria can have even greater weight and greater representativeness if it is considered to be snapshot of developments in the eastern and central parts of the Balkans.

The methodology chosen by the study required that the data extracted from the Ottoman primary sources be analyzed only after they had received precise spatial references. This was possible thanks to the usage of modern digital tools, such as the GIS software, which allowed a variety of analytic approaches to the thus assembled and spatially referenced database. In a way, then, this study was also an experiment that aimed at highlighting a deficiency found in most of the historical analyses of the Ottoman Balkans to date, which have neglected the role of space as one of the key variables. The results can only be regarded as preliminary, and further detailed case studies are necessary for building a truly realistic picture, but at the same time they seem very encouraging, and the employment of software applications for spatial analysis appears justified. There is little doubt that these digital tools will gain in importance in future research, and will in all probability be part of the standard methods of scholarly analysis before the end of this decade. Nevertheless, in spite of their many merits and almost unlimited capabilities, even the most sophisticated software applications remain mere instruments, which can only do good in the hands of trained historians or other scholars from the humanities and social sciences. Certain expected major digital breakthroughs, such as automatic data extraction or the development of Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) techniques for Ottoman primary sources, will certainly revolutionize the speed of access to the data encoded in them and will open up the field: but it will nevertheless remain for historians to tell the stories which thereby emerge.<sup>60</sup>

The main characters in the story of this paper, the pious endowments established by various individuals, most certainly deserve closer scholarly attention. They were a highly important and perhaps even supreme factor in provincial politics and local affairs in the Ottoman realm. The spatial study focused on the territory of Bulgaria

<sup>60</sup> Y.S. Can and M.E. Kabadayı, “CNN-Based Page Segmentation and Object Classification for Counting Population in Ottoman Archival Documentation”, *Journal of Imaging* 6: 32, 2020, p. 1–17; Y.S. Can and M.E. Kabadayı, “Automatic CNN-Based Arabic Numeral Spotting and Handwritten Digit Recognition by Using Deep Transfer Learning in Ottoman Population Registers”, *Applied Sciences* 10: 16, 2020, 5430; Y.S. Can and M.E. Kabadayı, “Computerized Counting of Individuals in Ottoman Population Registers with Deep Learning”, in X. Bai, D. Karatzas, and D. Lopresti (eds.), *Document Analysis Systems. Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, Cambridge, 2020, p. 277–290.

shows that about a quarter of the country's territory was under the direct control and administration of the *waqfs*. This fact alone is sufficient to demonstrate the relative weight of the *waqf* institutions for administering territories on behalf of the Ottoman polity. However, the possessions of the endowments were not equally distributed in all parts of the country. On the contrary, the spatial analysis demonstrates that the *waqf* settlements were concentrated primarily in the lower fertile lands of the central and eastern parts of Bulgaria. The almost complete lack of *waqf* villages in the densely populated western part of the country indicates that pious foundations were intentionally established in those regions of the country that were less populous. Many of the villages under the control of the *waqfs* were newly founded settlements, which demonstrates their important role for revitalizing the space that was assigned to the pious endowments. In the 1530s the pious endowments controlled 1/10 of the total revenues collected from the country, but only 7% of the taxpayers resided in the lands they owned. Further temporal slices of population statistics are needed to track the changes in detail, but research to date has demonstrated that Bulgaria's population distribution shifted over time. In the course of the last decade of the sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth century, the more densely populated but relatively higher western parts were pushing population out towards the lower eastern regions, until the population density in the country homogenized. Climatic changes must undoubtedly have been a significant push factor in the process, but the fact that the migratory wave was directed towards areas with a high concentration of *waqf* villages suggests that the pious endowments could have played a more significant role than previously believed. Once more, this illustrates the importance of the *waqf* institution for the maintenance of the Ottoman social order in the Balkans, and signals the necessity for more studies that can widen the territorial perspective and bring in more data suitable for quantitative and spatial analysis.

grigor.boykov@oeaw.ac.at

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AGENTS OF CONQUEST:  
FRONTIER LORDS' EXTENDED HOUSEHOLDS AS ACTORS  
IN THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST OF THE BALKANS

MARIYA KIPROVSKA  
(Central European University, Vienna)

Throughout the period of the Ottoman territorial expansion in the Balkans, military commanders from the families of several frontier lords figured prominently during conquests and emerged as distinct frontier elites and sociopolitical entities in their own right. As hereditary leaders of the vanguard Ottoman forces the frontier lords were in an extremely advantageous position to staff their courts and armies with slaves acquired through conquests in non-Muslim territories. These captives were raised, trained, and acculturated as part of the military-administrative households of the frontier lords, and in turn contributed to conquest, becoming the spearhead of further military expeditions. This essay examines the composition of the extended military household of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, a district governor of Niğbolu, as presented in an Ottoman register from the second decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and argues that his personal retainers became a reservoir for the military and the administration of the marcher district under his governance. It further maintains that the frontier lords' households, which represent a distinct group of power holders outside the sultanic dynasty, emerged as true loci of power that managed manpower along the bordering regions and should be studied in regards not only to their regional authority, but to their place in the Ottoman political establishment as well. By establishing stable patron–client relations with the members of their extended households, the frontier lords found themselves at the apex of a large web of networks entwined within social, military, administrative, political, and cultural life along the borders of the Ottoman state and should be regarded as an indispensable part of the Ottoman socio-political order in the region as a whole.

**Keywords:** Ottoman conquest, Balkans, frontier elites, household, Mihaloğlu family.

The Ottoman polity, as it appears in studies by some modern Ottomanists, was in essence a household-based political establishment ruled by the dynasty of Osman, whose own household stood at the apex of an extensive network of military, administrative, and elite political households encompassing a wide array of social actors, stretching from the highest Ottoman officials to the smallest fief holders in the provinces.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the achievements of modern scholarship we

<sup>1</sup> Metin Kunt has repeatedly emphasized the central role of households in Ottoman society. See M. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650*, New York, 1983, p. 9–56; idem, "Royal and Other Households," in Christine Woodhead (ed.), *The Ottoman World*, London – New York, 2012, p. 103–115.

are now more cognizant of the composition of the sultanic palace with its satellite princely and other grandee households.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the growing academic interest in other political households in the Ottoman realm has revealed the increasing importance of the pasha and vizier households, epitomized by the powerful Köprülü clan of viziers, as a primary source of the Ottoman ruling elite since the mid seventeenth century, a period which signaled a change in power relations and political authority in internal Ottoman affairs.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, households outside the Ottoman central government, located in the capital, were the backbone of the entire military elite on a provincial level, as observed in Ottoman Egypt and the district of Jerusalem during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup>

The alteration in the power balance at a given time was neither a temporal nor a spatial phenomenon. Arguably, it was a rather omnipresent feature of the Ottoman societies throughout the empire's long history, and was tightly intertwined with the changing political, military, economic, and social conditions. The profound changes in these conditions brought about a deep transformation in the political system and opened the way to Ottoman modernity at the turn of the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup> During the first centuries of the Ottoman state's existence, the transformation of power, control, and political authority was linked primarily to the evolving Ottoman concept of state-building, incarnated in prolonged centralizing, bureaucratizing, and Sunnitising efforts, which reached high points during the reigns of Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446 and 1451–1481) and Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566).<sup>6</sup> A change was certainly evident in the shifting pattern of provincial

<sup>2</sup> The most authoritative study on the composition of the sultanic household still remains İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, Ankara, 1945; see also idem, *Çandarlı Vezir Ailesi*, Ankara, 1974. Cf. L.P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford, 1993; R. Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800*, London, 2008; Th. Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453–1474)*, Leiden, 2001; H. W. Lowry, *Hersekzâde Ahmed Paşa: An Ottoman Statesman's Career & Pious Endowments*, Istanbul, 2011; H. Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Şehzadelik Kurumu*, Ankara, 2004; İ. M. Kunt, "A Prince Goes Forth (Perchance to Return)", in B. Tezcan and K. Barbir (eds.), *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, Madison, Wisconsin, 2007, p. 63–71; M. Kunt, "Turks in the Ottoman Imperial Palace", in J. Duindam, T. Artan and M. Kunt (eds.), *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective*, Leiden–Boston, 2011, p. 289–312.

<sup>3</sup> R.A. Abou-El-Haj, "The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households 1683–1703: A Preliminary Report", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94:4, 1974, p. 438–447; D. Ze'evi and I. Buke, "Banishment, Confiscation, and the Instability of the Ottoman Elite Household", in D. Ze'evi and E. Toledano (eds.), *Society, Law, and Culture in the Middle East: "Modernities" in the Making*, Berlin, Boston, 2015, p. 16–30.

<sup>4</sup> D. Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s*, Albany, 1996; J. Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaglis*, Cambridge, 2002; eadem, *Tale of Two Factions: A Myth, Memory, and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen*, Albany, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> M. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants...*; B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, Cambridge, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> C. Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, Berkeley, 1995; C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power*, Houndmills–New York, 2002;

appointments after the second half of the sixteenth century, when the ever-growing imperial military-administrative household of *kuls*, the sultan's own servitors, became the primary source for staffing most senior appointments in the provinces, hence ousting the local provincial nobility's household members.<sup>7</sup> The new power elites of imperial palace graduates and their households became key loci of power that, through a web of relationships and to a great extent by exercising household patronage, oversaw the manpower in the empire, a change noticeable in the built environment as well.<sup>8</sup> By focusing on members of these power elites and their clientelistic networks, recent scholarship has admittedly increased the general awareness that not all political power in the empire emanated from the sultan, hence shaking the understanding of all-embracing sultanic absolutism in a putative patrimonial empire, and bringing to the fore other socio-political actors who shaped the Ottoman socio-political order in their own right.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the growing corpus of studies on the Ottoman elite households and groups and individuals outside the Ottoman dynasty concentrates, as a rule, on the personal sultanic retinue and palace-bred elites, and hence by extension on the members of the extended Ottoman imperial household.<sup>10</sup> There is still a palpable lack of scholarly interest in the patronage networks of the most distinct group of power holders outside the sultanic dynasty that held sway for the first three centuries of Ottoman history.

B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire...* The process of Ottoman Sunnitization has recently been comprehensively studied by T. Krstić, "State and Religion, 'Sunnitization' and 'Confessionalism' in Süleyman's Time", in Pál Fodor (ed.), *The Battle for Central Europe: The Siege of Szigetvár and the Death of Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrínyi (1566)*, Leiden, Boston, 2019, p. 65–91; D. Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion", *Turcica* 44, 2012, p. 301–338; T. Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu, (eds.) *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750*, Leiden, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> M. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants...*; Jane Hathaway, "Households in the Administration of the Ottoman Empire", *Journal of Turkish Studies* 40, 2013, p. 127–149.

<sup>8</sup> G. İşıksel, "Ottoman Power Holders in the Balkans (1353–1580): A Case of Upward and Downward Elite Mobility", in D. Dautović, E. O. Filipović, and N. Isailović (eds.), *Medieval Bosnia and South-East European Relations: Political, Religious, and Cultural Life at the Adriatic Crossroads*, Amsterdam, 2019, p. 85–95. More generally: G. Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire*, London, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> The patrimonial Ottoman empire of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries envisaged by some Ottomanists (and most recently by B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire...*, 89–90, 192–93) has been questioned by H. Erdem Çıpa. Based on his analysis of the succession struggle of the sultan-to-be Selim I (r. 1512–1520), and most importantly of the prominent role of different military-political fractions, notably the Balkan frontier commanders, the author suggests that not all political power in the Ottoman polity emanated from the sultan and hence it cannot be considered a patrimonial state. H. E. Çıpa, *The Making of Selim: Succession, Legitimacy, and Memory in the Early Modern Ottoman World*, Bloomington, 2017, p. 62–107.

<sup>10</sup> J. Hathaway, *Beshir Agha: Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem*, Oxford, 2012); eadem, *The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem: From African Slave to Power-Broker*, Cambridge, 2018; H. Reindl-Kiel, *Leisure, Pleasure and Duty: The Daily Life of Silahdar Mustafa, Éminence Grise in the Final Years of Murad IV (1635–1640)*, Berlin, 2016. A truly inspiring overview of various types of Ottoman households with a desideratum for their further integration within the broader Mediterranean context and households' network, is presented by Palmira Brummett, "Placing the Ottomans in the Mediterranean World: The Question of Notables and Households", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 36, 2010, p. 77–96.

Throughout this period of territorial expansion, military commanders from the families of several frontier lords figured prominently during conquests as well as in domestic politics, emerging as influential power brokers in times of dynastic struggles. As hereditary leaders of the vanguard Ottoman forces moving across the Ottoman frontiers, the Evrenosoğlu, Mihaloğlu, Paşa Yiğitoğlu, Turahanoğlu, Malkoçoğlu, and other less prominent dynastic clans amassed enormous wealth and accumulated substantial military power, hence emerging as distinct frontier elites and sociopolitical entities in their own right. Thanks to increasing awareness within the scholarship on the formative Ottoman period that these frontier power holders played a prominent role in the early Ottoman conquests, we are now cognizant of their key involvement in the subsequent administration of the border regions brought under their governance, retaining relative autonomy vis-à-vis the central Ottoman administration.<sup>11</sup> Recent research has revealed that these lords possessed large hereditary estates in the areas under their control, which were transformed into ancestral residences and seats of power through vast architectural patronage.<sup>12</sup> It has also, to a great extent, unveiled the frontier lords families' pivotal role in internal Ottoman politics, especially during times of dynastic strife when the Ottoman pretenders relied heavily on the support of the Balkan *begs* to ascend the throne.<sup>13</sup> Based on the preserved archival records of the raiders' (*akıncı*) troops, traditionally led by members of these distinguished lineages of raider commanders, current studies have given details of the numbers, recruitment patterns, and geographical spread of their soldiery as well.<sup>14</sup>

Yet even though recent scholarship is shedding more light on the frontier lords' families' role in the military invasions both in Europe and Asia, their regional power along the borders, and their involvement in factional politics in times of accession struggles, there is a notable deficiency in current research as

<sup>11</sup> C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650...*, p. 186–188, 260–265; H. W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, Albany, 2003, p. 45–94; H. W. Lowry, "Early Ottoman Period", in M. Heper and S. Sayarı (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, Abingdon–New York, 2012, p. 5–14; P. Fodor, "Ottoman Warfare, 1300–1453", in K. Fleet (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 1: *Byzantium to Turkey 1071–1453*, Cambridge, 2009, p. 192–226, esp. p. 204–205.

<sup>12</sup> Recent systematic studies on the Evrenosoğlu family of frontier lords and the territories under their direct control have demonstrated that convincingly. H. W. Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350–1550: The Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece*, Istanbul, 2008; H.W. Lowry and İ. E. Erünsal, *The Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar: Notes & Documents*, Istanbul, 2010. An increased scholarly interest in the other marcher lords' families in the Balkans, among others by Levent and Ayşe Kayapınar, Orlin Sabev, Çetin Arslan, Mustafa Özer, Ayşegül Kılıç, and myself, is currently underway, but it seems unnecessary to cite all their studies here. A general assessment of the architectural heritage of members of the noble families in the Balkans has most recently been presented by M. Kiel, "The Incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire, 1353–1453", in K. Fleet (ed.), *Byzantium to Turkey 1071–1453...*, p. 138–191.

<sup>13</sup> D. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–1413*, Leiden–Boston, 2007, p. 135–194; H. E. Çıpa, *The Making of Selim...*, p. 91–107.

<sup>14</sup> A. Kayapınar and E. Erdoğan Özünlü, *Mihaloğulları'na ait 1586 tarihli akıncı defteri*, Ankara, 2015; E. Erdoğan Özünlü and A. Kayapınar, *1472 ve 1560 tarihli akıncı defterleri*, Ankara, 2017.

regards a comprehensive assessment of the patronage networks that they sustained and which undoubtedly constituted the backbone of their high socio-political standing both within and outside the confines of the empire. It is almost unimaginable that these powerful dynasties, whose longevity is comparable to the ruling Ottoman house, did not grow their own courts and large patronage households to uphold their authority throughout their long history.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, one might suggest that it was precisely thanks to the patronage households they raised and to the family networks they created over time that their dynasties were so long-lived, enduring well until the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Despite the lack of specific interest in the extended households of the frontier lords' dynasties, current scholarship on Ottoman households acknowledge the existence, alongside those belonging to other military, administrative, and religious officials, of frontier lords' extended families which, as the studies suggest, must have been largely modeled on that of the sultan – yet the research seems to have contented itself with this bare assertion alone.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, following the Muslim rulers' tradition, and the Ottoman *gulām* system in particular,<sup>17</sup> of recruiting and training elite slaves (*mamlūk*) for the palace and state service, the frontier lords were in an extremely advantageous position to staff their courts and armies with slaves acquired through conquests in non-Muslim territories (*dār al-ḥarb* / abode of war). The successful raiding expeditions in Europe performed under the leadership of the frontier lords usually brought rich booty,<sup>18</sup> the most valuable part of which was the captured slaves, who also became a primary source for the imperial palace servitors and the Janissary corps after the imposition of the one-fifth tax (*pençik*) enforced on war slaves by the Ottoman ruler.<sup>19</sup> However, these captives also comprised the manpower supply for the

<sup>15</sup> The Mihaloğlu and Evrenosoğlu families certainly survived the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, when their dynastic possessions remained within the territories of the newly born Balkan nation states. See H. W. Lowry and I. Erünsal, *The Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar...*; M. Kiprovská, "Power and Society in Pleven on the Verge of Two Epochs: The Fate of the Mihaloğlu Family and Its Pious Foundations (*Vakf*) during the Transitional Period from Imperial to National Governance", *Bulgarian Historical Review* 1–2, 2017, p. 172–204; V. Yančev and M. Kiprovská, "Povratni vremena: Ihtimanskijat vakāf na Mihaloglu Mahmud bey ot negovoto sāzdavane prez XV do načaloto na XX v.", *Istorija* 27:6, 2019, p. 559–598.

<sup>16</sup> M. Kunt, "Royal and Other Households..."; Hathaway, "Households in the Administration of the Ottoman Empire...", p. 128–129.

<sup>17</sup> H. İnalçık, "Ghulām, IV: Ottoman Empire", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 2, Leiden, 1991, p. 1085–1091.

<sup>18</sup> The disruption of life caused by these military raids across the border is clearly observable even in trade agreements, in which a force majeure clause, envisaging the real threat of Ottoman pillaging incursions, was included and stipulated exemption from contractual liability. These contracts and the evolution of the perception of the Ottoman menace, as well as the alteration in the sequence of military incursions, are discussed in detail in Emir Filipović's paper in this volume.

<sup>19</sup> İ.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları, I: Acemi Ocağı ve Yeniçeri Ocağı*, Ankara, 1943. There are reasons to believe that the *pençik* (one-fifth) tax on war captives was imposed to counterbalance the growing power of the Balkan frontier lords during the 1360s

households of the frontier lords themselves: their presence is attested in essentially all spheres of social life in the provinces under their governance. Hence, similar to the Ottoman rulers, the frontier lords evidently used slaves to repopulate desolate rural areas in their domains, so as to cultivate the landed estates.<sup>20</sup> The slaves of the marcher lords (already denoted in the sources as freedmen: *'ātīk, mu'taḳ, āzāde*) are sporadically mentioned in the tax records from all over the frontier nobility's landed properties, but mostly as town dwellers concentrated in the cities where the warlords established their power bases.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the frontier lords' own retainers of slave origin, as showcased by the preserved Ottoman tax registers from the fifteenth century, were the majority of the *tīmār*-holding military troops in the border districts (designated in the sources as *ta'allukāt, mensübān, merdümān, gilmānān, nökerān, hizmetkārān*).<sup>22</sup> As hinted by the sporadic recordings of the offices they held, these must have constituted the elite retinues of the border commanders' followers, who were part of their masters' courtly households. Acquired in the course of the plundering expeditions led by the protagonists of the Ottoman conquest in the Balkans and further north in Europe, these captives were raised, trained, and acculturated as part of the military-administrative household of the frontier lords, and in turn contributed to conquest, becoming the spearhead of further military expeditions. What is more, as part of their master's household and

and 1370s, when they were acting rather independently from the sultan. I. Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "En marge d'un acte concernant le penğyek et les aqınği", *Revue des études islamiques* 37, 1969, p. 21–47; C. Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, Berkeley, 1995, p. 112–113; V. Demetriades, "Some Thoughts on the Origins of the Devşirme", in E. Zachariadou (ed.), *The Ottoman Emirate (1300–1389)*, Rethymnon, 1993, p. 23–31.

<sup>20</sup> It was customary for the frontier lords to settle their war captives in the territories of their large pious foundations (*waqfs*). This was the case with many of the villages associated with the pious foundations of Timurtaş Beg, İshak Beg of Üsküb, and Evrenos Beg. Moreover, it appears that entire villages were created as a result of the resettling of prisoners of war on these noble families' landed estates. Ö.L. Barkan, "XV. ve XVI. Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Toprak İşçiliğinin Organizasyonu Şekilleri. I. Kulluklar ve Ortakçı Kullar", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 1, 1939, p. 29–74. Similarly, members of the Mihaloğlu family also deported settlers from the conquered territories and relocated them on their own private lands. See Ö.L. Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler. İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zâviyeler", *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2, 1942, p. 360–361; O. Sabev, "Osmanlıların Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi (XIV.–XIX. Yüzyıllar): Mülkler, Vakıflar, Hizmetler", *OTAM (Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi)* 33, 2013, p. 236; A. Kayapınar, "Kuzey Bulgaristan'da Gazi Mihaloğulları Vakıfları (XV.–XVI. Yüzyıl)", *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1:10, 2005, p. 174. See also Grigor Boykov's contribution to the present volume where he discusses, amongst others, the pious foundations of the frontier lords on the territory of present-day Bulgaria.

<sup>21</sup> H. W. Lowry and I. Erünsal, *The Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar...*, p. 110, 119; M. Kiprovska, "Shaping the Ottoman Borderland: The Architectural Patronage of the Frontier Lords from the Mihaloğlu Family", in M. Baramova, G. Boykov, and I. Parvev (eds.), *Bordering Early Modern Europe*, Wiesbaden, 2015, p. 108–109.

<sup>22</sup> H. İnalçık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, Ankara, 1954, p. 149–150, 158–159; H. İnalçık, *Hicri 835 tarihli Süret-i defter-i sancak-i Arvanid*, Ankara, 1954; H. Šabanović, *Krajište Isabega Ishakovića: zbirni katastarski popis iz 1455 godine*, Sarajevo, 1964.

therefore entangled in a network of patron–client ties, they also became an indispensable element of the military, administrative, social, political, and cultural life along and across the Ottoman borders, where they grew their own smaller patronage networks of clientelistic ties and thus contributed to the fluidity of social life in the border zone as a whole.<sup>23</sup> Examining the composition of these households and possibly tracing the career paths of the frontier lords’ retainers has the potential to raise our awareness of several intertwined problems relevant to the process of military conquest itself, as well as the accompanying practices of cross-border diplomacy,<sup>24</sup> political alliances, kinship ties, and all sorts of other interactions between the border elites and the regional dynasties and their nobility.

\* \* \*

The paramount significance of these questions for the general theme of the Ottoman conquests in Europe notwithstanding, the objective of the present paper is much humbler – it aims to merely present some preliminary findings on the extended military-administrative households of the frontier lords, based exclusively on one particular source, which sheds extra light on its composition and on the basis of which some tentative assumptions could be advanced. In this short essay, I will only sketch some notes based on one specific Ottoman register. By providing several particular examples, I hope to illustrate that these noble families created networks of dependent loyalties and maintained a sizable group of dependent subjects, who were exclusively former Balkan Christians and who subsequently served as agents of Ottoman order in the region.

The source under scrutiny is a register that lists the military retinue of the fief (*dirlik*)-holders (*sancağbegis*, *za’ıms*, and timariots) in the Rumelian (European) provinces of the empire sometime in the mid 1520s.<sup>25</sup> The document

<sup>23</sup> The entanglement of the different political and spatial aspects of the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, with a special emphasis on border zones, is addressed in the essay by Oliver Jens Schmitt in the present volume. See also his insightful thoughts on the manifold process of the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans in his “Introduction,” in O.J. Schmitt (ed.), *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans: Interpretations and Research Debates*, Wien, 2016, p. 7–45.

<sup>24</sup> M. Ivanović, “Cyrillic Correspondence Between the Commune of Ragusa and Ottomans from 1396 to 1458”, in S. Rudić and S. Aslantaş (eds.), *State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, Belgrade 2017, p. 43–63; A. Krstić, ““Which Realm Will You Opt For?” – The Serbian Nobility between the Ottomans and the Hungarians in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century”, in *ibid.*, p. 129–163.

<sup>25</sup> The original register is housed in the Topkapı Palace Museum Archives (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, TSMA) under the call no. D. 2204. I am, however, using the digital copy kept in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı – Osmanlı Arşivi, BOA) – TS. MA.d. 2204. The document is dated to the year 926/1520, but it seems to be from a slightly later date. A comparison with the *tevcih* registers containing the names of the appointed provincial governors from the 1520s (1521/2, 1522, 1526, 1527, and 1527–1531), as well as some of the well-established career paths of some of the frontier begs, strongly suggest that TS. MA.d 2204 was compiled when Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali Beg (d. 1527) was holding the post of a district-governor of Vidin in 1523/1524 and possibly slightly thereafter, before going back to his post as a *sancağbegi* of Semendire. For the career of Bali Beg, see Pál Fodor, “Wolf on the Border: Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali Bey (?–1527).

contains detailed information on nearly all military revenue grants,<sup>26</sup> i.e., *hāşşes*, *ze'āmets*, and *īmārs* in the Ottoman Balkan provinces of Ağrıboz (Euboea), Silistre (Silistra), Ohri (Ohrid), Vulçitrın (Vuçitrn), Gelibolu (Gallipoli), Semendire (Smederevo), Niğbolu (Nikopol), Mora (Morea), Vidin, İskenderye (Shkodër), Yanya (Ioannina), Köstendil (Kyustendil), Çingene, aka. the administrative district of Gypsies around Vize and Kırkkilise (Kırklareli), Avlonya (Vlorë), and İlbasan (Elbasan). The parts that have been preserved present information on the sum of revenues allotted to the *dirlik*-holders and on the military retinue of most district-governors (*sancağbegi*), *za'ims* or timariots, listed along with their names and often with their place of origin and specific office or duty.

District ( <i>livā/sancağ</i> )	District governor ( <i>sancağbegi</i> )	Allotted revenue (in <i>ağçe</i> )	Supported household ( <i>merdümān</i> , <i>hizmetkārān</i> , <i>gilmānān</i> )
Ohri	Mehmed Beg	340 000	200
Vulçitrın	'Alī Beg veled-i İskender Paşa	230 000	115
Gelibolu	Ahmed Beg, kapudan	450 000	---
Semendire	Mehmed Beg bin Yahyā Paşa	650 000	782
Silistre	Şücā' Beg	400 000	193
Niğbolu	Mehmed Beg bin 'Alī Beg	656 000	410
Mora	Süleymān Beg	504 000	254
Vidin	Bālī Beg	301 965	403
İskenderiyye	Ahmed Beg	475 000	273
Yanya	Luţfī Beg	503 629	230
Köstendil	Turgut Beg	350 000	167
İzvornik	Ahmed Beg bin Yahyā Paşa	220 000	---
Çingene	İskender Beg bin Yahyā Paşa	150 000	102
Avlonya	Ahmed Beg birader-i hāzret-i Ayās Paşa	350 000	235
İlbasan	Mehmed Beg	215 000	---

Ottoman provincial governors in Rumeli and their retainers (mid 1520s).

Source: BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204

Expansion and Provincial Elite in the European Confines of the Ottoman Empire in the Early Sixteenth Century”, in P. Fodor, N. E. Kovács, and B. Péri (eds.), *Şerefe: Studies in Honour of Prof. Géza Dávid on His Seventieth Birthday*, Budapest, 2019, p. 57–87, esp. p. 63. On the earliest appointment (*tevcih*) registers, their dating and contents, see Ö. L. Barkan, “H. 933–934 (M. 1527–1528) Malî Yılına Ait Bir Bütçe Örneği”, *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 15:1–4, 1953–1954, p. 251–329, esp. p. 303–307; E. Çakar, “Kanunî Sultan Süleyman Kanun-nâmesine Göre 1522 Yılında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İdarî Taksimatı”, *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 12:1, 2002, p. 261–282; M. T. Gökbilgin, “Kanunî Sultan Süleyman Devri Başlarında Rumeli Eyaleti, Livaları, Şehir ve Kasabaları”, *Belleten* 20, 1956, 247–294; M. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants...*, esp. p. 104–116.

<sup>26</sup> The defter consists of 201 folia. However, it has no beginning nor an end, hence it is incomplete (as some parts are missing). The register begins with certain *ze'āmet* (whose name is not readable because the upper part of the folio is torn) in the district of Ağrıboz. It is also obvious that the pages are bound erroneously, since f. 2<sup>a</sup> starts by listing *ze'āmets* in the Silistre province, but the latter's proper beginning is apparently on f. 56<sup>b</sup>, preceded by a recapitulation of the troops in the district of Ağrıboz on f. 56<sup>a</sup>.

Although at this point it is difficult to identify each of the mentioned district-governors (stemming notably from the fact that they are listed only with their personal names and lack a patronymic), the high amount of palace-fed retinue amongst them is nevertheless apparent. Being former sultanic pages and palace-graduates, a substantial number of the *sancağbegis* clearly belonged to the extended Ottoman household, as evidenced by the governors of Vilçitrın, Gelibolu, Semendire, Vidin, İzvornik, Çingâne, and Avlonya. Relatives of former sultanic pages of Christian descent (İskender Paşa was of Genoese descent;<sup>27</sup> Yahya Paşa – an Albanian;<sup>28</sup> Ayas Paşa – likewise Albanian-born<sup>29</sup>), and raised in the Ottoman palace, they indeed epitomize a change in provincial governance in which the sultan’s servitors gradually replaced the traditional local aristocratic families.<sup>30</sup>

Another eye-catching observation that imposes itself from the presented list of governor-generals with their fiefs and servants is that there is tangible discrepancy between the amounts of the allotted revenue and the size of the district-governor’s retinue. The most striking difference, for instance, is observable in the cases of Semendire, Niğbolu, and Vidin districts. Although Mehmed Beg from the Mihaloğlu family (the *sancağbegi* of Nikopol) was allocated a revenue grant bigger than that of Yahyalı Mehmed Beg in Semendire, he actually sustained a much smaller household, almost half the size of the latter’s. Similarly, the district-governor of Vidin, another member of the Yahyalı family, had a revenue grant amounting to half of that allotted to Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, but supported an entourage almost as large as the district-governor of Nikopol. These kinds of discrepancies have already been noted in recent studies. The inconsistencies are accounted for by the military merits, social standing, and, especially in the border districts, the amount of booty collected by the *sancağ*-holders.<sup>31</sup> This explanation might well be the case in point as regards our example. Originally an Albanian, and raised as Mehmed II’s palace page, Yahya Pasha served successively as governor, governor-general, and vizier under Mehmed II and his successor Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), and also joined the royal family by marrying Bayezid’s daughter.<sup>32</sup> From amongst his seven sons, Bali Beg and Mehmed Beg were the most illustrious.<sup>33</sup> Successfully leading vanguard forces into neighboring European soils,

<sup>27</sup> H. Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II (1481–1512)*, Berlin, 1983, p. 240–261.

<sup>28</sup> H. Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid...*, p. 336–345; A. Fotić, “Yahyapaşa-Oğlu Mehmed Pasha’s Evkaf in Belgrade,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 54:4, 2001, p. 437–452; P. Fodor, “Wolf on the Border...”.

<sup>29</sup> V.J. Parry, “Ayas Pasha”, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, vol. 1, Leiden, 1986, p. 779–780; B. Kütükoğlu, “Ayas Paşa”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 4, İstanbul, 1991, p. 202–203.

<sup>30</sup> M. Kunt, *The Sultan’s Servants...*

<sup>31</sup> M. Kunt, “Royal and Other Households...”, p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> H. Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid...*, p. 336–345.

<sup>33</sup> A. Fotić, “Yahyapaşa-Oğlu Mehmed Pasha’s Evkaf in Belgrade...”; P. Fodor, “Wolf on the Border...”.

they were among the most renowned frontier warriors of their time. Their consecutive appointments to the border districts of Vidin and Semendire put them in control of most of the Danubian border zone (*serhadd*). The district-governor of Niğbolu, Mehmed Beg, on the other hand, was a descendant of the Mihaloğlu family, whose eponymous founder was the Byzantine renegade Köse Mihal, one of the closest companions of Osman Beg in Bithynia.<sup>34</sup> Successive members of the Mihal family had led the Ottoman vanguard forces since the end of the thirteenth century, hence forming a hereditary family of frontier warriors (*uc begleri*) that was not directly linked to the royal palace and the sultanic household members who started their careers as palace graduates. Judging from the size of the revenue grant and the large military retinue that Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg was able to sustain by the mid 1520s, it becomes apparent that he was amongst the most successful frontier lords of the time, surpassed only by the members of the Yahyalı family both in terms of revenue grant size and amount of retainers. The high standing and foremost position of the Yahyalı family amongst the district-governors and frontier leaders in Rumelia is signified also by the fact that at the time the register was compiled, no less than four of the sons of Yahya Pasha held the posts of district-governors in the Balkans. This paramount standing certainly deserves special attention, but remains outside the analysis of the present paper, since the founder of the family, Yahya Pasha, was indeed a palace graduate and thus might be considered part of the extended royal household.

In what follows, I therefore restrict myself to a closer examination of the military household of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg and several of his relatives, as this particular family represents in full the hereditary Ottoman frontier nobility which founded, raised, and sustained a dynasty of its own outside the Ottoman royal household. Mehmed Beg himself was a son of Mihaloğlu 'Ali Beg,<sup>35</sup> one of the most prominent frontier lords at the time of Mehmed II and Bayezid II, who established his permanent power base in the district of Niğbolu centered on Plevne (mod. Pleven),<sup>36</sup> hence founding the Plevne branch of the family. Among 'Ali Beg's sons, Mehmed Beg was the most distinguished, gaining fame in the Ottoman military expeditions against European territories during the first three decades of the sixteenth

<sup>34</sup> O. Sabev, "The Legend of Köse Mihal", *Turcica* 34, 2002, p. 241–252; M. Kiprovska, "Byzantine Renegade and Holy Warrior: Reassessing the Character of Köse Mihal, a Hero of the Byzantino-Ottoman Borderland", *Journal of Turkish Studies* 40, 2013, p. 245–269 (Special Issue: S. S. Kuru and B. Tezcan (eds.), *Defterology: Festschrift in Honor of Heath Lowry*, Cambridge, 2013).

<sup>35</sup> O. Zirojević, "Smederevski Sandjakbeg Ali Beg Mihaloglu", *Zbornik Za Istoriju Matitsa Srpska* 3, 1971, p. 9–27; A. S. Levend, *Gazavât-Nâmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Gazavât-Nâmesi*, Ankara, 2000, p. 187–195.

<sup>36</sup> M. Kiel, "Urban Development in Bulgaria in the Turkish Period: The Place of Turkish Architecture in the Process", *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 4:2, 1989, p. 108–112; M. Kiel, "Plevna", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 8, new edition, Leiden, 1995, p. 317–320; A. Kayapınar, "Kuzey Bulgaristan'da Gazi Mihaloğulları Vakıfları..."; O. Sabev, "Osmanlıların Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi..."; M. Kiprovska, "Power and Society in Plevne on the Verge of Two Epochs...".

century and holding several border district governorships. Mehmed Beg participated in all the major military expeditions of Selim I (r. 1512–1520) and Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566): he led the raiders' troops in the campaign against the Safavids in 1514; and he fought at the siege of Belgrade (1521), at the battle of Mohács (1526), as well as during the Hungarian (1529) and the so-called German campaigns (1532) of Süleyman I.<sup>37</sup> He was a district-governor Vidin (1515)<sup>38</sup> of Bosnia (1517?)<sup>39</sup> and Hersek (1520),<sup>40</sup> a governor of two infantry (*piyāde*) recruitment districts in the province of Sultanönü in Anatolia (1520),<sup>41</sup> the birthplace of the dynasty, and most notably the district-governor of Niğbolu, where the Plevne branch of the family had its large domains,<sup>42</sup> a post which he held almost uninterruptedly from the early 1520s.<sup>43</sup>

In the mid 1520s Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg held the governorship of the Danubian border province of Niğbolu with an annual income of 656 000 *akçe*, as attested by the register examined in this essay.<sup>44</sup> Unlike the provincial governors' appointment (*tevcîh*) registers scholars have employed thus far, which disclose information only on the name of the district-governor, the place of his appointment, and allotted revenue in a given year, the register of the fief-holding soldiery in Rumeli from the mid 1520s offers invaluable details on the supported retinue of the listed *dirlik*-holders as well. The register under scrutiny lists no less than 410 people from Niğbolu district-governor Mehmed Beg's retinue.<sup>45</sup> All of his retainers are listed under the heading *gilmânân*. In Ottoman usage, *gulām* (pl. *gilmân*) was a

<sup>37</sup> M. Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahvâl-i Gazi Mihal*, Der Sa'adet, 1315, p. 78–82; İ.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi. II. cilt: İstanbul'un Fethinden Kanunî Sultan Süleyman'ın Ölümine Kadar*, Ankara, 1998<sup>8</sup>, p. 262, 471, 573; M.T. Gökbilgin, "Mihaloğulları", in *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8, 1960, p. 288; A.S. Levend, *Gazavât-Nâmeler...*, p. 195–196.

<sup>38</sup> BOA, Maliyeden, Müdevver (MAD) 70, f. 1b.

<sup>39</sup> M. Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, ed. Nuri Akbayar, vol. 3, İstanbul, 1996, p. 965; V. Bišćević, *Bosanski namjesnici Osmankog doba (1463–1878)*, Sarajevo, 2006, p. 82–83; M.T. Gökbilgin, "Mihaloğulları", p. 288.

<sup>40</sup> 91, 164, MAD 540 ve 173 Numaralı Hersek, Bosna ve İzvornik Livâları İcmâl Tahrîr Defterleri (926-939 / 1520–1533), Ankara, 2005, p. 43.

<sup>41</sup> The military-administrative province of "Piyâdegân-i Sultanönü" was further divided into smaller units, two of which – both with the geographic name Harmanakaya – were under the military governance of Mehmed Beg, who inherited the position from his father 'Ali Beg. See H. Doğru, *XV. ve XVI. Yüzyılda Sultanönü Sancağında Yaya ve Müsellem Teşkilatı*, İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 1990, p. 88, 91; M. Kiprovska, "Byzantine Renegade and Holy Warrior...", p. 257–258.

<sup>42</sup> See also Grigor Boykov's contribution to this volume.

<sup>43</sup> In the appointment registers of the 1520s he is listed as a district-governor of Niğbolu in 1521/22 (TSMA, D. 9772), 1526 (TSMA, D.10057), and 1527 (TSMA, D.5246). Cf. Ö. L. Barkan, "H. 933–934 (M. 1527–1528) Malî Yılına Ait Bir Bütçe Örneği...", p. 303–307; M. T. Gökbilgin, "Kanunî Sultan Süleyman Devri Başlarında Rumeli...", p. 247–294; M. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants...*, p. 104–116. In a *tahrîr* register from 1530 (BOA, TD 370) he still holds the post of Niğbolu *sancağbegi*. 370 Numaralı Muhâsebe-i Vilâyet-i Rûm-İli Defteri (937/1530), vol. 2. Çirmen, Müsellemân-ı Çingâne, Müsellemân-ı Kızılca, Silistre, Keefe, Niğbolu ve Vidin Livâları, Çirmen ve Vize Müsellemeleri, Yörük ve Tatar Cemâatleri ile Voynuğan-ı İstabl-ı Âmire ve Kıbtîyân-ı Vilâyet-i Rûm-ili, Ankara, 2001, p. 512.

<sup>44</sup> BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 69<sup>b</sup>: *Livâ-i Niğbolu, der taşarruf-i Mehmed Beg bin 'Alî Beg, hâşıl: 656 000.*

<sup>45</sup> BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, ff. 69<sup>b</sup>–70<sup>b</sup>: *yekün-i merdümân-i müşârün-ileyh: 410.*

term used to designate a young slave who went through special training in a respected *kapı*, i.e., a household.<sup>46</sup> Engaged in constant warfare on the Ottoman borders, the marcher lords, including those from the house of Mihal, could easily staff their military households with the needed manpower supply, as they were able to accumulate a great many slaves and prisoners of war whom they later trained in various duties in their courts, and hence produced and maintained a sizable elite troop of soldiers and loyal subjects. Plausibly, the process of training these *kapı-kulları* (household servitors) employed by the frontier lords mirrored the educational and military training that the sultan's slaves went through in the royal Ottoman palace – first in the inner service (*enderün* section) and then in the outer service (*bīrūn* section) of the palace. Such a hypothesis is substantiated by the data enclosed in the register from the mid 1520s, which contains the names of each of the dependents of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, specifying a particular place of origin for many of his retainers, as well as their occupation or responsibility as employees at the *beg's* household. Hence, besides the armed retainers (*cebelü*) who rendered military service, one may identify particular regiments that were an integral part of his entourage and palace pages. Although not grouped under specific headings, the additional information for each individual allows us to determine the following detachments:

- commanders of military divisions  
18 *voyvoda* (commanders of a military division)
- cavalry regiment  
8 *çāvūş* (envoys to deliver and carry out orders, court heralds)
- regiment of the life-guards of the *beg*  
1 *silāhdār* (arms-bearer and personal life-guard of the *beg*)
- household soldiery  
257 *cebelü* (armed retainers)
- regiment of gate-keepers  
1 *kethüdā-i bevvābīn* (chief of the gate-keepers guarding the central gate of the *beg's* palace)  
2 *ser-bevvābīn* (heads of the gate-keepers)
- regiment of scribes  
5 *kātib* (scribes)
- regiment of the *beg's* kitchen  
1 *ser-ḥabbāzīn* (head of the cooks)  
4 *ḥabbāz* (bakers)  
2 *kilārī* (keeper of the larder)
- regiment of tailors  
1 *ser-ḥayyāṭīn* (chief of the tailors)  
7 *ḥayyāṭ* (tailors)

<sup>46</sup> H. İnalçık, “Ghulām, IV: Ottoman Empire...”.

- regiment of shoemakers  
1 *ser-kaḡafīn* (chief of the shoe makers)  
6 *kaḡaf* (shoe makers)
- regiment in charge of campaign tents  
1 *ser-mehterān-i ḡayme* (chief of the tent-makers)  
21 *mehter* (tent-makers)
- regiment of *beg*'s stables  
1 *emīr-āḡūr* (lord of the stables)  
1 *kethūdā-i āḡūr* (chief of the stables)  
5 *ḡarbende* (pack animals' grooms)
- regiment of falconers  
1 *ser-bāzdārān* (chief of raptor breeders)  
9 *bāzdār* (raptor breeders)
- regiment of physicians  
1 *cerrāḡ* (physician)

The composition of Mihaloḡlu Mehmed Beg's palace employees and military entourage implies that the *beg*'s personal retinue and extended household mirrored the structure of the sultanic household and sultanic palace personnel, where we see representatives of the same contingents.<sup>47</sup> In turn, this suggests that the raider commanders had in all probability fashioned their power bases and especially their residential mansions through analogy with the sultanic palaces. The presence of gate-keepers, for instance, clearly points to the physical appearance of the mansion. Obviously it was surrounded by walls, and access to the inner parts was only possible via the guarded gates. This assumption is corroborated by the physical remains of part of the enclosing walls of the Mihaloḡlus "castle" in Plevne, the family's most significant power base and residence in the Danubian plain.<sup>48</sup> Remnants of the dwelling still existed at the beginning of the twentieth century and were known until the 1930s as the "*saray*" (palace).<sup>49</sup> It is possible that the abode was built by Mihaloḡlu 'Ali Beg at the end of the fifteenth century concurrently with all the other buildings he commissioned, and around which the town of Plevne grew. In the mid seventeenth century, Evliya Çelebi recounted that the *saray* was a quadrangular fortification, with a palace of many stories inside the walls, where the

<sup>47</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı...*

<sup>48</sup> M. Kiprovska, "Shaping the Ottoman Borderland...", p. 207, 217–218; M. Kiprovska, "Plunder and Appropriation at the Borderland: Representation, Legitimacy, and Ideological Use of *Spolia* by Members of the Ottoman Frontier Nobility", in I. Jevtić and S. Yalman (eds.), *Spolia Reincarnated – Afterlives of Objects, Materials, and Spaces in Anatolia from Antiquity to the Ottoman Era*, Istanbul, 2018, p. 66–68. The existence of another palace of the family in its Harmanakaya domain in Anatolia is also attested in the Ottoman fiscal records of the region. See M. Kiprovska, "Byzantine Renegade and Holy Warrior...", p. 262–263.

<sup>49</sup> Y. Trifonov, *Istoriya na grada Plevne do Osvoboditelna voyna*, Sofia, 1933, p. 61 (plan of the walled part of the palace), p. 62–63.

Mihaloğulları lived and from where they governed the area.<sup>50</sup> Whether the inner space was strictly partitioned into successive courtyards, like the Topkapı Sarayı in İstanbul, is hard to determine. But what can be firmly ascertained about the Mihaloğlu palace in Plevne in particular, judging again from the retainers of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, is that it clearly integrated different structures, such as the palace kitchens and bakeries, supervised by the head of the cooks (*ser-ḥabbāzīn*), and the associated cellars and depots managed by the keeper of the larder (*kilārī*); the armory, which was managed by the chief sword bearer (*silāḥdār*); the palace stables, overseen by the chief of the stables (*emīr-āḥūr*); certain facilities where the *beg*'s birds of prey were raised and trained (as suggested by the presence of a chief falconer, *ser-bāzdārān*); tailoring ateliers (as suggested by the presence of both tent-makers and tailors – *mehterān*, *ḥayyāṭīn*); a scribes' chamber (as suggested by the presence of several scribes, *kātib*); and in all certainty it also possessed a distinct council hall (*dīvān-ḥāne*) where the councils, summoning the highest military commanders of the *beg*'s military forces (such as *voyvodas*) and his envoys (*çāvüşes*), were held and where military decisions and subsequent orders were carefully recorded by the secretaries (*kātib*s). In all probability, it also included dormitories for all palace employees. When Evliya Çelebi described the palace in the second half of the seventeenth century, he only mentioned that it resembled a fortification. Still, one can suppose that behind his wording, “many-storeyed palace,”<sup>51</sup> actually hide all the edifices described above.

The assumption that the Mihaloğlu retainers went through educational and military training in the palace facilities in the city of Plevne is likewise corroborated by further information obtainable from the register under scrutiny. A closer look at the retinue of some *ze'āmet*-holders (large fief holders) who were offspring of the Mihaloğlu family allows an interesting observation. A substantial part of their retainers were registered as originating from Plevne, implying that they were Plevne palace-graduates. These individuals were part of the extended Mihaloğlu military household, who, in turn, became the backbone of the satellite households of less prominent or simply younger – and therefore still less experienced – military leaders from the family. It suffices to look at the households of two of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's sons to substantiate this assumption. His son Hızır, who held a *ze'āmet* in the district of Niğbolu with an income of 70 000 *aḳçe*, sustained an entourage of 100 men. Not less than 57 of them, more than half, came from Plevne.<sup>52</sup> The same is true for the retinue of another son of Mehmed Beg, Ahmed Beg, who held another fief (*ze'āmet*) in the district of Niğbolu, yielding an income of 25 000 *aḳçe*. Yet again, half of the retinue of Ahmed Beg were from

<sup>50</sup> Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehmed Zillî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi. 6. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, ed. S. A. Kahraman and Y. Dağlı, İstanbul, 2002, p. 95.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 71<sup>a</sup>.

Plevne.<sup>53</sup> And if the proximity of the palace-center of Plevne to the holdings of the two sons of the district-governor of Niğbolu might well have been a leading factor in the formation of their households, another example from the district of Semendire definitely showcases how the offspring of a frontier lords' family formed his household. A case in point is a *tīmār*-holding, indeed a rather large one (15 380 *aķçe*), of Maḥmūd bin Meḥmed Beg bin İḥtimānī.<sup>54</sup> İhtiman, a town to the south-east of Sofia, was the place of residence of another branch of the Mihaloğlu family, whose members are referred to in the sources with the nobility predicate İḥtimānī (marking the place of their seat of power and family domain) to distinguish them from the Plevne family line.<sup>55</sup> The said Mahmud Beg at the time supported a household of 36 people, 12 of whom are recorded as İḥtimānī (from İhtiman), indicating their place of origin. Apparently, the core of his military household was formed by people from his father's courtly household (represented by the 12 retainers from İhtiman) who came along with their young master to the place of his new appointment – in this case, a *tīmār* in the province of Semendire.

fief-holding, its holder and allotted revenue	number of supported retainers	origin of the retainers' bulk
ze'āmet-i be-nām-i Hızır Beg bin Meḥmed Beg bin Miḥāl Beg ḥāşıl: 70 000 [aķçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 100	Plevne: 57
ze'āmet-i be-nām-i Ahmed Beg bin Meḥmed Beg bin 'Alī Beg ḥāşıl: 25 000 [aķçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 18	Plevne: 9
tīmār-i Maḥmūd bin Meḥmed Beg bin İḥtimānī ḥāşıl: 15 380 [aķçe]	cebelüyān: 36	İḥtimān: 12

Number and place of origin of some of the Mihaloğlu family members' retinue.  
Source: BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204.

The three cases cited above illustrate how the marcher lords' progeny formed their military-administrative households – the backbone of their retinues were graduates of their fathers' courts, later enlarged by their own slave recruits who were further trained into their newly formed households. Moreover, the cited examples also bear striking similarities with how the Ottoman princely household was formed. It was a well-established custom before the seventeenth century for an Ottoman prince (*şehzāde*) to leave the sultan's household and to receive an appointment as

<sup>53</sup> BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 72<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 45<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> For the establishment of the family in İhtiman and the town's further development see: M. Kiel, "Four Provincial İmaret's in the Balkans and the Sources about Them", in N. Ergin, Ch. K. Neumann, and A. Singer (eds.), *Feeding People, Feeding Power: İmaret's in the Ottoman Empire*, Istanbul, 2007, p. 106–109; O. Sabev, "Osmanlıların Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi ...", p. 239–240; M. Kiprovska, "Shaping the Ottoman Borderland...", p. 198–202.

governor in an Anatolian district (*sancak*). Upon leaving for the province, the prince was given some palace servitors from the sultanic household to staff his own household. At his provincial post, the prince's household grew with his own recruits, and upon succession to the throne the successful prince brought his entourage to be reincorporated into the royal household.<sup>56</sup> This practice seems to have been applied in full by the hereditary raider commanders as well, and ought to be accounted as among the principal reasons for the sustainability and longevity of their dynasties.

Apart from how the household was formed, the names of the *beg*'s retainues also provide an opportunity to substantiate the supposition that the marcher lords initially drew household members from slaves acquired as a result of their military expeditions in the Christian territories in the Balkans or Anatolia. For instance, a substantial part of the household attendants of the Niğbolu *sancakbegi* Mehmed Beg were specifically recorded with a toponymy-based label, such as Bosna (33), Arnavud (23), Hersek (12), Eflâk (4), Belgrad (2), Macar (1), Rus (1), therefore marking the actual places from where they had been taken and brought to his residential palace in Plevne for training. The same holds for some of his sons' households' entourage, amongst whom certain individuals are likewise listed as Bosna, Eflâk, Arnavud, Hırvat, and Macar, clearly indicating the territories of the military excursions from where the frontier lords levied the bulk of their future retainers and household affiliates.

These recruits, most of them certainly slaves captured during the raids, joined the households of the frontier warriors and, after going through special military and educational training, became either their palace servitors or part of their elite military retinue. They are recorded in the register only with a Muslim name, preventing any further observations as to their background prior to joining the Mihaloğlu household. It is plausible, nevertheless, that among their ranks there were also sons of local magnates in regions occupied by the frontier lords; others might have been taken as hostages from the neighboring noble courts; or there might have been some high-profile voluntary converts, former courtiers and retinue of the frontier nobility across the border, who switched sides and joined the court of the noble clan of Mehmed Beg.<sup>57</sup>

In spite of the obscurity shrouding the origins of these retainers, it is possible to trace out the military advancement of some. After graduation from the frontier lord's palace, the most distinguished ones were further awarded revenue grants

<sup>56</sup> M. Kunt, "Royal and Other Households..."

<sup>57</sup> Movement of higher and lesser nobility for military and official service across the border between the neighboring royal and noble courts was not uncommon. On the contrary, such movements from Serbia and Croatia to the north in Banat, Transylvania and in the service of the Hungarian king and nobles were rather frequent, as showcased by the studies of Neven Isailović and Aleksandar Krstić/Adrian Magina in the present volume. Moreover, as exemplified by the career path of the Serbian voivode Miloš Belmužević (Krstić and Magina's text in this volume), who for a short time was an Ottoman *sipāhī*, switching allegiance was not always a permanent decision.

(*tīmārs*) in their master's governing districts<sup>58</sup>. They raised smaller military households of their own, hence becoming an indispensable part of the military and the administrative structure of the respected regions. One can safely identify members of the Mihaloğlu extended household as *tīmār*-holders in the *sancağ* of Niğbolu in the mid 1520s. Three timariots are listed as the *sancağbegi* Mehmed Beg's associates (*merdüm*), one being explicitly recorded as his scribe (*kātib*).<sup>59</sup> Four more *sipāhīs* can likewise be identified as part of the Mihaloğlu family members' retinue: three men (*merdüm*) of Mustafa Beg and one attendant (*merdüm*) of Hasan Beg's household, the latter two being brothers of the then district-governor Mehmed Beg.<sup>60</sup>

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**Fief-holdings of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's household retinue members (*merdüm*):**

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tīmār-i Yūnus Çelebi, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hāşıl: 9 501 [akçe]
tīmār-i kātib Ca'fer, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hāşıl: 9 071 [akçe]
tīmār-i Kāşım, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hāşıl: 5 289 [akçe]

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**Fief-holdings of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's brothers' households retinue members (*merdüm*):**

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tīmār-i Alagöz, merdüm-i Muşafā Beg	hāşıl: 10 771 [akçe]
tīmār-i Hüsrev Dīvāne, merdüm-i Muşafā Beg	hāşıl: 7 708 [akçe]
tīmār-i İdrīs voyvoda, merdüm-i Muşafā Beg	hāşıl: 17 000 [akçe]
tīmār-i Mehmed, merdüm-i Hasan Beg	hāşıl: 6 250 [akçe]

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Fief-holders from the Mihaloğlu family household retinue members.  
Source: BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204.

The number of *sipāhī*-cavalrymen who were members of the military household of the frontier lord's district-governor, as presented in the register from the mid 1520s, might seem truly negligible as compared to the situation half a century earlier when, for example, the *tīmār*-holders in the province of Üsküp were all but a few represented by the servants of the marcher lords of Paşa Yiğit clan (most notably İshakoğlu 'İsa beg) – their *gulāms* or *hizmetkār*s.<sup>61</sup> However, the significance of the Mihaloğlu family members' entourage in the Niğbolu district's military forces should not be underestimated. Indeed, when one adds to the substantial retinue of the *sancağbegi*, amounting to 410 men, the number of the supported military escort of five more Mihaloğlu family members who held

<sup>58</sup> The most trusted men and distinguished voyvodas from the closest entourage of the *beg* were even allotted by their patron with private properties (*mülk*). Such was the case with several elite soldiers in the district of Plevne, who were granted private lands by Ali Beg and his son Mehmed Beg. Cf. A. Kayapınar, "Kuzey Bulgaristan'da Gazi Mihaloğulları Vakıfları...", p. 174; O. Sabev, "Osmanlıların Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi...", p. 236; V. Turgut, "Vakıf Belgelerinde Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluş Dönemi Aileleri: Malkoçoğulları ve Mihallüler", *Yeni Türkiye* 66, 2015, p. 573–583, esp. p. 581–582.

<sup>59</sup> BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 75<sup>a</sup>, 75<sup>b</sup>, 77<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 75<sup>b</sup>, 76<sup>a</sup>, 76<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> H. Šabanović, *Krajište Isa-bega Ishakovića...*

*ze'āmet*s in the province (three of his sons and two of his cousins), and the *tīmār*-holding men affiliated with the dynasty (*merdūms* of Mehmed Beg and two of his brothers) as well, it becomes clear that the extended Mihaloğlu household and its associates supported no less than 589 retainers, which made up nearly 40% (37.58%) of the whole military strength of the province, consisting of 1 567 soldiers in total.<sup>62</sup> Assuming that a number of the timariots with unspecified or unidentifiable affiliation were also the Mihaloğulları's close associates, these figures could prove to be higher still. Even these numbers, however, are instructive concerning the dominant authority of the warlords from the family in the Danubian frontier district of Niğbolu in the second decade of the sixteenth century.

fief-holder	allotted revenue	number of supported retainers
ze'āmet-i be-nām-i Hızır Beg bin Mehmed Beg bin Miḥāl Beg	hāşıl: 70 000 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 100
ze'āmet-i be-nām-i Ahmed Beg bin Mehmed Beg bin 'Alī Beg	hāşıl: 25 000 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 18
ze'āmet-i be-nām-i 'Alī Beg [bin] Mehmed Beg	hāşıl: 25 000 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 10
ze'āmet-i be-nām-i Seyyidi bin Bālī Beg	hāşıl: 22 598 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 8
ze'āmet-i be-nām-i Çalış bin Hızır Beg bin Miḥāl – maḥlül	hāşıl: 26 137 [ağçe]	--- <sup>63</sup>
tīmār-i Yūnus Çelebi, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hāşıl: 9 501 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 7
tīmār-i kātib Ca'fer, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hāşıl: 9 071 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 10
tīmār-i Kāsım, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hāşıl: 5 289 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 6
tīmār-i Alagöz, merdüm-i Muştafā Beg	hāşıl: 10 771 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 2
tīmār-i Hüsrev Dīvāne, merdüm-i Muştafā Beg	hāşıl: 7 708 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 5
tīmār-i İdrīs voyvoda, merdüm-i Muştafā Beg	hāşıl: 17 000 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 10
tīmār-i Mehmed, merdüm-i Hasan Beg	hāşıl: 6 250 [ağçe]	cebelüyān-i mezbūr: 3

Military retinue supported by Mihaloğlu family members and their associates.  
Source: BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204.

<sup>62</sup> BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 82<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> Since the revenue-raising fief was vacant at the time of the registration (*maḥlül*), there were no retainers listed. Çalış Beg should be regarded as the previous *ze'āmet* holder, as it is possible that he was either dead at that time or had received another fief-holding somewhere else.

\* \* \*

Taken as a whole, the information from the mid 1520s register offers an insight into the marcher lords' extended households. Even the sketchy examples from the province of Niğbolu and the household of its district-governor presented here reveal that these lords of the marches were rightfully called so not only because they led the Ottoman expansion into Europe in command of numerous troops of raiders, or because they established their lordships (massive landed estates) in the regions under their governance, but also because they sustained a large entourage of personal devotees, who manned their noble courts and were part of the military-administrative organization of their provinces. What is more, the composition and the size of their courtly households reveal striking similarities with the Ottoman imperial and princely households, which hence adds to the proper evaluation of the active role they played in all levels of the Ottoman socio-political establishment. It is noteworthy that the personal retainers maintained by Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, for instance, could be compared in size to the princely households of the time. Süleyman I, for example, when he was a princely governor in 1511, and his son prince Mehmed in 1540, had each approximately 500 men in their households.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, again in comparison with the Ottoman ruler, taking advantage of their leadership in foreign conquests and thereby obtaining substantial numbers of slaves (possibly including also members of the local higher or lesser nobility), the frontier lords were able to staff their households with slave recruits, who were raised, educated, and further socialized in their courts to become their loyal servitors, skillful courtiers, and elite military retainers. The courtly households of the frontier lords formed their elite entourage, whose members were arguably also physically attached to their master, living within the confines of the frontier lords' palatial homes, which, again in parallel to the sultanic palace, combined the family quarters of the *begs* and the training and lodging facilities for the pages. Furthermore, mirroring the formation of the Ottoman princely households, the frontier lords' palace servitors formed the core of smaller satellite households of other noble families. In turn, the latter were further enlarged by the respective household head with his own slave recruits. Trained in different duties, the most skillful palace graduates of the marcher lords could find their way to the imperial household as well, as testified, for example, by the presence of several associates (*merdüm*) of Balkan raider commanders among the royal retinue of Selim I in 1512.<sup>65</sup> However, the frontier lords' palace graduates were most visible in the provinces they governed, as they became a true reservoir for the military and

<sup>64</sup> Kunt, "A Prince Goes Forth...", p. 69.

<sup>65</sup> The first salary register (*mevacib defteri*) of Selim's royal retinue of 1512 and the individuals who were members of certain noble households, including the ones of the Balkan frontier lords, is analyzed in detail by H.E. Çıpa, *Yavuz'un Kavgası: I. Selim'in Saltanat Mücadelesi*, İstanbul, 2013, p. 181–211; H.E. Çıpa, "Bir Defterin Anlattıkları: I. Selim döneminin (1512–1520) İlk Mevacib Defteri," in A. Erdoğan, Z. Atbaş, and A. Çöteliöğlu (eds.), *Filiz Çağman'a Armağan*, İstanbul, 2018, p. 207–210.

the administration of the marcher districts, just like the imperial palace graduates became the pool for the military and administrative posts in the imperial center and throughout the provinces of the empire.

The households of the Ottoman frontier magnates emerged as true loci of power that managed manpower along the bordering regions. By establishing stable patron–client relations with the members of their extended households, the frontier lords found themselves at the apex of a large web of networks entwined within social, military, administrative, political, and cultural life along the borders of the Ottoman state. Moreover, it is notable that at their highest level these networks were also supported by a web of kinship relationships within and outside the Ottoman domains, which in turn positioned the household heads as active participants in domestic and foreign affairs at the time. A notable network of this type, not addressed in the present paper but which should undoubtedly not be overlooked, was created through the dynastic marriage politics that the frontier dynasties of warlords followed. The Plevne house of the Mihaloğlu knotted relations with the neighboring elites. Mihaloğlu ‘Ali Beg, the founding father of the Danubian (Plevne) line of the prominent dynasty and one of the most celebrated Ottoman frontier lords at the end of the fifteenth century, established putative kinship ties with the Hungarian court when he married king Mathias Corvinus’s daughter, whom he allegedly captured in one of his Transylvanian raids.<sup>66</sup> Hasan Beg, the eldest son of ‘Ali Beg, who was possibly born to this noble lady, established kinship ties with the powerful neighboring Ottoman frontier household of the Yahyalı family by marrying the daughter of Yahya Pasha himself.<sup>67</sup> Undoubtedly the most distinguished son of ‘Ali Beg, Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, whose household was discussed in the present paper, sealed an alliance with the Bosnian noble dynasty of Kosaçi when he married into the Hersekoğlu family by joining in matrimony the daughter of Ahmed Pasha.<sup>68</sup> Arguably, it was this alliance that secured him the post of district-governor of Hersek for some time. The political pact of union with one of the most influential houses of the Wallachian nobility, however, was the one that marked the career of Mehmed Beg.<sup>69</sup> Bonded to

<sup>66</sup> M. Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahvâl-i Gazi Mihal...*, p. 61.

<sup>67</sup> BOA, Tapu Tahrir Defteri (TD) 382, p. 733, 743; TD 713, f. 216. Cf. A. Kayapınar, “Kuzey Bulgaristan’da Gazi Mihaloğulları Vakıfları...”, p. 175.

<sup>68</sup> В. Атанасовски, *Пад Херцеговине*, Београд, 1979, p. 216. In a register of benefactions (*in ‘âmât defteri*) from 1507 Mehmed Beg appears as the husband of an unnamed daughter of Hersezkade Ahmed Pasha and the Ottoman princess Hundi Sultan (daughter of Bayezid II). See H. Reindl-Kiel, “Some Notes on Hersezkade Ahmed Pasha, His Family, and His Books”, *Journal of Turkish Studies* 40, 2013, 315–326 (Special Issue: S. S. Kuru and B. Tezcan (eds.), *Defterology: Festschrift in Honor of Heath Lowry*, Cambridge, 2013). In 1511 the wife of Mehmed Beg presented really generous gifts to Bayezid II. İlhan Gök, “Atatürk Kitaplığı M. C. O.71 Numaralı 909–933/1503–1527 Tarihli İn‘âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon-Değerlendirme)”, Unpublished PhD dissertation, Istanbul, Marmara University, 2014, p. 1217.

<sup>69</sup> The love story between Mihaloğlu ‘Ali Beg and the daughter of the Wallachian ban is at the center of Suzi Çelebi’s epic poem, dedicated to the heroic deeds of ‘Ali Beg. A. S. Levend, *Gazavât-Nâmeler...*

the boyar family of the Craiovești (the bans of Oltenia or Craiova) through his father's marriage to a daughter of Neagoe of Strehaia, Mehmed Beg remained closely linked to the Wallachian internal struggles, and his support was vital for the promoting of virtually all Wallachian voivodes in the period 1508–1532.<sup>70</sup>

Revealing further details about the dynastic marriages of the regional dynasties of frontier lords, as well as the members of their courtly households, and the impact they had on the socio-political dynamics along and across the Ottoman borders, would undoubtedly illuminate the history of the Ottoman conquest and subsequent permanent presence in the Balkans, a story of entanglement which is yet to be told. It remains a desiderata for future research to delve into the complicated matter of these families' prosopographic history. Only then will we be able to reconstruct the intricate kinship and clientele ties that formed multiple networks of dependencies and thus shaped the affairs of the bordering regions.

kiprovska\_mariya@phd.ceu.edu

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<sup>70</sup> The kinship ties of the Mihaloğlu to the Craiovești boyars were supported by documentary evidence published by M. A. Mehmet, "Două documente turcești despre Neagoe Basarab...", *Studii* 21:5, 1968, 921–930. It was Cristina Feneșan who proposed that the mother of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, the heroine from Suzi Çelebi's poem, must be a daughter of Neagoe of Strehaia, whom his father 'Ali Beg married and who later adopted the Muslim name Selimşah. See Cristina Feneșan, "Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg et la principauté de Valachie (1508–1532)", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 15, 1995, p. 137–155. Feneșan's study is by now the most comprehensive historical overview of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's interference in Wallachian politics, which goes far beyond the establishment of simple kinship relationships. Cf. her recent book, *Convertire la Islam în spațiul carpato-dunărean: (secolele XV-XIX)*, București, 2020, p. 243–248. On the wider phenomenon of creation of multiple webs of social connections and group solidarities with marked political dimensions, that informed the actions of "trans-border actors," among whom Mehmed Beg and his kin had a central role, see R. Păun, "Calling for Justice and Protection: Sixteenth-Century Wallachian and Moldavian Tributaries as Petitioners to the Imperial Stirrup", in G. Kármán (ed.), *Tributaries and Peripheries of the Ottoman Empire*, Leiden; Boston, 2020, 65–116.

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THE BELMUŽEVIĆ FAMILY. THE FATE OF A NOBLE FAMILY  
IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE DURING THE TURBULENT PERIOD  
OF THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST  
(THE 15<sup>th</sup> AND FIRST HALF OF THE 16<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES)

ALEKSANDAR KRSTIĆ  
(Institute of History, Belgrade)  
ADRIAN MAGINA  
(Museum of the Highland Banat, Reșița)

Voivode Miloš Belmužević was a significant figure in 15<sup>th</sup> century Serbian history. He was born to a noble family, whose members performed administrative duties in Zeta and northern Serbia during the reign of Despot Đurađ Branković (1427–1456). Shortly before the downfall of the Serbian medieval state, Belmužević supported the pro-Ottoman faction of Michael Angelović. Due to this fact, he fell into disgrace at the court and was deprived of his property in 1458. After the fall of Smederevo (1459) he entered into Ottoman military service and became a *sipahi*. In 1476/7, he held the market place of Jagodina in the Morava valley as a *timar*. He moved to Hungary most probably during the great Hungarian offensives against the Ottomans in northern Serbia in 1480 and 1481, when tens of thousands of Serbs were taken across the Sava and the Danube and resettled in southern Hungary, including Banat. After moving to Hungary, Belmužević fought the Ottomans along the border, but also on other battlefields, as the commander of a large detachment of light cavalry – *hussars*. He was wounded serving King Matthias Corvinus in Silesia in 1488, and he distinguished himself during the wars of King Wladislas II Jagello against Maximilian Habsburg and Jan Albrecht in western and northern Hungary (1490–1491). For his loyal service and military merits, Belmužević was rewarded by King Matthias on several occasions, starting from 1483, with estates in Timiș, Cenad and Bač counties. It is after one of these estates in the vicinity of Timișoara that he was given the noble appellation “of Saswar”. In 1496, King Wladislas II confirmed to Miloš Belmužević and his sons Vuk and Marko the earlier donations of Matthias Corvinus. However, the voivode lost both of his sons in the next few years: Marko died under unknown circumstances before 1498, while Vuk was killed in battle against the Ottomans in 1499 or 1500, during an Ottoman incursion into southern Hungary. In this conflict voivode Miloš was also wounded. Later, in order to avenge his son, he ravaged the surroundings of Smederevo. Left without a male heir, Belmužević left his estate to his mother Olivera, his wife Veronica and his underage daughter Milica. King Wladislas II confirmed the will of Belmužević, written in the Serbian language and preserved to the present day, after his death in the autumn of 1500. Veronica, who came from the noble family Arka of Densuș from Hunedoara County, remarried after her husband’s death to Stephen Bradacs of Lodormercz, a Hungarian nobleman of Croatian origin. With this marriage, the largest part of Belmužević’s property was transferred to Bradacs (the voivode left some possessions to his *familiares*). Becoming of age, Milica Belmužević started a series of legal processes in order to regain estates that were rightfully hers. Milica was married to Nicholas Kendeffy of Râu de Mori. This marriage strengthened Milica’s ties with the home region of her mother, the land of Hațeg in Hunedoara County. Her life can be traced

through a series of documents that span a period of six decades, outliving both her husband and son, John Kendeffy.

**Keywords:** Voivode Miloš Belmužević, Milica Belmužević, Serbian medieval nobility, Christian *sipahis*, hussars, Smederevo sancak, Banat.

The unusual life and prominent role of Voivode Miloš Belmužević in the history of Serbia and South East Europe in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century have aroused the interest of historians for over a hundred years.<sup>1</sup> A large number of sources of different origins – Serbian, Ragusan, Ottoman, Hungarian and Venetian, including the unique testimony of the voivode himself, who summed up his own life in his will<sup>2</sup> – have made it possible to sketch out his biography. Belmužević began his career in the state of the Serbian despots, after its collapse he became an Ottoman *sipahi*, and he died, according to his own words, “serving the king of Hungary and the Holy Crown”. Yet, because of the fragmentary nature of these data, there have been areas of doubt and disagreement among historiographers concerning some of the most important moments in the life of this Serbian nobleman.

It is believed that Miloš Belmužević (Biomužević or Beomužević)<sup>3</sup> came from a noble family whose two prominent members, brothers Đurađ and Vuk, were

<sup>1</sup> K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, translated and supplemented by J. Radonić, Beograd, 1952, vol. I, p. 376, 381, 407, 413; vol. II, p. 390–391; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba u Ugarskoj od pada Smedereva do seobe pod Čarnojevićem (1459–1690)*, Zagreb, 1914, p. 7–8, 17, 23–24, 27–29; idem, *Istorija Srba u Vojvodini od najstarijih vremena do osnivanja potisko-pomoriške granice (1703)*, Novi Sad, 1929, p. 14, 18, 26, 28, 34, 36, 40–41, 60; Y. Radonitch, *Histoire des Serbes de Hongrie*, Paris, 1919, p. 65–66; D. Popović, “Vojvodina u tursko doba”, in idem (ed.), *Vojvodina I. Od najstarijih vremena do Velike seobe*, Novi Sad, 1939, p. 210–212; idem, *Srbi u Vojvodini*, vol. I, Novi Sad, 1957, p. 155–158; J. Kalić (ed.), *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, Beograd 1982, p. 377–382, 435, 444, 458–460; D. Mrdenović, A. Palavestra, D. Spasić, *Rodoslovne tablice i grbovi srpskih dinastija i vlastele*, Beograd, 1991<sup>2</sup>, p. 218–220; N. Lemajić, “Porodica Belmužević”, *Istraživanja* 13, 1990, p. 73–80; idem, *Srpski narodni prvaci, glavari i starešine posle propasti srednjovekovnih država*, Novi Sad, 1999, p. 32–33, 55, 76, 153–155; idem, “O nekim nejasnim pitanjima iz istorije porodice Belmužević”, in S. Gavrilović (ed.), *Balkan i Panonija kroz istoriju*, Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference, Novi Sad, 2006, p. 115–123 (these works were reprinted in: N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita na prelomu epoha*, Sremska Mitrovica–Istočno Sarajevo, 2006); A. Krstić, “Novi podaci o vojvodi Milošu Belmuževiću i njegovoj porodici”, *Inicijal. Časopis za srednjovekovne studije* 1, 2013, p. 161–185; A. Magina, “Un nobile sârb în Banatul secolului al XV-lea: Miloš Belmužević”, *Analele Banatului, Serie nouă, Arheologie – istorie* 18, 2010, p. 135–142; idem, “Milica Belmužević: l’histoire d’une noble dame du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Inicijal. Časopis za srednjovekovne studije* 2, 2014, p. 145–162; S. Iașin, *Familiile nobiliare sârbești din Banat în secolele al XV-lea și al XVI-lea*, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, p. 168–173; A. Ivanov, “Ratovanje vojvode Miloša Belmuževića u Šleziji”, *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 94, 2016, p. 21–27.

<sup>2</sup> A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika iz XVI i XVII veka”, *Vjesnik kraljevskoga hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskoga zemaljskoga arkiva* 15/2, 1913, p. 93–94 (reprinted in: N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 354, and S. Petrović, “Staranje o duši. Testament Miloša Belmuževića i epski modeli o poslednjoj volji junaka”, *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* 71/1–4, 2005, p. 21–22).

<sup>3</sup> The surname is recorded in different variants in the sources. For differences in pronunciation cf. A. Loma, “Zagorje Stefana Belmuževića – kuda je Janko bežao sa Kosova”, *Zbornik Istorijskog muzeja Srbije* 23, 1986, p. 18, 20, note 29. For practical reasons, we will use the widely accepted form of the surname – Belmužević.

in the service of Despot Đurađ Branković (1427–1456) in Zeta, in the littoral part of present-day Montenegro. In some recent biographical articles on the Belmuževićs, it is stated that Đurađ Belmužević was in the diplomatic service of Despot Đurađ during the war between Dubrovnik and the Bosnian magnate Duke Radoslav Pavlović over the territory of Konavli (1430–1432).<sup>4</sup> This would be the earliest recorded mention of the activities of Đurađ Belmužević and any of the members of this family in general. During the first Ottoman occupation of the Serbian state (1439–1444) the brothers escaped from Zeta, and stayed with their families in Dubrovnik in 1443. Đurađ travelled from Dubrovnik to Hungary, probably to the despot who was in refuge there, and at the end of the same year the Ragusan authorities provided a ship to transport their wives to Shkoder.<sup>5</sup> After the restoration of the Serbian state, the brothers returned to Zeta. In 1445 they were listed among witnesses present for a verdict given at the despot's voivode in Zeta. In this document Vuk and Đurađ Belmužević are recorded as "Serbian noblemen" unlike several other witnesses, local nobles, who are mentioned as "noblemen of Zeta".<sup>6</sup> The following year, an envoy of Vuk Belmužević withdrew a deposit of funds which his master had previously left in Dubrovnik.<sup>7</sup> A lawsuit from 1450 shows that Vuk Belmužević, together with the Orthodox Metropolitan of Zeta, administrated the district of Luštica in the southern part of the Bay of Kotor.<sup>8</sup> Due to their close ties with Dubrovnik, the brothers were granted Ragusan citizenship in 1454.<sup>9</sup> Vuk Belmužević is not given further mention in sources while Đurađ, titled voivode, acquired weapons (maces and crossbow strings) in Dubrovnik at the beginning of March 1455.<sup>10</sup> From May 1455, this nobleman of the Serbian despot is also no longer mentioned in historical sources.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>4</sup> S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", in Č. Popov (ed.), *Srpski biografski rečnik (=SBR)*, vol. II, Novi Sad, 2006, p. 391; N. Lemajić, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", in *SBR*, vol. III, Novi Sad, 2007, p. 617. The authors have not cited a source for their claim. Despot Đurađ Branković supported Dubrovnik and intervened in its favour before Duke Radoslav Pavlović and other political factors in the region, including sending his envoy to Sultan Murad II: M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković i njegovo doba*, Beograd, 1994, 149–153, where sources and previous relevant literature are quoted.

<sup>5</sup> Državni Arhiv u Dubrovniku (=DAD), *Acta Minoris Consilii*, 9, fol. 161; *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, 8, fol. 223, 259v; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 389–390; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 197–198; idem, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 617; S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 391.

<sup>6</sup> A. Soloviev, "Zetska presuda iz 1445. godine", *Arhiv za pravne i društvene nauke XXIII* 1–2, Beograd 1931, p. 42–43, 45; I. Božić, *Nemirno Pomorje XV veka*, Beograd, 1979, p. 187–188; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198; idem, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 617–618; S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 391.

<sup>7</sup> DAD, *Diversa Notariae*, 30, fol. 58; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198.

<sup>8</sup> DAD, *Diversa Cancellariae* 62, fol. 25; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 389–390, n. 70; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198; S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 391.

<sup>9</sup> DAD, *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, 14, fol. 74v; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 389–390; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198; idem, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 618; S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 391.

<sup>10</sup> DAD, *Acta Minoris Consilii* 13, fol. 258v; A. Veselinović, *Dubrovačko Malo veće o Srbiji (1415–1460)*, Beograd, 1997, p. 599; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 197–198.

<sup>11</sup> On May 6, 1455, the Ragusan authorities rejected some of his requests: DAD, *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, 14, fol. 159v; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198; idem, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 618.

As most of the information on the Belmužević family prior to 1455 is connected to Zeta, it is believed that this family originated from that region. Nevertheless, there are some data which connect the Belmužević family with the vicinity of the town of Valjevo in north-western Serbia, where a village named Beomužević still exists. A contemporary from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Konstantin Mihailović of Ostrovica states in his work *The Memory of the Janissary* that John Hunyadi was captured in the region of Zagorje in 1448 while fleeing Kosovo, and that he was brought before Stefan Belmužević, the lord of that area, who delivered him to Despot Đurađ.<sup>12</sup> *Zagorje (Zagor)* was the other name for the Valjevo *nahiye* in some Ottoman *defters* from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the first decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>13</sup> Genealogical relations between Stefan Belmužević and brothers Vuk and Đurađ Belmužević cannot be determined today. Nevertheless, having in mind that it was a very rare surname, it is almost certain that they were all members of the same noble family. The surname Belmužević could have originated from the words *beli muž* (“white man”), but also from *belmuž*, a kind of shepherd’s meal made from cheese and flour.<sup>14</sup>

Based on the fact that his elder son was also called Vuk, Miloš could have been the son of Vuk Belmužević. In Serbian historiography he is mostly considered to be identical to Voivode Miloš, the last commander of Despot Đurađ in Zeta prior to the Ottoman conquest (1452–1456),<sup>15</sup> as well as to the despot’s voivode of the same name in Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, who carried out that duty in 1457.<sup>16</sup> We have previously expressed our reservations towards such identifications<sup>17</sup> since

<sup>12</sup> Konstantin Mihailović iz Ostrovice, *Janičareve uspomene ili turska hronika*, ed. Đ. Živanović, *Spomenik SANU* 107, 1959, p. 31; Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoires of a Janissary*, trans. B. Stolz, *Ann Arbor*, 1975, p. 84–85; A. Loma, “Zagorje Stefana Belmuževića”, p. 17–18; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 343–344; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 199.

<sup>13</sup> “Valyeva nām-ı diğēr Zagor”: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, İstanbul (=BOA), *Tapu tahrir defterleri (=TD)* no 144, p. 189–266; D. Bojanić, *Turski zakoni i zakonski propisi iz XV i XVI veka za smederevsku, kruševačku i vidinsku oblast*, Beograd, 1974, p. 28, 93, 176. On “Zagorje”, which corresponds to the present-day Podgorina region around Valjevo, see: A. Loma, “Zagorje Stefana Belmuževića”, p. 18–22; S. Ćirković, “‘Crna Gora’ i problem srpsko-ugarskog graničnog područja”, in S. Branković (ed.), *Valjevo – postanak i uspon gradskog središta*, Valjevo, 1994, p. 59–61.

<sup>14</sup> *Rečnik srpskohrvatskog književnog i narodnog jezika*, vol. I, Beograd, 1959, p. 446; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 165.

<sup>15</sup> K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. I, p. 376, 381; I. Božić, “Zeta u Despotovini”, in *Istorija Crne Gore*, vol II/2, Titograd, 1970, p. 229–230; idem, *Nemirno Pomorje*, p. 191; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela u borbi za obnovu Despotovine”, in J. Kalić (ed.), *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, Beograd, 1982, p. 377; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 412, 463, 724.

<sup>16</sup> Lj. Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, vol. I–2, Beograd–Sremski Karlovci, 1934, p. 431–433; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 390; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 724; S. Mišić, “Posedi velikog logoteta Stefana Ratkovića”, in idem (ed.), *Moravska Srbija: istorija, književnost, umetnost*, Kruševac, 2007, p. 13, 18. N. Lemajić had reservations regarding this identification (*Srpska elita*, p. 199–200, note 19), and it seems that several other historians were of the same opinion: M. Dinić, *Za istoriju rudarstva u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji i Bosni*, vol. I, Beograd, 1955, p. 84, 93; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela”, p. 377; D. Kovačević-Kojić, *Srednjovekovna Srebrenica (XIV–XV vijek)*, Beograd, 2010, p. 125.

<sup>17</sup> A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 166.

the mother of Miloš Belmužević was still alive and active half a century later, in 1503,<sup>18</sup> and also because he had an underage daughter at that same time.<sup>19</sup> This means that Belmužević was still very young in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, and the responsible duties of the despot's voivode in Zeta and Srebrenica at that turbulent time required someone with more military and managerial experience. On the other hand, the fact is that Miloš Belmužević was politically active at the start of 1458. He supported the pro-Ottoman fraction in the regency formed in Smederevo after the sudden death of Despot Lazar Branković (1456–1458), led by Grand Voivode Mihailo Angelović, brother to Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha. After the upheaval in Smederevo and Angelović's fall from power on March 31, 1458, his supporters lost their possessions which were given to members of the winning side.<sup>20</sup> Among those who were deprived of their possessions was also Miloš Belmužević, who lost at least one village in Usora, in the part of eastern Bosnia under the rule of the Serbian despots.<sup>21</sup> This is the first unambiguous information on Miloš Belmužević and his activities.

It is not known what happened to Miloš Belmužević during the turbulent months that followed, nor where he was at the time of the final fall of the Serbian state to Ottoman rule at the end of June 1459 and after. In August 1464, during the Ottoman-Hungarian fighting in Bosnia, the Ragusan authorities granted Voivode Miloš Belmužević permission to settle with his family in the territory of Dubrovnik.<sup>22</sup>

When the constant raids of the *akincis* in the areas of southern Hungary began, accompanied by devastation and depopulation, King Matthias Corvinus, as part of the reorganisation of the border defence system, actively began to settle Serbs into his realm and to encourage the Serbian nobility to enter his service. Brothers Stefan and Dmitar Jakšić, the sons or stepsons of Voivode Jakša Breščić, crossed over to the Hungarian side, probably in 1464. In the second half of that year King Matthias gave them the town of Nagylak (Nădlac) with its villages in the

<sup>18</sup> Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Budapest, Diplomatikai levéltár (=MNL-OL, DL) 26662; C. Feneşan, *Diplomatarium Banaticum*, vol. I, Cluj-Napoca, 2016, p. 228–231. More about which further on.

<sup>19</sup> L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára 1198–1526. Magyarország melléktartományainak oklevéltára II*, Budapest, 1907, p. 297–298; A. Magina, “Un nobile sârb”, p. 142.

<sup>20</sup> M. Spremić, “Propast srednjovekovne države”, in J. Kalić (ed.), *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, Beograd, 1982, p. 306; B. Ferjančić, “Vizantinci u Srbiji prve polovine XV veka”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 26, 1987, p. 207–211; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 515–517, 520, 523, 528, 532, 537, 762; idem, “Borbe za Smederevo 1458–1459”, in idem (ed.), *Pad Srpske despotovine 1459. godine*, Zbornik radova SANU, Beograd, 2011, p. 215–216; idem, “Mihailo Anđelović”, in Č. Popov (ed.), *Srpski biografski rečnik*, vol. VI, Novi Sad, 2014, p. 839–840.

<sup>21</sup> F. Rački, “Prilozi za sbirku srbskih i bosanskih listina”, *Rad JAZU* 1, 1867, p. 157; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 390–391; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 516–517, 520, 537, 724; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 199–200; S. Mišić, “Posedi velikog logoteta”, p. 7, 13; J. Mrgić, *Severna Bosna (13–16. vek)*, Beograd, 2008, p. 126–127; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 165.

<sup>22</sup> DAD, *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, 18, fol. 84; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 390; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198–199.

valley of the River Mureş. In subsequent years the Jakšić brothers gained numerous estates spread across Transylvania, Banat and Western Srem.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, with King Matthias having achieved success in Bosnia, managing to halt the Ottoman incursions into Srem and Banat, the king's former opponent, Vuk Grgurević also entered his service. Vuk Grgurević, the illegitimate grandson of Despot Đurađ, was included in the line of Hungarian barons and received land in the southern parts of Hungary, King Matthias officially recognising or confirming his title of despot.<sup>24</sup>

Historians believed for a long time that Miloš Belmužević moved to Hungary via Dubrovnik at the same time as Vuk Grgurević and the Jakšić brothers, in 1464.<sup>25</sup> However, his story was somewhat different. He was recorded as holder of a *timar* in the first preserved *mufasal defter* of the Smederevo sancak from 1477, with the *timar* yielding revenues from the market place (*pazar*) of Jagodina in the Morava valley, totalling 8,583 *akçes*.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, Belmužević joined Ottoman military service probably soon after the fall of Smederevo (1459) and became a *sipahi*. His request for refuge in Dubrovnik was probably the result of his temporary vacillation at the time of the tumultuous hostilities in Bosnia in 1464.

There were many Christian *sipahis* in the Ottoman border regions towards Hungary in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. During the 1470s, almost one half of all *timar* holders in the Smederevo sancak were Christians. However, the income

<sup>23</sup> L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 258–259, 390; J. Radonić, “Prilozi za istoriju braće Jakšića”, *Spomenik Srpske kraljevske akademije* 59, 1923, p. 63–73; S. Borovszky, “A nagylaki uradalom története”, *Értekezések a történeti tudományok köréből* 18, Budapest, 1900, p. 16–19; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 16, 26–28, 348–349; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 88–89; M. Spremić, “Porodica Jakšić u Banatu”, in M. Maticki and V. Jović (eds.), *Banat kroz vekove. Slojevi kultura Banata*, Beograd, 2010, p. 34–40; S. Iašin, *Familiile nobiliare sârbești*, p. 132–135; S. Božanić, M. Kisić, “O prvog generaciji Jakšića na tlu južne Ugarske – Stefanu i Dmitru u delu ‘Rerum Hungaricarum Decades’”, *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu* XLI–2, 2016, p. 119–129.

<sup>24</sup> V. Fraknoi, *Matyás király levelei*, vol. I, Budapest, 1893, p. 78. For different opinions about the origin of Vuk's despot title cf.: A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 16–17; B. Ferjančić, *Despoti u Vizantiji i južnoslovenskim zemljama*, Beograd, 1960, p. 198–199; A. Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, Beograd, 2006, p. 93; S. Ćirković, “O despotu Vuku Grgureviću”, *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice srpske* 6, 1971, p. 286–287; idem, “Postvizantijski despoti”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 38, 1999–2000, p. 399–400; D. Dinić-Knežević, “Sremski Brankovići”, *Istraživanja* 4, 1975, p. 7–8; K. Mitrović, “Vuk Grgurević između Mehmeda II i Matije Korvina”, *Braničevski glasnik* 2, 2004, p. 24–30; M. Spremić, “Srpski despoti u Sremu”, in M. Maticki (ed.), *Srem kroz vekove: slojevi kultura Fruške gore i Srema*, Beograd–Beočin, 2007, p. 48.

<sup>25</sup> K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 390; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela”, p. 377–378, note 14; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 724. Jireček also wrote, probably erroneously, that Belmužević moved to Hungary in 1469 (*Istorija Srba*, vol. I, p. 407, note 95). This statement was later included in the works of some other historians: Y. Radonitch, *Histoire*, p. 65; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 18; D. Popović, “Vojvodina u tursko doba”, p. 210. Cf. N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 201, note 25.

<sup>26</sup> BOA, *TD*, no 16, p. 223–224; B. Đurđev, “Hrišćani spahije u severnoj Srbiji u XV veku”, *Godišnjak društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine* 4, 1952, p. 167; E. Miljković, “Hrišćani spahije u Smederevskom sandžaku u drugoj polovini XV veka”, in S. Mišić (ed.), *Moravska Srbija: istorija, književnost, umetnost*, Kruševac, 2007, p. 87, 91; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 168; idem, “Which Realm Will You Opt for? – Serbian Nobility between the Ottomans and the Hungarians in the 15th Century”, in S. Rudić and S. Aslantaş (eds.), *State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, Belgrade, 2017, p. 153.

of their *timars* was fairly low, and ranged between 200 and nearly 20.000 *akçes*. Only 10% of the *timars* in the hands of Christians brought an income greater than 10.000 *akçes*.<sup>27</sup> With revenues of 8,583 *akçes*, Miloš Belmužević was one of the most significant Christian *sipahis* in the Smederevo sancak in 1477. This census was conducted immediately after the Ottoman-Hungarian fighting of 1476, when King Matthias captured Šabac in February, and Despot Vuk and Wallachian Voivode Vlad Țepeș burned and plundered the towns of Srebrenica, Kučlat and Zvornik in eastern Bosnia. In the summer of the same year, the Serbian despot and several other Hungarian commanders, including Dmitar Jakšić, defeated the Smederevo *sancakbeyi* Mihaloğlu Ali-bey at Požežena on the Danube while returning from the *akin* to Banat. After this battle, in the fall of 1476, the Serbian captains and their warriors participated in the Hungarian blockade of Smederevo, which was broken by Sultan Mehmed II in December.<sup>28</sup> The fact that Miloš Belmužević was one of the most prominent *timar* holders in northern Serbia after these clashes means that he dutifully fulfilled his military obligations to the sultan.

However, Voivode Miloš Belmužević did not remain in Ottoman military service long after 1477. The exact circumstances and time of his transition to Hungary cannot be ascertained. In his will, Belmužević mentions that he passed from the “pagans” to the Hungarian *arszag* (ország, state) with guarantees provided by King Matthias and the Estates.<sup>29</sup> He most probably crossed over to Hungary in 1480 or 1481,<sup>30</sup> during the considerable Hungarian campaigns in northern Serbia, followed by leading a large number of the Serbian population across the Sava and the Danube.<sup>31</sup> In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Serbian population in Hungary was constantly increasing, due to the organised and spontaneous migration from Ottoman to Hungarian territory. There could be several reasons for transition from the Ottoman to the Hungarian side. Motives of a religious and ideological

<sup>27</sup> E. Miljković, “Hrišćani spahije”, p. 87; eadem, “The Christian Sipahis in the Serbian Lands in the Second Half of the 15th century”, *Beogradski istorijski glasnik* 1, 2010, p. 113.

<sup>28</sup> L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 265–270, 389; Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, Sremski Karlovci, 1927, p. 250–251; V. Fraknói, *Matyás király levelei*, vol. I, p. 356, 359; A. Bonfini, *Rerum Hungaricarum Decades, quatuor cum dimidia*, Lipsiae, 1771, p. 593–595, 598; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 20–22; S. Ćirković, “Srednji vek”, in S. Filipović (ed.), *Šabac u prošlosti*, vol. I, Šabac, 1970, p. 98–102; O. Zirojević, “Smederevski sandžakbeg Ali-beg Mihaloglu”, *Zbornik za istoriju Matice srpske* 3, 1971, p. 17–18; D. Dinić-Knežević, “Sremski Brankovići”, p. 10–12; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela”, p. 384–385; M. Spremić, “Srpski despoti u Sremu”, p. 50–51; T. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*, Leiden–Boston, 2018, p. 243–260.

<sup>29</sup> A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika”, p. 93.

<sup>30</sup> N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 38, 201–202; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 169–170.

<sup>31</sup> V. Fraknói, *Matyás király levelei*, vol. II, p. 65–69, 76–80, 91–92, 158, 185, 190, 196–197, 388–390; Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, p. 253, 296; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. I, p. 412; O. Zirojević, “Smederevski sandžakbeg”, p. 19–20; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela”, p. 385–387; J. Kalić-Mijušković, *Beograd u srednjem veku*, Beograd 1967, p. 198–199; M. Spremić, “Srpski despoti u Sremu”, p. 52; E. Miljković, A. Krstić, *Branicevo u XV veku. Istorijско-geografska studija*, Požarevac, 2007, p. 40; M. Ivanović, N. Isailović, “The Danube in Serbian-Hungarian relations in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries”, *Tibiscum* 5, 2015, p. 386–387; T. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, p. 275–276.

nature (which were, for example, evidenced in the will of Miloš Belmužević)<sup>32</sup> were often merged with practical ones, which implied striving for a better position and social advancement. An individual's decision to move to a Christian country (albeit not an orthodox one) could receive strong impetus in light of the fact that advancement in the Ottoman military service was limited for Christians.<sup>33</sup>

Crossing from the Ottoman to the Hungarian state, Miloš Belmužević faithfully served King Matthias Corvinus and his successor Wladislas II Jagiełło. Like Despot Vuk (who died in 1485) and his cousins and successors Despots Đorđe and Jovan Branković, as well as the Jakšić brothers, Miloš Belmužević distinguished himself fighting at the head of a detachment of light cavalrymen (*hussars*). The Serbs in Hungary represented a substantially militarised social group. Serbian nobles and other warriors served as hussars, then as crew in the river flotilla (*nazadistae*, *šajkaši*), or in the border fortresses, including Belgrade.<sup>34</sup> Some of the Serbian noblemen in Hungary were directly in the king's service, while others appeared as the *familiars* and officials of Serbian aristocrats. Thus, Damjan Belmužević, apparently a relative of Voivode Miloš Belmužević, was castellan to Despots Đorđe and Jovan Branković in Jarak (Arky) in Srem in 1497.<sup>35</sup> In his will of 1500, Voivode Miloš mentions the "servants" (*sluge*, i. e. the *familiars*), to whom he left some of his possessions: Marko Radanović, Stefan Pribenović and a certain Jova.<sup>36</sup>

The Hungarian kings not only engaged the despots and other Serbian warriors in the struggle with the Ottomans, they also sent them to other battlefields. According to contemporary Ragusan writer Ludovik Crijević Tuberon, Despot Đorđe Branković and his brother Jovan rode to war against the Poles in 1491 with 600, the sons of Stefan and Dmtar Jakšić with 300, and Miloš Belmužević with 1000 hussars.<sup>37</sup> A decree from 1498, which defined the military obligations of barons and counties, also mentions the Serbian despot, who was obliged to equip 1000 horsemen for war, Stefan Jakšić of Nagylak (the Younger) and Miloš Belmužević, who was to mobilise all his hussars.<sup>38</sup> In his will, Voivode Miloš

<sup>32</sup> A. Ivić, "Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika", p. 93.

<sup>33</sup> A. Krstić, "Which Realm", p. 155–156.

<sup>34</sup> S. Ćirković, "Srpski živalj na novim ognjištima", in J. Kalić (ed.), *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, p. 436–438; idem, "Počeci šajkaša", in V. Čubrilović (ed.), *Plovidba na Dunavu i njegovim pritokama kroz vekove*, Beograd, 1983, p. 129–137; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 61–70.

<sup>35</sup> MNL-OL, DL 20598; A. Krstić, "Akt sremskih županijskih vlasti o istrazi protiv despota Đorđa i Jovana Brankovića i njihovih familijara (Vrdnik, 22. avgust 1497)", *Inicijal. Časopis za srednjovekovne studije* 5, 2017, p. 159, 167–168, 175–176; idem, "Which Realm", p. 156. The surname of the castellan of Jarak was transcribed "Velmožović" in earlier Serbian historiography.

<sup>36</sup> A. Ivić, "Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika", p. 93; A. Krstić, "Which Realm", p. 155–156.

<sup>37</sup> Ludovici Tuberonis Dalmatae Abbatis, *Commentarii de temporibus suis*, ed. V. Rezar, Zagreb, 2001, p. 73.

<sup>38</sup> *Corpus juris Hungarici. Magyar törvénytár 1000–1526. évi törvényczikkek*, Budapest, 1899, p. 606, 608; J. Bak, *Online Decreta Regni Mediaevalis Hungariae. The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary. All Complete Monographs*, 4, 2019, p. 928–929, 955–956, [https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/lib\\_mono/4](https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/lib_mono/4); A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 170; idem, "Which Realm", p. 155.

Belmužević mentions that he was wounded serving King Matthias in Silesia.<sup>39</sup> It was revealed only recently that this statement refers to the Głogów War fought between King Matthias Corvinus and his Silesian vassal, John II of Sagan, Duke of Głogów in Lower Silesia, Poland, in 1488. Due to the participation of the Serbian warriors in this conflict, local people called it “the Serbian war”. Despot Đorđe Branković and his detachment also participated in fighting in Silesia in 1489.<sup>40</sup> Belmužević’s wartime exploits in the vicinity of Székesfehérvár during the conflict between Wladislas II Jagiełło and Maximilian Habsburg (1490–1491) were well known. He also participated in fighting against the troops of Polish Prince Jan Olbracht at Košice in December 1491.<sup>41</sup>

Initially, Belmužević’s position in the new environment was relatively modest. The first possession he was gifted from King Matthias for his military service against the Turks consisted of just one village and one *praedium* (uninhabited land) in the vicinity of Timișoara (1483).<sup>42</sup> However, due to his military abilities, the Voivode quickly rose to the very top of Serbian society in Hungary, becoming very close in rank to the despots from the Branković family and the Jakšićs. The Hungarian monarchs generously rewarded Belmužević for his military merits on several occasions.<sup>43</sup> Before his death, Voivode Miloš boasted 22 properties, three of which were in Bács County (today Bačka in Serbia), two in Cened and 17 in Timiș County (in the territory of present-day Romanian Banat and the Mureș valley).<sup>44</sup> Miloš Belmužević retained the noble title of “Saswar” carried by a property located in the vicinity of Timișoara, which he was given by King Matthias after the Silesian War (1488/1489).<sup>45</sup> King Wladislas II confirmed to Miloš Belmužević and his sons Vuk and Marko previous donations from Matthias Corvinus in 1496.<sup>46</sup> The significant presence of Serbs on former properties of Belmužević in the years and decades that followed his death indicates that he, as

<sup>39</sup> A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika”, p. 93.

<sup>40</sup> J. Cureus, *Gentis Silesiae annales*, Witebergae, 1571, p. 339–357; A. Ivanov, “Ratovanje vojvode Miloša Belmuževića u Šleziji”, p. 21–27; A. Krstić, “Which Realm”, p. 153.

<sup>41</sup> Ludovici Tuberonis *Commentarii*, p. 66, 73; N. Istvanffy, *Regni Hungarici historia post obitum gloriosissimi Mathiae Corvini regis*, Coloniae Agrippinae, 1724, p. 10; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 34; S. Božanić, “Srpski velikaši u političkim previranjima oko izbora Vladislava II za kralja Ugarske”, *Istraživanja* 24, 2013, p. 154, 160–161; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 170; idem, “Which Realm”, p. 154.

<sup>42</sup> King Matthias donated to *Mylos Belmosewyth* the possession *Maysa* and the *praedium Paznad* in Timiș County on December 21, 1483: MNL-OL, DL 26646; L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 276–277; A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 138–139; C. Feneșan, *Diplomatarium Banaticum*, vol. I, p. 180–181.

<sup>43</sup> Miloš Belmužević received donations from King Matthias on at least four different occasions, but only the first charter (from 1483) has been preserved. Others are documented in Belmužević’s will and in the confirmation charter of King Wladislas II of 1496: A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika”, p. 93–94; MNL-OL, DL 26655; A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 139; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 182–183.

<sup>44</sup> On these properties in detail, see: A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 136–142; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 169, 171, 179, 182–183. See also the map of Belmužević’s properties in this article.

<sup>45</sup> A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika”, p. 93; MNL-OL, DL 26655, 36849, 20476, 29022, 26662; L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 299; A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 140, 142.

<sup>46</sup> MNL-OL, DL 26655; A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 139.

well as the Jakšić family and other Serbian noblemen, played an important role in colonising the Serbian refugees from the Ottoman Empire in Banat.<sup>47</sup>

Miloš Belmužević was well integrated into the environment of the Hungarian noblemen and carried out the usual activities of county nobility. For example, in 1496 he was one of two deputy counts of Bač County and presided at the law court of the county.<sup>48</sup> He was married to Veronica, daughter of Ladislaus Arka of Densuş, a nobleman of Romanian origin from Hunedoara (Hunyad) County in Transylvania.<sup>49</sup> This marriage was certainly concluded after Belmužević crossed over to Hungary. Voivode Miloš was not young when he began his service to the Hungarian king instead of the sultan, so it can be assumed that he had previously already been married. The Voivode had three children: sons Vuk and Marko and a daughter Milica, but only she has been confirmed by sources as Veronica's child. Milica was still underage in 1501<sup>50</sup> which means that she was not born before 1489, probably only a couple of years before her father's death. Namely, according to Hungarian legal custom, girls were considered adults when they turned 12 years old.<sup>51</sup> Vuk was presumably named after his grandfather, Despot Đurađ's nobleman Vuk Belmužević. However, the Voivode lost both his sons in the span of just a few years: Marko died in unknown circumstances between 1496 and 1498, while Vuk was murdered during a clash with the Turks. This happened at Easter, most probably in 1499 or 1500, during an intrusion by Ottoman warriors from the Smederevo sancak into the territory of southern Hungary. In this conflict Voivode Miloš was also wounded. In order to avenge his son, Belmužević ravaged the surroundings of Smederevo in the summer of 1500 and died several months later.<sup>52</sup>

Left without a male heir, Belmužević obtained permission from King Wladislas II to leave his estate to his mother Olivera,<sup>53</sup> his wife Veronica and his underage daughter Milica. Miloš Belmužević's will, made out on September 8, 1500,<sup>54</sup> contains many details about his family and social relationships, as well as

<sup>47</sup> A. Magina, "Un nobil sârb", p. 137.

<sup>48</sup> MNL-OL, DF 250334, DL 20476; N. C. Tóth, R. Horváth, T. Neumann, T. Pálosfalvi, A. W. Kovács, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1458–1526. II. Megyék*, Budapest, 2017, p. 39.

<sup>49</sup> Biblioteca Academiei Române, filiala Cluj-Napoca (=BAC), colecția Kemény József, mss. KJ 288/D, Appendix diplomatarii Transilvanici, vol. 8, f. 14; A. Magina, "Un nobil sârb", p. 142; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 175–178; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 146–147. About the Arka family, see also: A. A. Rusu, I. A. Pop, "Familia nobiliară românească Arca din Țara Hațegului (sfârșitul sec. XV – începutul sec. XVI)", *Acta Musei Napocensis* 21, 1984, p. 211–225.

<sup>50</sup> MNL-OL, DL 32552; L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, 297–298.

<sup>51</sup> J. Holub, "Az életkor szerepe a középkori jogunkban és az 'időlátott levelek'" 1–2, *Századok* 55, 1921, p. 32–37, 212–235; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 166, 178; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 146–147.

<sup>52</sup> Ludovici Tuberonis *Commentarii*, p. 134–136; M. Sanuto, *I diarii*, vol. III, Venezia, 1880, col. 669–670; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 171–174.

<sup>53</sup> The older Serbian historiography erroneously believed that Olivera was Voivode Miloš's wife, cf: A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba u Ugarskoj*, p. 27–28; idem, *Istorija Srba u Vojvodini*, p. 40–41, 60; D. Popović, "Vojvodina u tursko doba", p. 210; idem, *Srbi u Vojvodini*, p. 156; D. Mrđenović, A. Palavestra, D. Spasić, *Rodoslovne tablice*, p. 218, 220; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 203–205.

<sup>54</sup> About the problem of dating of Belmužević's will, see: A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 172–174.

the mentality of the Serbian noble environment. It mentions several otherwise unknown Serbian noblemen from Hungary. The presence of some members of the Jakšić family as witnesses to Belmužević's will testifies to the close relations among the two Serbian noble families. Belmužević's will also suggests that his mother assumed the principal role in the family after his death. The Voivode specified that she should prepare the goods to be donated for "the salvation of his soul" (horses; silver; horse equipment).<sup>55</sup> In 1503, Stephen and Marko Jakšić and Olivera Belmužević represented together the interests of her family before the authorities as plaintiffs in a litigation with their neighbours who had plundered the Belmužević's properties in the Mureş valley.<sup>56</sup> This shows that Olivera did indeed take over the leading role in the family after her son's death and had to do so in her old age, since the Voivode's widow, Veronica, remarried a Hungarian nobleman of Croatian origin, Stephen Bradacs of Lodormercz. She gave birth to his daughter before 1504.<sup>57</sup> Although King Wladislas II put the young Milica under his royal protection and confirmed the will of her father in 1501,<sup>58</sup> Veronica brought to her second husband not only her, but also Milica's part of Belmužević's estate as a dowry. This later led to litigation over the estate between mother and daughter, which started in 1519 and lasted seven years.<sup>59</sup> In the same year (1519), Milica is mentioned as being married to Nicolas Kendeffy of Malomviz (Râu de Mori, Hunedoara County), a member of another distinguished noble family of Romanian origin from Transylvania. During a litigation between the relatives of the Kendeffy and the Kenderessi families, representatives of the Alba Chapter and the Transylvanian Voivode were sent to the Kendeffy estates in Râu de Mori and Colţ castle (Kolcvár), where they met with the female side of the family, Margaret and Milica, as their husbands were not at home.<sup>60</sup> It is the first mention of Belmužević's daughter as an adult, after almost two decades in which we know nothing of her private life. After a decade and a half of marriage, Milica was registered as a widow. Her husband died sometime between 1532 and 1537.<sup>61</sup> As a married woman and then a widow, she fought hard to keep the family estates together. In 1532 a certain nobleman from present-day Banat, Gaspar Margay, was

<sup>55</sup> A. Ivić, "Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika", p. 93–94; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 176, 181–182.

<sup>56</sup> MNL-OL, DL 26662; C. Feneşan, *Diplomatarij Banaticum*, vol. I, p. 228–231; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 176.

<sup>57</sup> MNL-OL, DL 29590; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 176–177; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 147.

<sup>58</sup> MNL-OL, DL 32552; L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 297–298.

<sup>59</sup> Slovenský národný archív, Bratislava (=SNA), Rodu Révay, škat. 90, Doc. ad diversas familias, fasc. IV, no 17; Rodu Révay, škat. 87, Doc. Fam. Kende, fasc. II, no 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 147–150, 153–156.

<sup>60</sup> "... ad possessionem Malomwyz, consequenterque domum et curiam quoque nobilitarem eorundem Ladislai, nec non Nicolai et Michaelis Kendeffy in eadem Malomwyz ac Kolch subtus castrum similiter Kolch vocatum (...) dominarum Margarethe eiusdem Ladislai et Mylycza dicti Nicolai Kendeffy consortum"; MNL-OL, DL 30553.

<sup>61</sup> SNA, Rodu Révay, škat. 87, Doc. Fam. Kende, fasc. II, no 16, 19; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 151, 158–161.

gifted the estates of the disloyal John Bradach of Sasvar, Milica's stepbrother. She opposed this donation since these estates were a part of an inheritance from her mother's side.<sup>62</sup> Almost exactly the same situation was repeated in 1538, when Milica (registered as a widow), in the name of her son John, was involved in disputes with Wolfgang Bethlen over three estates in Hunedoara County.<sup>63</sup>

Sometime in the 1540s, Milica's only son John married Margaret (Mary), daughter of Pavle Bakić, the last Serbian despot in Hungary,<sup>64</sup> and the young couple was blessed with a daughter named Anna. John Kendeffy was loyal to King Ferdinand I Habsburg, for which supporters of Queen Isabella attacked his castle, Colț, in Hunedoara County and captured his mother, wife and children in 1551. John's family was soon released from captivity but this was not the end of the problems the elderly Belmužević woman faced.<sup>65</sup> Her son died in late 1553 or early 1554 and Milica Belmužević once again became the head of the family. In November 1554, at the request of Margaret Bakić, King Ferdinand confirmed that the assets belonging to her late husband John, retained by his mother Milica (*apud manus generosae dominae Mylyczae genitrix ipsius condam Ioannis Kendeffy*) belonged to her and her daughter Anna (*ex eodem condam Ioanne Kendeffy progenitae*).<sup>66</sup> Soon after (in early 1555), Margaret remarried, to Thomas Oláh, nephew to well-known humanist Nicholas Oláh,<sup>67</sup> but she continued to maintain relations with her mother-in-law. In 1557, although in her old age, Milica fought again with her relatives from the Kendeffy family to preserve the estates of the young granddaughter Anna.<sup>68</sup> Milica most probably lived on the Kendeffy estates in Râu de Mori and at Colț castle during the last years of her life. At the beginning of 1562, the lady Belmužević was still alive, mentioned in the will of Paul the Literate of Sighet (Sziget, Maramureș County in northern Romania) alongside her granddaughter. Paul left a debt of 25 florins to the old lady because she had taken

<sup>62</sup> "Domina Mylliche vocata, consors Nicolai Kendeffy (...) publice contradixisset (...) bona et iura ipsa possessionaria neminem alium preterquam ex legitime datione et inscriptione condam genitricem sue ex divisione superinde facta concernere": MNL-OL, F 4 Cista comitatum, comitatus Hunyadiensis, cista 1-ma, fasc. 7, no. 40. The same document in Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Cluj (= SJAN), fond Gál de Hilib, nr. 14, f. 5r.

<sup>63</sup> MNL-OL, F 4 Cista comitatum, comitatus Hunyadiensis, cista 2-da, fasc. 5, no. 31.

<sup>64</sup> A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 151–152. On Pavle Bakić and his family, see: N. Lemajić, *Bakići: porodica poslednjeg srpskog despota*, Novi Sad, 1995 (= idem, *Srpska elita*, p. 209–336).

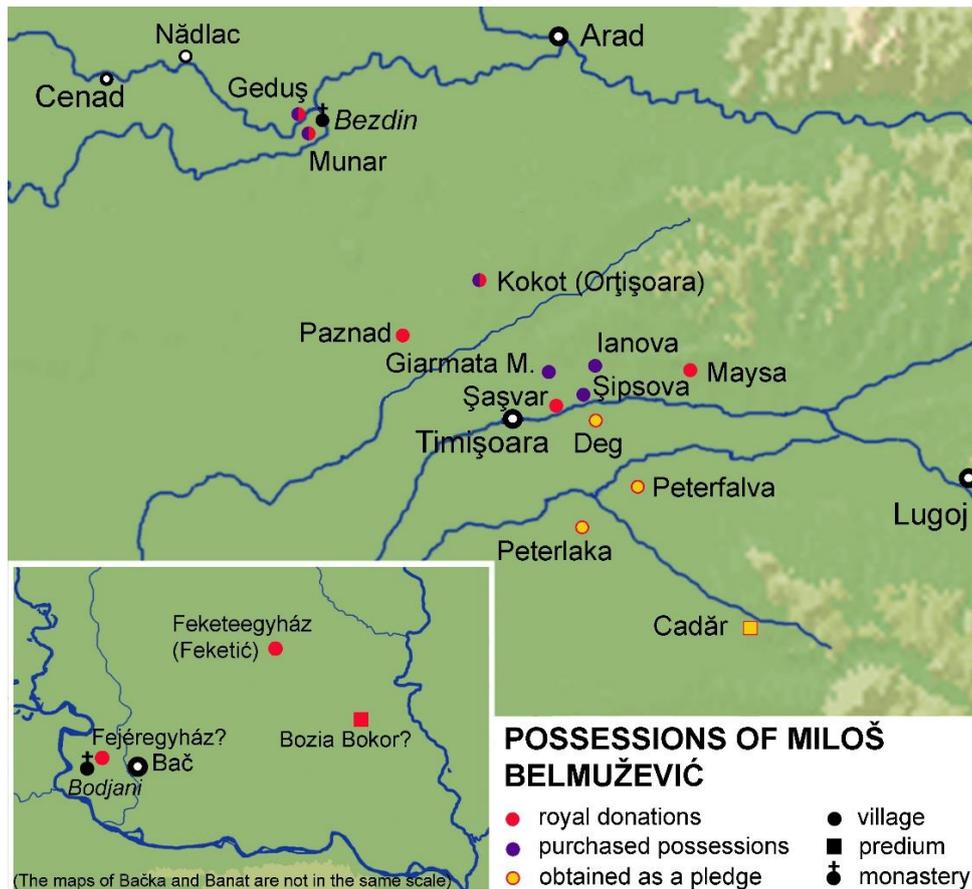
<sup>65</sup> A. Ivić, *Istoriја Srba*, p. 420–421; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 152; C. Feneșan, "Ioan Kendeffi, Ioan Glesán și Nikola Crepović – fideles pragmatici în lupta pentru stăpânirea Transilvaniei și Banatului (mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea)", *Banatica* 26/2, 2016, p. 309–336.

<sup>66</sup> SJAN Sibiu, Episcopia bisericii Evanghelice C.A din Transilvania, colecția de documente episcopale, nr. 157. See also: A. Ivić, *Istoriја Srba*, p. 420–421.

<sup>67</sup> "Dominam Margaretham Bakyth, egregii quondam domini Ioannis Kendeffy relictam, secundum ritum et legem sancte Romane ac universalis ecclesiae in uxorem despondimus": L. Magina, "Nuptialia festa agebantur: invitația de nuntă, sursă primară pentru istoria socială a Transilvaniei princiare", *Banatica* 28, 2018, p. 560. On the Oláh family, see: Șt. Bezdechi, "Familia lui Nicolae Olahus", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională* 5, 1928–1930, p. 63–85.

<sup>68</sup> A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 152–153.

care of his beloved daughter for more than two years.<sup>69</sup> Milica was the last member of the family who carried the name of Belmužević. She most likely passed away not long after this last mention. Her granddaughter Anna also died a few years later and the Belmužević estates were alienated for ever,<sup>70</sup> but that is another story.



In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Serbian nobility in Hungary still maintained the traditions of the fallen Serbian state and had strong connections

<sup>69</sup> “Domine Mylycze Belmosowyth, relicte condam Nicolai Kendeffy de Malomwyz, que filiulam meam plusque duobus annis aluit et modo quoque alit debitum 25 florenorum, quos ad emptionem porcorum dederum remitto. Domine Anne Kendeffy, consorti domini Ioannis Kendi, mastecani ex pellibus mardurinis factam lego”: SJAN Cluj, fond familial Bálintitt, seria 1: Documente medievale, nr. 29 (February 12, 1562).

<sup>70</sup> “Ioannis Kendi consequenterque pueri Ioannis, filii et puella Anna, filiae suorum ex generosa olim domina Anna, filia egregii condam Ioannis Kendeffy, consorte sua procreatorum”: SJAN Cluj, fond familial Bánffy, seria 2, register 1a, no. 4 (1577). Their properties were confiscated by Stephen Báthory for disloyalty.

with the Orthodox Church. This can be seen in the last will of Voivode Miloš. For the salvation of his soul Belmužević bequeathed 100 florins to his clergyman, the Athonite monk Timotheos, who was to convey the funds to Mont Athos. He and Deacon Marko, who probably wrote Belmužević's will, were also listed among the witnesses to this document.<sup>71</sup> There are also some indications of the endowments of this nobleman and his family. Tuberon mentions a church dedicated to the Mother of God in the Tisza valley, in the vicinity of Belmužević's home, where the Voivode and his men were celebrating Easter when the Turks attacked them. Based on Tuberon's account, it can be assumed that this church was an endowment of Voivode Miloš.<sup>72</sup> Two Serbian Orthodox monasteries – Bođani in Bačka and Bezdin in the Mureş valley in Romania, known from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, were erected on Belmužević's lands. It is traditionally considered that the Jakšić brothers were the founders of both monasteries, but it is possible that the original churches were built by Miloš Belmužević. Interestingly, both monasteries are dedicated to the same holiday –The Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.<sup>73</sup>

Miloš Belmužević's high rank in Serbian society in Hungary was also recollected by the Hungarians even a quarter of a century after the Voivode's death. Expecting the crossing of Pavle Bakić from the Ottoman Empire to Hungary at the end of 1525, Paul Tomori, Archbishop of Kalocsa and commander of defence of the southern parts of the kingdom wrote: "If he goes over, he would be a great person as the late Belmužević was, or as the masters Jakšić are now".<sup>74</sup> However, unlike the despots from the Branković family or the Jakšićs, the memory of Miloš Belmužević did not endure among Serbs over subsequent centuries. Thanks to the fact that enough information about his personality and deeds has been preserved in various sources, modern historiography has been able to rediscover him.

aleksandar.krstic@iib.ac.rs  
adimagina@gmail.com

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<sup>71</sup> A. Ivić, "Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika", p. 93–94.

<sup>72</sup> Ludovici Tuberonis *Commentarii*, p. 134; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 171–172, 180–181; R. Grujić, "Duhovni život", in D. Popović (ed.), *Vojvodina I. Od najstarijih vremena do Velike seobe*, Novi Sad, 1939, p. 366, believed that this refers to the former monastery Drenovac between Zrenjanin and Ečka in the Serbian Banat.

<sup>73</sup> A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 179–180, where previous relevant historiographical literature on these monasteries is listed.

<sup>74</sup> V. Fraknói, "Tomori Pál kiadatlan levelei", *Történelmi tár* 1882, p. 88; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 226.

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## CROATIAN NOBLE REFUGEES IN LATE 15<sup>th</sup> AND 16<sup>th</sup> CENTURY BANAT AND TRANSYLVANIA – PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

NEVEN ISAILOVIĆ  
(Institute of History, Belgrade)

In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman pressure on the Kingdom of Croatia within the Hungarian Realm became unbearable and many nobles decided to leave their native land and resettle in another part of the realm, where their status would be recognised and service to the ruler continued. The nobility of southern Croatia sought refuge in various parts of Hungary, among which were Banat and Transylvania. Their arrival to the easternmost part of the state mostly happened before the division between the Habsburgs and the Zápolyas and their loyalty after 1526 was usually dictated by the majority within the community they settled into. In Banatian and Transylvanian sources the Croats are identified by their conspicuous surnames and the epithet *Croatus* (*Horváth*) and, sometimes, by their noble predicates which specified their original main estate. Many of them acquired possessions in their new places of residence, married into local noble families and performed various duties, mostly as commanders of the cavalry or castellans of important fortresses. Even though they adapted to the new environment, it seems that the Croats kept close to each other, which can be observed through their documents, connections and family ties. Putting aside the most famous example of George Martinuzzi, this overview will include the short case studies of Martinuzzi's compatriots – Mark Mišljenović of Kamičac, the Kučićs of Razvade, the Šušalićs of Lukarić, Nicholas Kolunić, the Benkovićs and Bojničićs of Plavno, and Cosma Petričević of Raduč.

**Keywords:** nobility, migrations, Croats, Banat, Transylvania, 15<sup>th</sup> century, 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### INTRODUCTION

The subject of migration of South Slavic noblemen to Banat and Transylvania<sup>1</sup> in the late medieval and early modern period, mainly as the result of Turkish pressure, is a promising topic which remains understudied in both South Slavic, Hungarian and Romanian historiographies, since it has never been systematically researched. While ex-Yugoslav authors mainly focused on the migrant families prior to their resettlement or on the first generation of nobles who came to Banat and Transylvania, Hungarian historians tried to make a more

<sup>1</sup> The use of these terms (Banat and Transylvania) for the late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century may seem anachronistic, but due to frequent changes in the administrative and political map of southern and eastern part of the Hungarian Realm in that period, I will employ them throughout the text, having in mind primarily the borders from the age of the Principality of Transylvania and Turkish-occupied Banat.

synthetic approach, but it resulted in only a few studies or smaller monographs on certain influential families of South Slavic origin in the easternmost part of the Realm of St. Stephen. Romanian historiography became interested in the topic only recently, primarily dealing with the individuals who held important military or administrative offices on the territory of present-day Romania during the regimes of King Matthias Corvinus, Jagiellonian kings, Zápolya family, George Martinuzzi, Báthory family, Michael the Brave etc.

Taking into account the increased availability of the original documents and literature through a series of digital platforms on the internet, as well as the strengthening of cooperation between the historians and scholarly institutions of the region, future developments should include not only one- or two-author studies, but wider international and interdisciplinary projects that would shed more light on various aspects of the life of South Slavic noble individuals, families and communities in Transylvania and Banat – their family, marital and political networks, their cultural influences and written practices, their religion, their careers and their general position in the Transylvanian and Banatian society from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Turkish advance in the Balkans and South-East Europe was and still is a popular topic of the historiography of our region and beyond.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the subject of war-induced migration of people (including both elites and wider population) is becoming increasingly interesting to the scholarly and non-scholarly audience due to present-day tendencies and current political developments which bear a certain degree of similarity to those of the past.<sup>3</sup> However, in depth analysis of the migrations between the parts of South-East Europe are yet to find their systematic researchers. We should bear in mind that, to some extent, this was a reversible process – while some noblemen and groups of people went to the Hungarian Kingdom, the others went to the Ottoman Empire. There were quite a few examples of several iterations of switching sides, although primarily in the early stages after the Ottoman conquest of South Slavic states. On this occasion, however, we will focus only on permanent resettlement of noblemen from Croatia proper to the easternmost part of the Hungarian Realm, namely Banat and Transylvania.

I intend to shed some light on the life and career of the representatives of lesser to middle-ranked nobility, primarily since the cases of magnates have – mostly – already been studied and there is no substantial data on lower strata of

<sup>2</sup> F. Adanır, S. Faroqhi (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, Leiden – Boston – Köln, 2002; H. W. Lowry, *The shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350-1550: the conquest, settlement & infrastructural development of Northern Greece*, Istanbul, 2008; D. Nicolle, *Cross and Crescent in the Balkans: The Ottoman Conquest of Southeastern Europe (14th–15th Centuries)*, Barnsley, 2010; O.J. Schmitt (ed.), *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans: Interpretations and Research Debates*, Wien, 2016; S. Rudić, S. Aslantaş (eds.), *State and Society in the Balkans Before and After Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, Belgrade, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> D. Eltis (ed.), *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives*, Stanford, 2002; N. Fattori, *Migration and Community in the Early Modern Mediterranean. The Greeks of Ancona, 1510–1595*, Cham, 2019.

Croatian population (especially serfs) who may have followed their noble lords. Data suggests that the only reason for resettlement of the nobles was unsustainability of the southern border, along which their estates were located, under Ottoman advance in the last years of the 15<sup>th</sup> and first years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1490s, the pressure on the Kingdom of Croatia within the Hungarian Realm became unbearable for the marcher nobility which endured Turkish raids for decades, especially since the fall of the Kingdom of Bosnia (1463). Without any significant subsidies from the central government and growing poor due to the lack of resources and depopulation of their possessions, many members of lesser and middle (known as *egregii*)<sup>4</sup> nobility decided to leave their native land, virtually as refugees, and resettle in another part of the Realm, where their status would be recognised and active service to the ruler or a magnate continued.<sup>5</sup>

The nobility of southern Croatia sought refuge in various regions, depending on the office they were given or network/faction they belonged to. It was common for different branches of the same family to resettle in entirely different parts of the Realm. The migration to Banat and Transylvania was just one direction in which the noble Croats went.<sup>6</sup> Their arrival to the easternmost part of the state mostly happened long before the division between the Habsburgs and the Zápolyas and their loyalty after 1526 was usually dictated by the majority within the community they settled into, but there were exceptions to this rule. The other key conclusion, although preliminary, is that, once in the far east of the Realm, most of the Croats made part of the same political network, keeping, at first, their original identification and identity, entering marital ties between themselves and mainly collaborating. In time, they adopted the customs of their new communities and fully blended in the society, some of them becoming Protestant and many of them corresponding in the Hungarian language, which was typical only for the elites of Transylvania.

#### HISTORIOGRAPHY, STATE OF RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Before setting out to explore the abundant new data which became available through digitisation, a researcher must review the achievements of previous historians and the methodological framework which was employed. The dominant questions are – which noble families and individuals were most thoroughly studied

<sup>4</sup> S. Miljan, *Plemićko društvo Zagrebačke županije za vladavine Žigmunda Luksemburškoga (1387.–1437.)*: doctoral dissertation, Zagreb, 2015, p. 23–25.

<sup>5</sup> I. Jurković, “Šesnaestostoljetna hrvatska raseljenička kriza i moderna sociološka terminologija”, *Društvena istraživanja* 14/4–5, 2005, p. 759–782.

<sup>6</sup> There were Croatian noble and non-noble communities in eastern, southern and northern Hungary, in Austrian lands etc. The most famous and the most studied Croatian community is the one in Burgenland (Croat. Gradišće, Hung. Órvidék) – M. Valentić, *Gradišćanski Hrvati od XVI stoljeća do danas*, Zagreb, 1970; B. Vranješ-Šoljan, *Gradišćanski Hrvati: između tradicije i suvremenosti*, Zagreb, 2005.

and by whom, what was the dominant approach in previous studies, what the old sources and those which have recently emerged offer to historians and, finally, how to improve the research in the future.

All South Slavic historiographies had a similar model of research. Namely, the studies were focused on the most notable individuals from the period of migration and on the first generations in the new environment. Having in mind the sheer number of Croatian noble families and individual migrants to Banat and Transylvania, either through their connections with duke John Corvinus, illegitimate son of King Matthias Corvinus, and his entourage in the 1490s and early 1500s, or by opting for Zápolya in the dynastic strife of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is quite surprising that there is practically no historian who studies this topic. The closest approach was made by Ivan Jurković who defended his PhD thesis *The Fate of the Croatian Noble Families in the Face of Ottoman Advance* in 2004, at Central European University in Budapest. Yet again, in his comprehensive articles on certain families, rich in source material, he did not focus on any of those that went to Transylvania or Banat.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the Croatian noble migration remains the most understudied and the most promising topic for future research, in comparison with the noble migrants from Serbia or Bosnia. Croatian noble families were more numerous since they represented proper Hungarian nobility, originally belonging to the Hungarian Realm, unlike the Serbs (and presumably Bosnians, who were not confirmed in their titles by Hungarian kings), who had to earn their nobility by their service.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I. Jurković, "Raseljena plemićka obitelj za osmanske ugroze: primjer Berislavića de Werhreka de Mala Mlaka (Dio prvi: Stjepan Berislavić Vrhrički i Malomlački)", *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 20, 2002, p. 125–164; idem, "Raseljena plemićka obitelj za osmanske ugroze: primjer Berislavića de Werhreka de Mala Mlaka. (Dio drugi – Nasljednici Stjepana Berislavića tijekom 16. st.)", *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 21, 2003, p. 119–181; idem, "Klasifikacija hrvatskih raseljenika za trajanja osmanske ugroze (od 1463. do 1593.)", *Migracijske i etničke teme*, 19/2–3, 2003, p. 147–174; idem, "Socijalni status i prisilni raseljenici podrijetlom iz hrvatskih plemićkih obitelji u zemljama njihovih doseoba za trajanja osmanske ugroze", *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 23, 2005, p. 63–85; idem, "Hrvatsko raseljeno plemstvo u korespondenciji Antuna Vrančića", in V. Lakić (ed.), *Zbornik o Antunu Vrančiću*, Šibenik, 2005, p. 41–50; idem, "Osmanska ugroza, plemeniti raseljenici i hrvatski identitet", *Povijesni prilozi* 31, 2006, p. 39–69; idem, "Ugrinovići od Roga – Raseljena obitelj plemenitog roda Šubića Bribirskih za trajanja osmanske ugroze", *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 26, 2008, p. 71–85; idem, "Demográfiai válság az oszmánellenes háborúk idején: Magyar és horvát főurak és a horvát kizeleptülők / Demografska kriza u razdoblju protuosmanskih ratova: ugarski i hrvatski velikaši i hrvatski raseljenici", in P. Fodor, D. Šokčević, J. Turkalj, D. Karbić (eds.), *A magyar-horvát együttélés fordulópontjai: intézmények, társadalom, gazdaság, kultúra / Prekretnice u suživotu Hrvata i Mađara: Ustanove, društvo, gospodarstvo i kultura*, Budapest / Budimpešta, 2015, p. 242–249, 294–301; idem, "Migracije. Raseljenička kriza za osmanske ugroze: 'U baščini mojoj ne dadu mi priti'", in M. Karbić (ed.), *Vrijeme sazrijevanja, vrijeme razaranja: Hrvatske zemlje u kasnome srednjem vijeku*, Zagreb, 2019, p. 99–113.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ivić, *Spomenici Srba u Ugarskoj, Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji tokom XVI i XVII stoleća*, Novi Sad, 1910; idem, *Istorija Srba u Ugarskoj: od pada Smedereva do seobe pod Čarnojevićem (1459–1690)*,

Hungarian historiography was far more interested in the topic in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, since it was compatible with the endeavour to publish most of the sources and, also, the genealogies and histories of noble families. Putting aside many short articles in specialised journals or brief notes in encyclopaedic volumes on the Hungarian nobility<sup>9</sup>, only two monographic accomplishments should be mentioned. The book of József Molnár on the Melić family of Bribir<sup>10</sup> and a group of publications by Emil Petrichevich Horváth on his own family.<sup>11</sup>

Romanian historiography was not particularly interested in South Slavic (especially Croatian) nobility in Banat and Transylvania as the primary subject of its research, maybe because, beside George Martinuzzi, none of the Croatian nobles had a key role in Transylvanian politics and maybe because those nobles were perceived as a part of the Hungarian elite and were eventually fully magyarised.<sup>12</sup> Some valuable data can, however, be traced on the margins of broader studies on Banat and Transylvania in the late medieval and early modern period. Only lately, some Romanian historians have begun to publish their studies focused on South Slavic notable individuals in present-day Romania.<sup>13</sup> Having in mind the fact that most of the new sources are to be found in Romanian and Hungarian archives (some of them in the Hungarian language, as well), the interest of researchers from these countries in this topic is more than valuable.

This brief overview of the state of research shows that it was rather limited, uneven and “capsuled” within national historiographies, both in methodological

Zagreb, 1914; V. Atanasovski, *Pad Hercegovine*, Beograd, 1979, p. 162–165. Also see the article “The Belmužević Family – The Fate of a Noble Family in South-East Europe during the Turbulent Period of the Ottoman Conquest (The 15th and the First Half of the 16th Century)” by Aleksandar Krstić and Adrian Magina, in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Most of these articles were published in the Hungarian journal for heraldry and genealogy *Turul*. Also see: I. Nagy, *Magyarország családai: czimerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal*, vols. I–XIII, Pest, 1857–1868; B. Kempelen, *Magyar nemes családok*, vols. I–XI, Budapest, 1911–1932 *Arcanum DVD könyvtár IV. – Családtörténet, heraldika, honismeret*, Budapest, 2003 (DVD edition).

<sup>10</sup> J. Molnár, *A Subich-nemzetségből származó Bribiri Melith-család-vázlatos története*, Hajdúnánás, 1939.

<sup>11</sup> E. Petrichevich Horváth, *A Mogorovich nemzetségbeli Petrichevich család története és oklevéltára – A Petrichevich család általános története*, Budapest, 1934; idem, *A Petrichevich-család naplói*, Budapest, 1941; idem, *A Mogorovich nemzetségbeli Petrichevich család története és oklevéltára – A Petrichevich család történetének regesztái*, Pécs, 1942.

<sup>12</sup> About Martinuzzi and historiography on him see recent monographs: A. Papo, G. Nemeth Papo, *Frate Giorgio Martinuzzi: Cardinale, soldato e statista dalmata agli albori del Principato di Transilvania*, Roma, 2017; idem, *Nemăsurata ispită a puterii. Gheorghe Martinuzzi, adevărul rege al Transilvaniei în secolul al XVI-lea*, Oradea, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb în Banatul secolului al XV-lea: Miloš Belmužević”, *Analele Banatului* s.n. 18, 2010, p. 135–142; idem, “Milica Belmužević: l’histoire d’une noble dame du XVIe siècle”, *Initial. A Review of Medieval studies* 2, 2014, p. 145–162; idem, “Peter Petrović and Protestantism. Aspects concerning the Patronage of the Reformation during its Early Period”, *Initial. A Review of Medieval studies* 3, 2015, p. 139–159; idem, “Acta Jakšićiana. Documents regarding the Jakšić of Nădlac Family in Romanian Archives”, *Initial. A Review of Medieval studies* 6, 2018, p. 159–188; F. N. Ardelean, *Organizarea militară în Principatul Transilvaniei (1541-1691)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2019.

approach and the choice of subjects and their presentation. Therefore, we should pose the question of further steps and ideas. First of all, it is essential that historians overcome language barriers and self-centeredness, as well as the diffusion of research and overwhelmingly present ignorance of the results of neighbouring historiographies. Some of these tasks are easier to do than others, but they are all doable, and some problems can be overcome by cooperation through collective authorships and delegation of specific tasks on the basis of expertise.

The typology of sources which were already used by the historians does not significantly differ from the typology of newly available ones. Both groups are mainly charters, reports and other types of documentary material, with much less narrative sources (although some chronical notes and genealogies can be found). But the new material, combined with a new methodological i.e. more synthetic approach, will still allow us to broaden our findings narrowed down to most important topics such as biographies of great personalities, the issue of their possessions or military service, the issue of their leadership in their communities etc. Beyond these, “usual” topics, sources offer a lot of data on political networking, affinities, marital policies, connections with other Croatian (or Slavic) noble families and broader Slavic population, issues of literacy and cultural influences, gradual magyarisation of the Croatian elite, religious affiliation, variety of offices held by the Croatian nobles, clientelism etc.

Having everything above-mentioned in mind, it is quite in place to urge historians from South East Europe to broaden their cooperation and include the research of South Slavic (especially Croatian) noblemen in Banat and Transylvania in their future projects. It would most definitely be a gratifying investment and even an international research project could be carried out in relatively close future. The fact that both Hungarian and Romanian archives for the Middle Ages and (to some extent) for the early modern period are mostly digitised and, therefore, fully and easily available on web portals such as *Hungaricana* (based in Hungary) and *Arhivă Medievală* (based in Romania), will give an impetus and motivation for the research.<sup>14</sup> Although the portal *DIZBI HAZU* (Digital Collection of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, based in Croatia) does not offer the same range of material and features, it also facilitates the process of research.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, *Hungaricana* also offers a substantial material from Croatian archives (up until 1526)<sup>16</sup>, available in the form of reproductions from microfilms, which makes the research much easier than before, even for a single historian, who would, however, be overwhelmed by the quantity and diversity of data. Since I found myself in a similar situation, this contribution will give only the preliminary findings on the subject, as indicated in the title.

<sup>14</sup> *Hungaricana* (<https://hungaricana.hu>), *Arhivă Medievală* (<https://arhivamedievala.ro>).

<sup>15</sup> Digitalna zbirka Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti (<https://dizbi.hazu.hr/a>).

<sup>16</sup> A valuable new resource for the period 1526–1570 can be found on the Hungarian web portal *Adatbázisok Online* (<https://adatbázisokonline.hu/gyujtemeny/reformacio>).

### PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON THE PROCESS OF ARRIVAL OF CROATIAN NOBLES TO BANAT AND TRANSYLVANIA

In the preliminary research I conducted during the last years, with the help of the literature and Romanian colleagues, I was able to identify more than a dozen noble families of Croatian origin in Banat and Transylvania, usually bearing the epithet “Horváth” i.e. “Croat”. Most of them originally came from southern Croatia (first to be occupied by the Turks). At this point I will mention only the most important ones and those who are very well documented – the Šušalić family of Lukarić or Oprominje, Šubić-Melić of Bribir, Šubić-Ugrinić of Rog, Petričević of Raduč, Kolunić and Perušić of Pset, Kučić of Razvađe, Bojničić and Benković of Plavno, Mišljenović of Kamičac and Uzdolje, Utišenović and Bartaković of Kamičac, Martinušević of Bogočin, Korlatović of Korlat. After their resettlement, most of these families were based in Banat, and the counties of Bihar (Hung. Bihar), Satu Mare (Hung. Szatmár) and Alba (Hung. Fehér), but some had estates or held important offices outside of these regions and counties as well.<sup>17</sup> A few of these noble families, unlike Serbian and Bosnian ones, are still existent, although they are now fully magyarised.

No thorough study of how these particular noble families arrived to the easternmost part of the Hungarian Realm has yet been made. Only a few cases of notable individuals were studied in more details, the most famous one being George Martinuzzi (Croat. Juraj Utišenović Martinušević).<sup>18</sup> Since many nobles came from the relative (and some even from the immediate) vicinity of Martinuzzi’s home castle of Kamičac, it was assumed that he was the primary agent of their arrival. The other candidate was John Zápolya (Croat. Ivan od Zapolja), who became the voivode of Transylvania in 1510, sixteen years before he became a pretender to the throne of Hungary. He was one of the principal leaders of the lesser nobility and gentry, a social stratum to which most of the aforementioned nobles belonged to.<sup>19</sup> Finally, he was himself a noble from Slavonia and of Slavic origin and most of the Slavs from Slavonia were, in fact, Croats. In 1527 Slavonian nobility opted for Zápolya and Croatian for Ferdinand of Habsburg.<sup>20</sup> But, the emigrants we are discussing here mostly came to the region of Zápolya’s influence years before the civil war began. With most of the source material yet to be researched, it is precisely the time of the arrival of the noble Croats to Banat, Transylvania and the eastern counties of Hungary which leads us to re-consider the

<sup>17</sup> I. Horn, “Magyar végvári tisztek erdélyi karrierlehetőségei a 16. század második felében”, in G. Veres, M. Berecz (eds.), *Hagyomány és megújulás - Életpályák és társadalmi mobilitás a végváriak körében*, Eger, 2008, p. 103.

<sup>18</sup> Papo, Nemeth Papo, *Frate Giorgio Martinuzzi...*, passim; T. Oborni, “Fráter György szervitorainak és familiárisainak jegyzéke a Castaldo-kódexben, 1552”, *Fons: forráskutatás és történeti segédanyagok* 25, 2018, p. 435–451.

<sup>19</sup> Horn, “Magyar végvári tisztek...”, p. 103.

<sup>20</sup> F. Šišić, *Hrvatski saborski spisi*, vol. I, Zagreb, 1912, p. 50–55, 71–77.

theories of Martinuzzi's and Zápolya's direct involvement in the launching of the first migration wave from southern Croatia to the far east of the Realm. Both of the above mentioned personalities started their careers in the first years and decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, gradually rising to power.<sup>21</sup> That means they were not established well enough to coordinate migration in the last years of the 15<sup>th</sup> and early years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Most Croatian nobles were to become the members of their affinity networks (through the institution of *familiaritas*) sometime later, but they were not responsible for their transfer. In fact, they themselves, or their ancestors, made part of the same process of migration, but they rose to greater prominence than their fellow-nobles and compatriots who are the topic of this particular paper.<sup>22</sup>

Although the Hungarian nobility had ranks, since the time of Louis I the Great's reforms in the 1350s, all of the nobles were protected by the king in their status and some of their vested rights.<sup>23</sup> The law by itself was important, but what boosted lesser Croatian nobility's potential for migration was their role in defence of the southern borders of the Realm during the period of Ottoman conquest. From the viewpoint of the central authorities in Buda, the situation in southern Croatia was gradually deteriorating throughout the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century since the area was isolated by Bosnia and Venice and controlled by local magnates whose loyalty to the crown was frequently compromised by either their own interests or pure political reality, since the king and his representatives did not invest enough effort to support the region which was attacked by all the neighbours.<sup>24</sup>

The Ottoman threat proved to be much more important challenge than the others, but the actions of the government were hindered by a long lasting dynastic strife. When Matthias Corvinus was finally secure on his throne, Bosnia had already fallen to the Ottomans (1463). Yet again, it was Corvinus who re-organised the border defence system, making Croatia and parts of Bosnia he conquered from the Turks in late 1463 and 1464 an active frontier aimed at halting the Ottoman advance. In comparison with the earlier period this buffer zone was more functional and it held for several decades.<sup>25</sup> It was not impervious to Turkish *akinci*

<sup>21</sup> T. Neumann, "Dózsa legyőzője. Szapolyai János erdélyi vajdasága (1510–1526)", *Székegyföld* 18, 2014, p. 93–107; Papo, Nemeth Papo, *Frate Giorgio Martinuzzi...*, p. 21–52.

<sup>22</sup> It is considered that George Martinuzzi himself was brought to Hungary by John Corvinus because George's father Gregory served John and was killed fighting the Turks. Papo, Nemeth Papo, *Frate Giorgio Martinuzzi...*, p. 21–29.

<sup>23</sup> F. Somogyi, L.F. Somogyi, "Ludovici I. Regis, decretum unicum, anno 1351, editum 1986", in S.B. Vardy, G. Grosschmid, L.S. Domonkos (eds.), *Louis the Great, King of Hungary and Poland*, Boulder – New York, 1986, p. 453–483.

<sup>24</sup> V. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća*, vol. III, Zagreb, 1985, passim; N. Isailović, "Bosnia and Croatia-Dalmatia in the Late Middle Ages. A Historical Perspective", in Dž. Dautović, E.O. Filipović, N. Isailović (eds.), *Medieval Bosnia and South-East European Relations: Political, Religious, and Cultural Life at the Adriatic Crossroads*, Leeds, 2019, p. 39–49.

<sup>25</sup> B. Grgin, *Počeci rasapa. Kralj Matijaš Korvin i srednjovjekovna Hrvatska*, Zagreb, 2002, p. 31–33, 115–125, 171–186; D. Salihović, "For a Different Catastrophe: A Fruitful Frontier on the Southern Edges of the Kingdom of Hungary after 1463. An Initial Inquiry", *Initial. A Review of Medieval Studies* 5, 2017, p. 73–107; idem, "The Process of Bordering at the Late Fifteenth-Century Hungarian-Ottoman

raids which were gradually exhausting the resources and men power of the Hungarian south, but the king and his governors – bans – regained control over the entire region. In such a system, the middle ranked (*egregii*) or lesser nobles from southern Croatia, controlling smaller estates and forts, became marcher lords in direct service of the king and ban, frequently being named as *homines regii* in legal processes and local inquiries.<sup>26</sup> They were the immediate neighbours of advancing Turks and the first line of defence in Matthias' time.<sup>27</sup>

The king's death in 1490 and the ensuing strife over the throne did contribute to the decomposition of the defence system, but it was deteriorating over time, burdened with the lack of resources and people which were the main target of Turkish raids.<sup>28</sup> The decades of warfare were exhausting the royal treasury as well and the system was gradually collapsing. One of the last attempts to rebuild it once again was the appointment of King Matthias' illegitimate son – John Corvinus to the position of duke of Slavonia and ban of Croatia-Dalmatia.<sup>29</sup> His path to this office was paved with nails. Even before his father's death he was targeted by the queen and some circles of nobility, and after 1490 he not only definitely renounced all his claims to the throne, but was also left without the promised title of the king of Bosnia and effective control over Slavonia, although he supported Jagiellonian King Vladislaus II. It was only after 1496 and his marriage to Beatrice, a daughter of the influential Croatian magnate Bernardin Frankapan, that he regained some fortunes and the life-long position of the duke of Slavonia and ban of Croatia-Dalmatia. Through these offices he became the effective commander of the southern frontier.<sup>30</sup> It was the time of the war of Christian states against the Ottomans and John's efforts to secure the border were indisputable and clearly visible.

Although he achieved some success, not only of local significance, John's appointment came too late to turn the tide of the war, which was the consequence of a longer process. Namely, between 1471 and 1473, the Ottomans were already in control of some regions west of the river Neretva.<sup>31</sup> The defeat of the Croatian

Frontier", *History in Flux* 1, 2019, p. 93–120; idem, "Exploiting the Frontier – A Case Study: the Common Endeavour of Matthias Corvinus and Nicholas of Ilok in Late Medieval Bosnia", in Dž. Dautović, E.O. Filipović, N. Isailović (eds.), *Medieval Bosnia and South-East European Relations: Political, Religious, and Cultural Life at the Adriatic Crossroads*, Leeds, 2019, p. 97–112.

<sup>26</sup> M. Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary*, New York - London, 2000, p. 70–74, 81, 175.

<sup>27</sup> Grgin, *Počeci rasapa...*, p. 115–125, 171–186.

<sup>28</sup> F. Szakály, "The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System and Its Collapse" in J.M. Bak, B.K. Király (eds.), *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi. War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, New York, 1982, p. 141–158.

<sup>29</sup> M. Mesić, "Građa mojih razprava u 'Radu': listine i izprave", *Starine Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 5, 1873, p. 109–288; L. Thallóczy, A. Hodinka, *A horvát véghelyek oklevéltára 1490–1527*, Budapest, 1903, passim; F. Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika o hercegu Ivanišu Korvinu i o borbama Hrvata s Turcima (1473–1496)", *Starine Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 37, 1934, p. 189–344; *ibid.*, *Starine Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 38, 1937, p. 1–180.

<sup>30</sup> V. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća*, vol. IV, Zagreb, 1985, p. 191–264.

<sup>31</sup> Atanasovski, *Pad Hercegovine*, p. 64–96, 118–125.

army at the battlefield of Krbava in 1493 had a more significant aftermath than it is usually viewed. It was not only a disastrous defeat but also a prequel to the series of attacks which led to the extension of Turkish authority to the river Cetina and even some areas west of it by 1497.<sup>32</sup> Although some fortresses kept their garrisons loyal to the Jagiellonian king up until the 1520s or, in case of Klis, until 1537, by 1505 those forts became mere islands in the Ottoman sea. The situation became untenable for the marcher nobility – the population was abducted in Turkish raids or fled to the northwest, the economy crumbled under constant pressure and the resources (money, food, men power) for the defence were completely exhausted. The reports from the southern border after 1504 and John Corvinus' death show despair of the remaining defenders of the south. Receiving only small subsidies or tax benefits from the central authorities, the local nobles sought to deliver themselves from the hopeless situation.<sup>33</sup>

John Corvinus, whose primary battlefield during the war with the Ottomans was on the southern borders, who was the governor of Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia, and whose wife was from a Croatian magnate family, established a network of connections with people who were serving him in the war – as horsemen or castellans. The leaders of auxiliary *vlach* troops also represented a network, but it functioned separately from the one which comprised Croatian nobility.<sup>34</sup> Corvinus was the last hope for the defenders of the isolated, south-western frontier of the Hungarian Realm. When the peace treaty of 1503<sup>35</sup> proved to be of small significance for the actual situation in the field, the network of middle-ranked and lesser nobles which John created started to organise the withdrawal from the region affected by the Turks since the official border was now in the immediate vicinity of major fortresses of Knin, Sinj, Klis and Skradin. It was, however, not meant for Corvinus to implement this gradual migration since he died of fever in Krapina 1504. His legacy was formally continued by his young offspring – sons Christopher and Matthew (both died in 1505), and daughter Elisabeth (died in 1508) – but effectively by his wife Beatrice (died in 1510), who kept John's possessions after his death, undoubtedly with support of her influential father Bernardin Frankapan.<sup>36</sup>

The migration did not happen at once – it was a gradual process and not an easy one. The central government certainly did not wish to leave the border with no

<sup>32</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Istanbul), Tapu tahrir defterleri 987.

<sup>33</sup> Gy. Pray, *Epistolae procerum regni Hungariae*, vol. I, Pozsony, 1806, p. 156–158; L. Thallóczy, S. Barabás, *A Frangepán család oklevéltára*, vol. II, Budapest, 1913, p. XLV–XLVI; N.C. Tóth, *Politikatörténeti források Bátori István első helytartóságához (1522–1523)*, Budapest, 2010, p. 44–45; Thallóczy, Hodinka, *A horvát véghegyek oklevéltára...*, p. 16–19.

<sup>34</sup> S. Gunjača, “Tiniensia archaeologica historica topographica II”, *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* III/7, 1960, p. 78–84; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata...*, vol. IV, p. 225–257. Many details concerning this period are also brought by Sanudo's diaries.

<sup>35</sup> L. Thallóczy, S. Horváth, *Jajca (bánság, vár és város) története: 1450–1527*, Budapest, 1915, p. 167–170.

<sup>36</sup> Gy. Schönherr, *Hunyadi Corvin János 1473–1504*, Budapest, 1894; T. Neumann, “Mátyás herceg (Szerény adalék a Hunyadi családfához)”, *Turul* 88, 2015, p. 72–73.

defence, depopulated and without nobility to keep up the struggle against the advancing Ottomans. Yet, the signs of the deteriorating situation in the decade between the peace of 1503 and the fall of Sinj in 1513, could not be ignored and they were easily verified. The appointment of a local Croatian noble with courtly career – Mark Mišljenović of Kamičac to the office of ban of Croatia and Dalmatia (which he shared with a notable Hungarian noble Andrew Both of Bajna) was a part of the efforts of the court in Buda to elevate distinguished local fighters and give a new impetus for the gentry defending their estates.<sup>37</sup> These efforts were faltering due to intensified Turkish pressure that created the situation in which smaller forts were demolished, commoners captured or dispersed, all valuables pillaged, crops destroyed and any collection of tribute rendered impossible. This created an atmosphere in which the network made by Corvinus could receive their master's and king's grant to leave the area and assume another office elsewhere, retaining their title and noble status.<sup>38</sup> The first ones to leave were people on higher positions, better connected to Beatrice Frankapan, who became a wealthy landowner in Banat and Transylvania, with the centre in her castles of Hunedoara (Hung. Hunyad) and Lipova (Hung. Lippa). She received support not only of her father, but also of King Vladislaus II who eventually remarried her to his cousin George of Brandenburg-Ansbach in 1509, a year prior to Beatrice's death which was preceded by the deaths of her children with Corvinus.<sup>39</sup> Two facts in support of the theory that John Corvinus and Beatrice Frankapan were the first to coordinate Croatian migration to the eastern part of the Hungarian Realm are that most of the data for the period between the 1490s and 1510s are to be found in the family archive of Hunyadi i.e. Corvinus family, as well as that the Kučić family (very close to Beatrice) was supporting neither Zápolya or Martinuzzi, but, in fact, Ferdinand I of Habsburg since late 1526, although the majority of Croats of the region did not do so.

In 1510 George of Brandenburg-Ansbach was granted Beatrice's heritage of Hunedoara, Lipova and 252 villages by King Vladislaus II who named George her principal heir. Some of the Croats remained in his affinity until the moment he sold out most of his possessions in Hungary in order to acquire some Silesian ones, not only because his career was oriented to German lands, but also because of his continuous feuds with Zápolya.<sup>40</sup> The representatives of the first wave of Croatian noble refugees already established themselves in the new environment, receiving not only offices (usually military, due to their experience in cavalry and as castellans), but some estates too. They became intermediaries for the arrival of the

<sup>37</sup> V. Klaić, "Hrvatsko kraljevstvo u XV. stoljeću i prvoj četvrti XVI. stoljeća (1409–1526.)", *Vjesnik Hrvatskoga arheološkog društva* 8, 1905, p. 136, 138.

<sup>38</sup> Jurković, "Šesnaestostoljetna hrvatska raseljenička kriza...", p. 759–782; idem, "Socijalni status...", p. 63–85.

<sup>39</sup> P. Strčić, "Frankapan, Beatrica", in T. Macan (ed.), *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. IV, Zagreb, 1998, p. 399.

<sup>40</sup> W. Huber, "Georg (der Fromme)", in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, Band 30, Nordhausen, 2009, p. 472–484.

second wave which mostly, but not exclusively, came prior to the battle of Mohács, possibly in the period before and immediately after the fall the main fortresses of Knin and Skradin (1522), Ostrovica (1523), and Obrovac as well as the counties of Krbava and Lika (1527).<sup>41</sup> It seems that only a small number of nobles from southern Croatia went to the east due to the civil war between the supporters of Ferdinand I and John Zápolya which started in 1527. We can, to some extent, deduce that from the fact that no representative on any major Croatian noble family that rose to some prominence in Banat and Transylvania was among the nobles choosing either Ferdinand I (mainly nobles from Croatia, in Cetin, on 1 January 1527) or Zápolya (mainly nobles from Slavonia, in Dubrava, on 6 January 1527).<sup>42</sup> Interestingly enough, Bernardin Frankapan and his sons were the only magnates originating from Croatia proper who supported Zápolya over the Habsburgs. However, we have no data that they had anything to do with the second wave of Croatian migrants to Banat or Transylvania, nor did Zápolya.<sup>43</sup>

When the new wave of migration began, it were those who were already in the new environment that helped their compatriots, in many cases their relatives too, to acquire land and service in the circles of Zápolya and, by then, already influential George Martinuzzi, the most famous offspring of two lesser noble families (Utišenović and Martinušević) from the district of Oprominje.<sup>44</sup> After he gained substantial power, following John Zápolya's death in 1540, Martinuzzi formed an impressive noble retinue. A list of his retainers at the time of his death comprises many persons bearing Slavic surnames and/or epithet Horváth.<sup>45</sup> After 1551, they were already members of the noble society of their counties and Transylvania as a whole<sup>46</sup> and their position was not (in some cases not substantially, in others not whatsoever) challenged or endangered by Martinuzzi's murder. Most of the Croats held offices for temporary pro-Habsburg governors, then for the new "strongmen" of John Sigismund Zápolya's Eastern Hungarian Kingdom and, ultimately, for the rulers of the Principality of Transylvania. In first

<sup>41</sup> M. Mesić, "Banovanje Petra Berislavića za kralja Ljudevita II.," *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 3, 1868, p. 1–64; idem, "Hrvati nakon bana Berislavića do muhačke bitke," *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 18, 1872, p. 77–163; *ibid.*, *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 22, 1873, p. 55–204; V. Klaić, "Pad Obrovca, Udbine i Jajca. Prilog za hrvatsku povjestnicu godine 1527.–1528.," *Vjesnik Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskoga zemaljskog arkiva* 7, 1905, p. 53–69; Gunjača, "Tiniensia archaeologica...," p. 88–91; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata...*, vol. IV, p. 293–430.

<sup>42</sup> Šišić, *Hrvatski saborski spisi*, vol. I, p. 50–55, 71–77.

<sup>43</sup> P. Strčić, "Frankapan, Bernardin Ozaljski," in T. Macan (ed.), *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, vol. IV, Zagreb, 1998, p. 399–401; idem, "Bernardin Frankopan i njegovo doba. Prilog za sintezu povijesti o vrhuncu srednjovjekovnoga razvoja i početka borbe za opstanak Frankopana i hrvatskoga naroda," *Modruški zbornik* 3, 2009, p. 3–27.

<sup>44</sup> A. Sekulić, "Naš pavlin Juraj Utišinović, crkveni poglavar i državnik," in M. Mendušić, D. Marguš (eds.), *Miljevci u prošlosti (s pogledom u budućnost)*, Visovac – Drinovci, 2008, p. 165–169; Papo, Nemeth Papo, *Frate Giorgio Martinuzzi...*, p. 21–30; idem, *Nemšurata ispitā...*, p. 21–30.

<sup>45</sup> Oborni, "Fráter György..." , p. 443–451.

<sup>46</sup> At that time, Banat was conquered by the Turks.

generations, the newly settled Croats had comparative advantages – they were trained soldiers, skilful in marcher combat, experienced castellans. They also knew the Slavonic language in its South Slavic variant, which was, up until the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, used even by higher Ottoman administration, but certainly by the Turkish marcher lords and *sanjakbeys*, who were, in large numbers, of South Slavic origin themselves (mainly from Bosnia and Croatia).<sup>47</sup> Finally, they formed one network, at least for a certain period of time, which was the source of loyal retainers of their leader (whether it was Beatrice Frankapan, George of Brandenburg-Ansbach, John Zápolya and his son, Queen Isabella, Martinuzzi, Castaldo, Báthory family, Nádasdy family, or local magnates).<sup>48</sup>

In Latin sources from Hungary, Banat and Transylvania the Croats were identified by their conspicuous Slavic surnames and the epithet *Croatus* (much more often in Hungarian version – *Horváth*) and, sometimes, by their noble predicates which specified their original main estate. Yet, most of them acquired new possessions, married into local noble families and performed various duties, mostly as wardens or prefects of important fortresses, county officials or *familiares* of kings, princes, bishops and magnates. Even though they adapted to the new environment rather easily, since their nobility was the first factor of their identity, it seems that the Croats kept close to each other, at least in the first couple of generations, which can be observed through their documents, connections and family ties.<sup>49</sup> Their bond was not only of ethnic and linguistic origin. Almost all of these nobles came from a small region near the Krka river in southern Croatia, which was already pointed out as the home region of Martinuzzi. The magyarisation which was already ongoing in the later decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a normal process of blending in the customs of the majority of Transylvanian nobility of the same rank. It did not completely disrupt the network, but, eventually, new networks, based on the distribution of possessions and belonging to a faction, emerged as primary. The surnames, noble predicates (some of which slightly changed) and epithet *Horváth*, however, endured for centuries, even after the process of magyarisation was completed and all noble Croats from Transylvania assumed Hungarian identity.<sup>50</sup>

### SELECTED CASE STUDIES

Due to preliminary nature of this paper, in its last section, I will briefly go through several case studies which I deem exemplary in order to show the

<sup>47</sup> N. Isailović, A. Krstić, “Serbian Language and Cyrillic Script as a Means of Diplomatic Literacy in South Eastern Europe in 15th and 16th Centuries”, in S. Andea – A.C. Dincă (eds.), *Literacy Experiences concerning Medieval and Early Modern Transylvania*, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, p. 185–195.

<sup>48</sup> See the section of this article dedicated to selected case studies.

<sup>49</sup> Jurković, “Osmanska ugroza, plemeniti raseljenici...”, p. 39–69; Horn, “Magyar végvári tisztek...”, p. 103.

<sup>50</sup> See footnote 11.

possibilities that newly available data offer for future research. For these small “medallions” I selected the families and/or individuals who are well-documented in literature and databases easily accessible to all historians.

Mark (Croat. Marko) Mišljenović of Kamičac (the noble predicate derives from a fort on the Krka river, in the present-day Municipality of Promina) was one of the most important Croatian nobles whose career spanned several decades. He was from the same fort from which Martinuzzi’s father Gregory (Croat. Grgur) Utišenović was, but we have no data which would link these two families. His noble predicate was later expended by adding the nearby estate of Uzdolje to it. Mark came to King Matthias’ court in the 1470s as a young man. In the late 1480s he already distinguished himself in king’s service and gained possessions in Slavonia, in the county of Dubica, along with his brother John who was also a royal courtier.<sup>51</sup> In 1491 he received a portion of the estates of Francis Jakcs of Kusaly (today Coșeu in the county of Sălaj) for his services and was named King Vladislaus II’s *cubicularius*, receiving further possessions in the county of Trenčín (Hung. Trencsén).<sup>52</sup>

In 1496 Mark married Benigna, the daughter of Balázs Magyar and widow of Pál Kinizsi.<sup>53</sup> She gave up her rights and transferred them to her male family members, including her new husband.<sup>54</sup> Some of these possessions were in present-day Romania, in the county of Hunedoara (Hung. Hunyad). However, since many of them were formerly pledged, Mark soon transferred them to the king and Corvinus family.<sup>55</sup> Most of his remaining possessions were located around Herend near Veszprém in Hungary and near Székesfehérvár.<sup>56</sup> In the first years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Mark was the castellan of Buda (certainly in 1505)<sup>57</sup> and after the death of John Corvinus in 1504 he was involved in defending southern Croatia from the Ottoman attacks. In 1506 he became one of Croatian bans and captains of Senj, along with Andrew Both of Bajna.<sup>58</sup> It was considered that he would, as a local Croat, enhance the defence, but he died soon afterwards (around 1508). His estate was claimed by his younger brothers Andrew and Matthew, and his widow

<sup>51</sup> Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (=MNL OL) (Budapest), Diplomatikai levéltár (=DL) 26530, 30916, 67881; E. Laszowski, “Prilog historiji hrvatskih porodica Martinuševića, Utješenića, Mišljenovića i njihovih srodnika”, *Vjesnik Kr. državnog arhiva u Zagrebu*, 1937, p. 156.

<sup>52</sup> MNL OL, DL 30923, 46657, 82063.

<sup>53</sup> MNL OL, DL 63247, 63513, 63514; I. Borsa, *A Justh család levéltára 1274-1525*, Budapest, 1991, p. 100–101.

<sup>54</sup> MNL OL, DL 38914, 46332, 46657; Arhivele Naționale ale României (=ANR), Direcția Județeană (=DJ) Cluj, Fond familial Vécsey, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 240.

<sup>55</sup> MNL OL, DL 30934.

<sup>56</sup> MNL OL, DL 39338, 46726, 66360, 66363, 66378, 66640, 69169, 102692.

<sup>57</sup> MNL OL, DL 39335.

<sup>58</sup> V. Klaić, “Kandidacija (commendatio) bana po hrvatskom saboru za vladanja kuće Habsburg (1527–1848.)”, *Vjesnik Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskoga zemaljskoga arkiva* 10, 1908, p. 168.

relinquished it to them.<sup>59</sup> His resettlement to the eastern part of the Hungarian Realm was among the first, but was not permanent.

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The Kučić family of Razvađa Vas (today Razvođe, Municipality of Promina) first appeared in sources in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Their main representative in the last quarter of the century was John (Croat. Ivan) Kučić who was granted the possibility to import *vlach* (i.e. nomad) population to his estates by Croatian ban Matthew Geréb of Vingard (Hung. Vingárd) in 1484, because he distinguished himself fighting against the Turks.<sup>60</sup> In the late 1490s he became a part of the network established by Croatian ban John Corvinus for the defence of the southern borders against the Ottomans. During Corvinus' administration, he probably became the castellan of Knin, one of two most important fortresses in southern Croatia and the seat of Croatian ban.<sup>61</sup> The other castellan may have been John's brother George (Croat. Juraj), mentioned in 1485.<sup>62</sup> Knin was under constant attack, but fell to the Ottomans only in 1522.

However, John Kučić seemed to have left his Croatian estates before the death of John Corvinus, moving north under the protection of Corvinus and his wife Beatrice Frankapan. He was first to be found as a castellan of the Vingard castle in 1503.<sup>63</sup> In 1505, along with his son Gaspar (Croat. Gašpar), he came in the possession of the estate Gusu (Hung. Kisludas)<sup>64</sup> and then, 1506–1508, of an iron mine near the castle of Hunedoara and of Vingard castle and market place with surrounding villages in the county of Alba.<sup>65</sup> After the Geréb of Vingard family became extinct, these possessions came into hands of John Corvinus, but after he died, his widow Beatrice Frankapan sold them to John Kučić for 11500 florins which she needed to redeem her numerous pledges (1508).<sup>66</sup> This transfer was sanctioned by King Vladislaus II, but was disputed by other nobles (Bethlen and Somkerekí) and neighbouring Saxon communities.<sup>67</sup> Prior to this transaction in 1508, John was Beatrice's castellan of Vingard, as well as of Lipova and Şoimoş

<sup>59</sup> MNL OL, DL 82532, 82570, 89214.

<sup>60</sup> E. Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest Vlaha u Dalmaciji", *Vjesnik Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskoga zemaljskog arkiva* 16, 1914, p. 318–319.

<sup>61</sup> Thallóczy, Hodinka, *A horvát véghegyek oklevéltára...*, p. 18.

<sup>62</sup> Thallóczy, Barabás, *A Frangepán család...*, vol. II, p. 163.

<sup>63</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj (custodie BCU Cluj), Colectia Generală, Seria 2 – BCU, Nr. 130.

<sup>64</sup> MNL OL, DL 26487.

<sup>65</sup> MNL OL, DL 32569; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Bethlen de Iktár, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 66; I. Izsó, *Szemelvények a középkori montanisztika magyarországi történetének írott forrásából*, Rudabánya, 2006, p. 138.

<sup>66</sup> MNL OL, DL 37839.

<sup>67</sup> MNL OL, DL 26508, 26509, 74337; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Bethlen de Iktár, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 230; S. Barabás, *A római szent birodalmi gróf széki Teleki család oklevéltára*, vol. II, Budapest, 1895, p. 313, doc. CXCVIII.

near Arad. His deputy was a man named Cosma, maybe another Croatian.<sup>68</sup> All these forts were put under Kučić's protection by Corvinus' widow. After Beatrice Frankapan remarried to count George of Brandenburg-Ansbach in 1509, she was able to regain Lipova and Şoimoş for herself.<sup>69</sup> Yet, she died in 1510 and her widower sold out many of their possessions, and the Kučić family was confirmed as the possessor of several estates in the counties of Alba, Târnava (Hung. Küküllő) and Hunedoara, as well as in Scaunul Mureşului (Hung. Marosszék).<sup>70</sup>

Having the Vingard castle as the core of their possessions their new noble predicate was "Horváth of Vingard". The litigations with local noble families from the Alba county continued even after the estates were confirmed to the Kučićs, which led even to armed conflicts of smaller scale in 1515.<sup>71</sup> In 1512, John Kučić bought two estates in the Arad county from another Croatian noble – John Benković of Plavno, for 400 florins.<sup>72</sup> John Kučić died before 1519 after which his son Gaspar was the only representative of the family.<sup>73</sup> The Vingard castle was in the hands of the same Gaspar Horváth of Vingard in 1526, but he was ousted in 1532 by Zápolya's troops headed by his palatine Michael Keserű (not to be confused with one of the Šušalićs of Cheşereu).<sup>74</sup> Why? His courtly career started in the Jagiellonian time and he used to be *magister dapiferorum* in 1526. After Louis II's death at Mohács he became a staunch supporter of King Ferdinand and from 1527 to 1540 he was addressed as king's *locumtenens* and *magister regalium cubiculariorum*, with fiscal authority in Transylvania.<sup>75</sup> In the same capacity, he also tried to take over the fortress of Făgăraş for the Habsburgs.<sup>76</sup> His name was mentioned with the title of "captain general" in the armistice concluded between Ferdinand's and Zápolya's supporters in 1529.<sup>77</sup> He was donating some of his

<sup>68</sup> ANR, DJ Sibiu, Magistratul oraşului şi scaunului Sibiu, Colecţia de documente medievale, Seria U III, Nr. 254.

<sup>69</sup> MNL OL, DL 37849.

<sup>70</sup> MNL OL, DL 26510.

<sup>71</sup> MNL OL, DL 26525.

<sup>72</sup> MNL OL, DL 59979, 60003, 60004.

<sup>73</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj (custodie BCU Cluj), Colecţia Generală, Seria 2 – BCU, Nr. 130.

<sup>74</sup> ANR, DJ Sibiu, Episcopia Bisericii Evanghelice C.A. din Transilvania, Colecţia de documente episcopale, Nr. 70; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Székely de Adămuş, Seria 1 (Registrul 1), Fascicula nr. 1, Nr. 31; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Bethlen de Iktár, Seria 1 - Documente medievale, Nr. 165; I. Nagy, *Magyarország családai: czimerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal*, vol. VI, Pest, 1860, p. 229.

<sup>75</sup> ANR, DJ Sibiu, Episcopia Bisericii Evanghelice C.A. din Transilvania, Colecţia de documente episcopale, Nr. 101; ANR, DJ Sibiu, Capitulul evanghelic C.A. Bistriţa, Nr. 1; ANR, DJ Braşov, Fond Primăria oraşului Braşov, Colecţia de documente Stenner, Seria 2 – Latină, maghiară, germană, Volumul I, Nr. 95; ANR, DJ Sibiu, Magistratul oraşului şi scaunului Sibiu, Colecţia de documente medievale, Seria U V, Nr. 320; ANR, DJ Sibiu, Magistratul oraşului şi scaunului Sibiu, Colecţia de documente medievale, Seria U IV, Nr. 343.

<sup>76</sup> ANR, DJ Braşov, Fond Primăria oraşului Braşov, Colecţia de documente Schnell, Volumul 2, Nr. 077.

<sup>77</sup> ANR, DJ Sibiu, Episcopia Bisericii Evanghelice C.A. din Transilvania, Colecţia de documente episcopale, Nr. 124.

estates to his retainers – the Thoroczky family in 1534, until they received others of the same value by King Ferdinand. Some of them were supposed to be returned to him in 1536 when Anthony Thoroczky was to receive Iclod (Hung. Nagyiklód).<sup>78</sup> After 1536, I was not able to trace any further data on this family's actions in Transylvania, because Gaspar's activity was, by then, already transferred to other parts of Hungary. The only certain information is that afore-mentioned Anthony Thoroczky asked, in his testament dated in 1549, to be buried next to his master – Gaspar Horváth of Vingard (who died after 1540) in his foundation – the church in Torna.<sup>79</sup>

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The Šušalić (Šušeljčić) family from the village of Lukarić in Oprominje (today Lukar, once again in the municipality of Promina along the left bank of the river Krka) was based in the small fort of Hotiblić, which is even today known by the other name Šušelj, on the slopes of the Promina mountain. Their first known member was Michael (Croat. Mihovil), who was under investigation in 1507 because he left his fortress and took shelter in the town of Skradin, fleeing from the Turkish siege laid on Hotiblić. The officials cleared him of the charges, admitting that he fought bravely until he was forced to retreat.<sup>80</sup> Another Šušalić, Stephen (Croat. Stipan), possibly Michael's brother or son, was the castellan of Morović (in present-day Serbia) in the south-Hungarian county of Vukovo (Hung. Valkó) in 1512 and then Gyula in 1514–1516.<sup>81</sup> It seems that he was the founder of Békés and the Külső-Szolnok line of the family, continued by his descendants Francis (Croat. Franjo) and Peter (Croat. Petar).<sup>82</sup>

After years of scarce mentions, the family is to be found in the broader circle of bishop Martinuzzi's supporters and retainers, in the counties of Békés, Külső-Szolnok and Bihar.<sup>83</sup> In fact, in 1543, Martinuzzi gave a previously pledged and later redeemed portion of the estate Cheşereu (Hung. Érkeserű), belonging to the bishopric of Oradea (Hung. Nagyvárad), to his loyal *familiaris* Peter Horváth Šušalić of

<sup>78</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Thoroczky, Seria I - Documente medievale, Nr. 1, 33, 36; Zs. Jakó, A. Valentiny, *A torockószent-györgyi Thoroczky család levéltára*, Kolozsvár, 1944, p. 27–28.

<sup>79</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Thoroczky, Seria I – Documente medievale, Nr. 41.

<sup>80</sup> ANR, DJ Bihar (Oradea), Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 1, f. 1; MNL OL, Diplomatiikai fényképgyűjtemény (=DF) 279057.

<sup>81</sup> MNL OL, DL 37903; E. Veress, *Gyula város oklevéltára 1313-1800*, Budapest, 1938, p. 63-66, 85, 103.

<sup>82</sup> A. Csipes, *Békés megye élete a XVI. században*, Békéscsaba, 1976, p. 24–25; Gy. Kristó, *Békés megye a honfoglalástól a törökvilág végéig. Nyolcszáz esztendő a források tükrében*, Békéscsaba, 1981, p. 85–86; Gy. Benedek, "Oklevelek Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok megye volt hevesi részeinek történetéből 1501-1597", *Zounuk – A Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Levéltár Évkönyve* 13, 1998, p. 425–427; idem, *Őcsöd nagyközség oklevelei és fontosabb iratai 1297–1738*, Szolnok, 2001, p. 51–52, 83, 86, 90–91, 94–95, doc. 18, 19, 34, 35, 37, 39; idem, *Türkeve város oklevelei és iratai 1261–1703*, Szolnok, 2004, p. 160, doc. 61.

<sup>83</sup> Oborni, "Fráter György...", p. 445.

Lukarić.<sup>84</sup> Three years later, the bishop helped Peter by issuing him the genealogy of the Sassy family which was litigating with Šušalić over the same estate.<sup>85</sup> Litigation concerning the Cheşereu estate and Barathpyspeky *praedium* went on for years, since it was a joint possession of several noble families. In 1549, Peter Šušalić opposed a settlement between two other co-possessors of the estate and once again received protection by Martinuzzi who personally sentenced that the Sassy family had to enable the restitution of their estates to the Šušalić family.<sup>86</sup> In early 1550s, after Martinuzzi's death, it seems that Peter Šušalić made arrangements with King Ferdinand of Habsburg and his commanders, since the king confirmed his possession of Cheşereu, conferred his royal rights to the estate and issued several decrees in order to implement his decision (1552–1554).<sup>87</sup> He was even protected by Giambattista Castaldo, the organiser of Martinuzzi's murder.

Even five years later, when the Zápolyas regained the upper hand, Queen Isabella, the mother of King John Sigismund, confirmed Ferdinand's donation to the sons of Peter Šušalić – Michael and George and his daughter Helen (Croat. Jelena).<sup>88</sup> Once again the name Michael appears within the family, suggesting that the Šušalićs from Bihor were, in fact, direct successors of Michael Šušalić from 1507. From at least 1556, the guardian of the underage descendants of Peter Šušalić was another Croatian noble from the region surrounding the river Krka – Nicholas (Croat. Nikola) Ugrinić Šubić of Rog, a member of a lateral branch of the famous Šubić lineage. In 1556, Peter Petrović, King John Sigismund's envoy, ensured Nicholas' control over the *praedium* Barathpyspeky and the estate of Buduslău (also in the Bihor county).<sup>89</sup> Two years later, Šubić was opposing any changes in the structure of the estates as a tutor of the young Šušalićs, along with Sofia Edenffy (their mother, wife of late Peter Šušalić) and Michael Zombory.<sup>90</sup>

The same year, 1558, Michael Šušalić was no longer under tutelage and he started representing himself.<sup>91</sup> In 1562, the trial between the Šušalić and the Sassy family was renewed and the agreement was finally reached only in 1570.<sup>92</sup> Sofia Edenffy, Michael's and George's mother, issued her testament in 1575 and at the same time a small chronicle of the family, written in Hungarian, was made by an

<sup>84</sup> ANR, DJ Bihor, Fond Capitlul Episcopiei romano-catolice de Oradea, Seria 1 – Instrumenta litteralia, Subseria 1.1-Acte, Fascicula 47, Nr. w; Zs. Jakó, *A kolozsmonostori konvent jegyzőkönyvei*, vol. II, Budapest, 1990, p. 640, doc. 4777.

<sup>85</sup> ANR, DJ Bihor, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 - Familia Fráter, Nr. 12, f. 1.

<sup>86</sup> ANR, DJ Bihor, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 - Familia Fráter, Nr. 1, f. 6; *ibid.*, Nr. 7 f. 3.

<sup>87</sup> ANR, DJ Bihor, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 - Familia Fráter, Nr. 5, f. 1; *ibid.*, Nr. 7, f. 4; *ibid.*, Nr. 12, f. 2; *ibid.*, Nr. 19, f. 1.

<sup>88</sup> ANR, DJ Bihor, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 - Familia Fráter, Nr. 1, f. 9.

<sup>89</sup> ANR, DJ Bihor, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 1, f. 7, 9, 11.

<sup>90</sup> ANR, DJ Bihor, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 4, f. 4–5.

<sup>91</sup> ANR, DJ Bihor, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 4, f. 5.

<sup>92</sup> ANR, DJ Bihor, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 1, f. 2, 15; *ibid.*, Nr. 3, f. 2.

unknown author from within the family.<sup>93</sup> The document, which is still to be thoroughly investigated, may trace the links between the Bihar county and Békés/Külső-Szolnok counties Šušalićs. It seems that the family renewed two other old feuds over some buildings in Cheşereu in 1578 but they were resolved peacefully.<sup>94</sup> In 1583 two noblemen from the Satu Mare county leased a part of an estate called Resighea to Michael Šušalić.<sup>95</sup> Six years later, Michael loaned 25 florins to the same noblemen.<sup>96</sup> He got married to Petronella Sulyok from an influential family of the Satu Mare and Bihar counties and was involved in legal process concerning the division of Ladislav Zólyomy's (Petronella's grandfather) possessions.<sup>97</sup> From 1585 to 1589, Michael acted as a vice-count and noble judge of the Bihar county, presiding over many processes and administering justice.<sup>98</sup>

Sigismund, the son of Nicholas Šušalić, as well as Melchior Šušalić were mentioned around Cluj and in the present-day Mureş county (namely in Târnaveni) in the 1580s and 1590s, but it is not certain in which way they were connected with the main line from the Bihar county.<sup>99</sup> They may have descended from John Lukarić (Šušalić) who was the castellan or vice-castellan of Vác in 1542, following the death of another Croat and Zápolya's supporter, Stephen Brodarić, the bishop of Vác, and was later mentioned with his brother Simon in the Târnavă and Alba counties.<sup>100</sup>

Michael, from the main line based in Bihar, died around 1590, when a debt was collected from his possessions.<sup>101</sup> According to Hungarian genealogies, he had a son Peter who, in his turn, had only two daughters – Helen and Sophia, ending the male line of this branch of the family. Peter was still the lord of Cheşereu and he was often mentioned along with Peter Melić of Bribir.<sup>102</sup> In 1628, the estates of

<sup>93</sup> ANR, DJ Bihar, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 4, f. 7; ANR, DJ Bihar, Colecția de documente, Seria 2 (Inventar nr. 99), Nr. 24, f. 3–4.

<sup>94</sup> ANR, DJ Bihar, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 15, f. 17; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Bethlen de Iktár, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 273.

<sup>95</sup> ANR, DJ Bihar, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 3, f. 4.

<sup>96</sup> ANR, DJ Bihar, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 10, f. 4.

<sup>97</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Vécsey, Seria 2 – Documente fasciculate, Nr. 9, f. 59, 62–64; I. Nagy, *Magyarország családai: czimerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal*, vol. X, Pest, 1863, p. 403, 406.

<sup>98</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Kornis, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 189; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Bánffy, Seria 3 – Evidențe vechi de arhivă și acte fasciculate, Subseria 2 – Acte fasciculate, Nr. 69, f. 69; ANR, DJ Bihar, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 3 – Familia Fráter, Nr. 10, f. 3; ANR, DJ Bihar, Colecția de fonduri familiale, Seria 1 – Familia Ugray-Bölönyi, Nr. 7, f. 201–202.

<sup>99</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Kornis, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 180; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Gál de Hilib, Nr. 3; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Wass, Seria 2 – Documente fasciculate, Fascicula 65, Nr. 1, 8; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond fideicomisionar Jósika, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 354.

<sup>100</sup> Jakó, *A kolozsmonostori convent...*, vol. II, p. 670, 696–697, 716, 758, doc. 4894, 4989, 4990, 5069, 5227; Gy. Szarka, *A váci püspökség gazdálkodása a török hódítás korában, 1526–1686*, Vác, 2008, p. 66.

<sup>101</sup> ANR, DJ Bihar, Colecția de documente, Seria 2 (Inventar nr. 99), Nr. 13, f. 25.

<sup>102</sup> I. Nagy, *Magyarország családai: czimerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal*, vol. V, Pest, 1859, p. 160; K. Géresi, *A nagy-károlyi gróf Károlyi-család oklevéltára*, vol. IV, Budapest, 1887, p. 90–91; M. Détsky, "A pocsaji Rákóczi-udvarház", *Bihari Múzeum Évkönyve* 3, 1982, p. 97.

Šušalić went over to their cousins by the female line, the Fráter family, which was authorised by Gábor Bethlen.<sup>103</sup> The extant archive of the Šušalićs of Bihar is preserved within the archive of the Fráter family.

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Nicholas Kolunić, the captain of Senj (1496) and *magister agazonum* (master of the horses) of Jagiellonian kings (1502)<sup>104</sup>, a descendant of a family whose roots were from eastern Croatia (today a part of the Bosnian municipality of Bosanski Petrovac), had numerous possessions in the Hunedoara county and in the regions south of Karansebeş and Reşiţa (Vălişoara, Prilipeţ, Gârlişte etc.) but it is not certain whether he primarily lived there or at the court. After his death around 1503, his widow Ursula exchanged most of these estates with George of Marga and sold others.<sup>105</sup>

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Another Croat, Nicholas Benković of Plavno, was still on his possessions in southern Croatia, north of Knin, in the last years of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, defending his castle on the border with the Turks<sup>106</sup>, but became the captain of Hunedoara by 1506.<sup>107</sup> He previously came to Gyula with John Corvinus along with some other Croats (a branch of the Šušalić family, Peter Sadobrić of Skradin, Peter Grdešić of Ripač, Andrew Dudić, some of whom held the office of castellan of Gyula).<sup>108</sup> Another document from 1507 informs us that the captaincy of Hunedoara was given to him by Beatrice Frankapan, the widow of John Corvinus, who also gave Nicholas and his brother George estates near Gyula and in the Zărând (Hung. Zaránd) county in exchange for service to her and her progeny in the first generation. This decision was met by protests of some nobles who, supposedly, protected the rights of Beatrice's daughter Elisabeth (died in 1508). We do not have data on the decisions which were made in the ensuing legal process, but it

<sup>103</sup> I. Nagy, *Magyarország családai: czimerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal*, vol. II, Pest, 1858, p. 251–260; K. Benda, Gy. Kenéz, "Barbiano generális jelentése a Bocskai-szabadságharc első hónapjairól", *A Debreceni Déri Múzeum Évkönyve 1969-1970*, 1971, p. 163.

<sup>104</sup> M. Magdić, "Petnaest izprava, koje se čuvaju u arkivu senjskoga kaptola", *Vjesnik Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskog zemaljskog arkiva* 3, 1901, p. 54–55; V. Klaić, "Županija Pset (Pesenta) i pleme Kolunić (Prilog za historiju diaspore hrvatskih plemena)", *Vjesnik Hrvatskog arheološkog društva* 15, 1928, p. 11.

<sup>105</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Colecția personală Kemény József, Seria 2 – BCU, Nr. 140; F. Pesty, *A szörényi bánóság és Szörény vármegye története*, vol. III, Budapest, 1878, p. 149–151, 378–388.

<sup>106</sup> Thallóczy, Hodinka, *A horvát véghelyek oklevéltára...*, p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> ANR, DJ Sibiu, Magistratul oraşului și scaunului Sibiu, Colecția de documente medievale, Seria U V, Nr. 58; MNL OL, DL 30970; MNL OL, DF 245954.

<sup>108</sup> MNL OL, DF 232224; Kristó, *Békés megye...*, p. 85–86; L. Blazovich, *Városok az Alföldön a 14–16. században*, Szeged, 2002, p. 188.

seems that the Benkovićs kept the formerly granted estates.<sup>109</sup> The estates given to the Benković family were Kávás, Fajdas, Somos and Hégenháza, which were (at least Fajdas), after the ending of Nicholas' bloodline, passed to another Croatian from the same region – Francis Tivković of Petrovo polje who was also linked to the famous Melić (alternatively: Milić) family of Bribir.<sup>110</sup> Another Benković of Plavno, John, was in the circle of Martinuzzi's *familiars* and he sold his possessions in the Arad county to the Kučić family of Razvađe, as was already mentioned.<sup>111</sup>

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George Bojničić of Plavno and Knin was the vice-treasurer of John Zapolya's widow, Queen Isabella in the 1540s. There are many documents which testify that he collected money for the payment of tribute to the Ottoman sultan in 1543. He issued all of these documents in Gilău (Hung. Gyalu), near Cluj.<sup>112</sup> He is also found as a witness in a document issued by Martinuzzi in 1545, and was on the list of his *familiars* in 1552.<sup>113</sup> The other members of this family include Catherine (Croat. Katarina) Bojničić, the wife and since the 1550s widow of Michael Losonci-Bánffy, a member of an old Transylvanian noble family with estates in the Dăbâca (Hung. Doboka), Solnoc Interior (Hung. Belső-Szolnok) and Cluj (Hung. Kolozs) counties. Michael's and Catherine's estates were inherited by their daughter Euphrosina.<sup>114</sup> In 1569 the sources mention the same Catherine Bojničić in Târgu Mureș (Hung. Marosvásárhely), as the widow of Leonard Erdély.<sup>115</sup> Matthew, John and Gregory Bojničić, however, had most of their estates in the Zemplín (Hung. Zemplén) county in present-day Slovakia from the 1560s to 1580s.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>109</sup> MNL OL, DL 37806, 37812, 37826, 37827; Veress, *Gyula város...*, p. 44–46.

<sup>110</sup> I. Bojničić, "Kraljevske darovnice, odnoseće se na Hrvatsku. Iz kraljevskih registraturnih knjiga Libri regii", *Vjesnik Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskoga zemaljskog arkiva* 7, 1905, p. 263.

<sup>111</sup> MNL OL, DL 59979, 60003, 60004; Oborni, "Fráter György...", p. 440, 448.

<sup>112</sup> ANR, DJ Sibiu, Magistratul orașului și scaunului Sibiu, Colecția de documente medievale, Seria U IV, Nr. 419, 421, 829; ANR, DJ Brașov, Fond Primăria orașului Brașov, Colecția de documente Schnell, Volumul 3, Nr. 130.

<sup>113</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Vécsey, Seria 2 – Documente fasciculate, Nr. 7, f. 28; Oborni, "Fráter György...", p. 443, 447.

<sup>114</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Bánffy ANR, Seria 2 – Instrumente contemporane de evidență și documente după instrumente contemporane de evidență, Subseria 2 – Documente ordonate după registrul 2, Fascicula II, Nr. 17; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Bánffy ANR, Seria 2 – Instrumente contemporane de evidență și documente după instrumente contemporane de evidență, Subseria 1b - Documente ordonate după Registrul 1b, Fascicula nr. 66, Nr. 29.

<sup>115</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Suky, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 286.

<sup>116</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Sennyey, Seria 3 – Comitatul Zemplén, Acte fasciculate, Fascicula nr. 2a, Nr. 8; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Sennyey, Seria 3 – Comitatul Zemplén, Acte fasciculate, Fascicula nr. 7a, Nr. 1, 2, 11.

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The last case study for this occasion would be the one of the Petričević family of Raduč. The Petričevićs were members of a wider clan called Mogorović from the Croatian county of Lika. The village of Raduč is situated in the present-day municipality of Lovinac, south of Gospić. One branch, headed by Nicholas, son of John, came to Transylvania before 1543, possibly through connections with the Zápolyas and Martinuzzi, and settled in Bunești (Hung. Széplak). However, the most important member and the true establisher of family's fortunes was Cosma Horváth Petričević, whose career was at its height in the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He belonged to the Báthory circle and it seems that his family left Catholicism.<sup>117</sup> He had estates near the Székely Land – around Komlod, Milaș, Sânmărtinu de Câmpie, Șopteriu etc.<sup>118</sup>

Stephen Báthory named Cosma “provisor” of the Alba county by 1575.<sup>119</sup> By 1578 he also became the prefect of Făgăraș with several additional duties, including the role of the intermediary between the Székelys, Saxon communities and Transylvanian ruler, and of the collector of tithe.<sup>120</sup> It is interesting to note that a certain Michael Horváth (Croat) was the castellan of Făgăraș back in 1509 and 1510, yet his exact origin currently remains unknown.<sup>121</sup> Cosma's colleague was Michael Rác (i.e. the Serb), the royal judge of several Székely seats and prefect of Várhegy (Rom. Chinari), with whom he also traded.<sup>122</sup> The vice-provisor of Făgăraș was Nicholas, *literatus* of Besenyő, who received donations from Cosma in the Turda (Hung. Torda) county (1583). The donation of the estate Csanád led to a lawsuit of other proprietors, which lasted for years.<sup>123</sup>

There are many extant documents by which Cosma was appointed to administer borderline issues with Wallachia, control the roads and prohibit clandestine travelling or settle grievances of the citizens of Brașov and religious communities in Mediaș concerning tithes and taxes.<sup>124</sup> He also acted as a judge in

<sup>117</sup> I. Horn, *A hatalom pillérei: A politikai elit az Erdélyi Fejedelemség megszilárdulásának korszakában (1556–1588)*: doctoral dissertation, Budapest, 2012, p. 121–122, 179, 228, 264–265, 295, 358; eadem, “Magyar végvári tisztek...”, p. 103–104, 110.

<sup>118</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Jósika de Vlaha, Seria Documente medievale, Nr. 20; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond fideicomisionar Jósika, Seria 3 – Acte familii, Nr. 791, f. 1; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Haller, Seria 2, Nr. 60, f. 4.

<sup>119</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Jósika de Vlaha, Seria Documente medievale, Nr. 22.

<sup>120</sup> ANR, DJ Brașov, Fond Primăria orașului Brașov, Colecția de documente Schnell, Volumul 2, Nr. 191.

<sup>121</sup> ANR, DJ Sibiu, Magistratul orașului și scaunului Sibiu, Colecția de documente medievale, Seria U V, Nr. 125, 1903.

<sup>122</sup> ANR, DJ Brașov, Fond Primăria orașului Brașov, Colecția Documente privilegiale, Nr. 557; ANR, DJ Cluj, Colecția Documente cu peceti atârinate, Seria 1 ANR, Fond Banffy, Nr. 1, 25.

<sup>123</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Haller, Seria 2, Nr. 5, f. 1, 8, 11; *ibid.*, Nr. 69, f. 28–31.

<sup>124</sup> ANR, DJ Brașov, Fond Primăria orașului Brașov, Colecția Documente privilegiale, Nr. 1, 557, 565, 571, 572, 597; ANR, DJ Brașov, Fond Primăria orașului Brașov, Colecția de documente Fronius, Volumul I, Nr. 336; ANR, DJ Sibiu, Episcopia Bisericii Evanghelice C.A. din Transilvania, Colecția de documente episcopale, Nr. 239; ANR, DJ Sibiu, Colecția de documente ale parohiilor evanghelice

local litigations over property issues.<sup>125</sup> Cosma was keeping correspondence with Anna (Croat. Ana) Melić of Bribir, a Croatian noblewoman married first to Bernard Bánffy and then to Francis Mikola of Someşeni, exchanging advices about the household, which suggest that they had a close relationship.<sup>126</sup> Petričević died between 1592 and 1600. His sons Francis and Stephen and daughters Clara and Judith continued the family line which prospered in the decades and centuries that followed.<sup>127</sup> A member of the family – Emil Petričević Horváth wrote a series of monographs about his kindred in the 1930s and 1940s which are now somewhat outdated.<sup>128</sup>

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At this time, I prefer not to focus on the Melić of Bribir family, a branch of the Šubić kindred, since there is vast data on its activity, as well as some secondary works by József Molnár and Pál Lukcsics.<sup>129</sup> Their estates were concentrated in the north-east, in the counties of Szabolcs, Ugocsa and Satu Mare, and later also in Zemplín and elsewhere. It is known that they were closely connected with other Croatian nobles such as the Šušalić family, Francis Tivković of Petrovo polje<sup>130</sup> etc.

There were, of course, other Croats who came to the easternmost parts of the Hungarian Kingdom through their service to John Corvinus and his widow, Zápolyas or Martinuzzi, but we do not have enough space to address all of their cases.

C.A. Săteşti Preluarea 1, Seria 1 – Acte Parohia Bistriţa, Nr. 8; ANR, DJ Sibiu, Fond Capitlul evanghelic C.A. Sibiu, Seria 1 – Acte cu instrumente contemporane de evidenţă, Nr. 2, 177, 261; ANR, DJ Sibiu, Fond Parohia evanghelică C.A. Mediaş, Seria 1 – Registre, Registru de documente privind jurisdicţia ecleziastică a saşilor transilvăneni, Nr. 2, f. 99–100.

<sup>125</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Colecţia Documente cu peceti atârinate, Seria 1 ANR, Colecţia Generală, Nr. 1, 128.

<sup>126</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond fideicomisionar Jósika, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 152. The Melić and Petričević family were connected through marriage since the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>127</sup> ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Béli, Seria 1 – Documente medievale, Nr. 199; ANR, DJ Cluj, Fond familial Bánffy ANR, Seria 2 – Instrumente contemporane de evidenţă şi documente după instrumente contemporane de evidenţă, Subseria 1a – Documente ordonate după registrul 1a, Nr. 17, p. 18–22; Horn, *A hatalom pillérei...*, p. 360.

<sup>128</sup> See footnote 11.

<sup>129</sup> J. Molnár, *A Subich-nemzetségből...*, passim; I. Nagy, *Magyarország családai: czimerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal*, vol. VII, Pest, 1860, p. 411–412; P. Lukcsics, “A Bribiri Melith-család genealogiája”, *Turul* 3–4, 1934, p. 97–98; N. Kallay, “Zlatne bule Andrije II. i Bele IV. Šubićima Bribirskim”, *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 44/1, 2012, p. 209–222; I. Fazekas, “Katholische Adelige jenseits der Theiß. Ein Beitrag zur ungarischen Adelsgeschichte zwischen 1550 und 1640”, in K. Keller, P. Maťa, M. Scheutz (eds.), *Adel und Religion in der Frühneuzeitlichen Habsburgermonarchie*, Wien, 2017, p. 48–49.

<sup>130</sup> A. Jakovljević, N. Isailović, *Petrovo polje u vrelima osmanskog razdoblja (1528.–1604.)*, Šibenik, 2019, p. 135–136.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The preliminary findings I presented clearly demonstrate that an extensive further research, which should most definitely include a team of historians from ex-Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary or even from a wider region of South East Europe, would be a worthwhile effort.

The case studies show that I had to consult either old encyclopaedic literature or directly historical sources (charters, letters, notes etc.) which points to the lack of significant studies of migration of Croatian nobility to eastern Hungary, Banat and Transylvania during the period of the Ottoman threat and subsequent conquest. My modest knowledge of Romanian and Hungarian historiography and, moreover, less than basic knowledge of Romanian and Hungarian languages might have prevented me from tracing all the available literature. Yet again, intensive collaboration and exchange of information with my colleagues from both Romania and Hungary strengthen my opinion that the statement I made earlier is not essentially wrong. Even before much needed synthetic approach, a team of historians should start working on detailed case studies of notable Croatian families and individuals whose activity can be followed in a longer period and through a variety of source material.

The examples I selected are representative because they are demonstrating the possibilities of research. Both similarities and differences in careers, life paths and fate of the nobility can be observed from the given short case studies. In a more general sense, I believe that it is now established that the migrations were the result of the gradual collapse of the southern Hungarian border (which is why I call the migrants “noble refugees”) and that they were happening in phases. The first phase, linked with the actions of John Corvinus and his wife/widow Beatrice Frankapan, deserves a thorough study because it laid the foundation of the Croatian noble community in Banat and Transylvania. The second task of historians should be to analyse interconnections between Croatian nobility in the new environment (keyword: identity), ultimate establishment of affinity networks with key political players of the region (keyword: service) and marital ties with the members of local – non-Croatian, and mainly Hungarian – nobility (keyword: adaption).

neven.isailovic@iib.ac.rs

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## Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Istanbul)

Tapu tahrir defterleri

## Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (Budapest)

Diplomatikai fényképgyűjtemény  
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FORCE MAJEURE, ACT OF GOD OR NATURAL DISASTER?  
OTTOMAN MILITARY THREAT AS A CAUSE FOR EXEMPTION  
FROM CONTRACTUAL LIABILITY DURING  
THE CONQUEST OF THE BALKANS

EMIR O. FILIPOVIĆ  
(University of Sarajevo)

By the late fourteenth century unpredictable Ottoman raids on the territories of Albania, Serbia and Bosnia became a regular occurrence and precautions were usually taken in order to avert or limit potential damage of any kind. This was often expressed in written contracts in which the Ottoman threat, “fear of the Turks”, or even news about their imminent arrival were used as justification to look for shelter where people and goods could be safe until the danger passed. In certain cases, these unavoidable and inevitable incidences essentially released the interested parties from contractual liability and obligation. This paper examines such instances in which Ottoman military threat was presented as a “higher force”, a punishment from God and even as something resembling a “natural disaster”, essentially serving as an effective exemption clause which excluded coverage for the caused damage.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Empire, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia, Ragusa (Dubrovnik), caravan trade, contractual liability.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> June 1520 Pope Leo X recounted and condemned the theses of Martin Luther and his followers in a rather famous bull commonly known by its incipit as *Exsurge Domine*. Threatening to excommunicate Luther as a heretic, the pontiff completely rejected his teachings as errors, declaring them to be either “heretical, false, scandalous, offensive to pious ears, seductive of simple minds” and in general opposed to Apostolic doctrines. Among the various accusations in this lengthy list, under number 34 the Pope denounced his claim that “to fight against the Turks is to resist God as he punishes our sins through them”.<sup>1</sup>

Leaving aside the fact that this was, as claimed, “a peripheral theological point” at the time, and that in his works Luther discussed divine judgements in general rather than wars against the Ottoman Turks in particular,<sup>2</sup> this proposition nevertheless merits interest in our attempt to understand contemporary attitudes to

<sup>1</sup> “34. Præliari adversus Turcas, est repugnare DEO visitanti iniquitates nostras per illos.” (15 June 1520), L. Cherubini, *Magnum Bullarium Romanum*, vol. I, Luxembourg, 1742, p. 611.

<sup>2</sup> H.J. Hillerbrand, “Martin Luther and the Bull *Exsurge Domine*”, *Theological Studies* 30, 1969, p. 111.

advancing Ottoman armies. It confirms that Luther, at least in his early writings and sermons, viewed the Turks as God's judgement and that he thought fighting against them was equivalent to defying this judgement. Therefore, he initially assumed a position of non-resistance to the Turks since he believed them to be one of the methods used by God as punishment for the sins and moral corruption of Christendom, meaning that for him Turkish attacks were almost equivalent to floods, fires, plagues and famines, all of which were sent by God to test the faith and resolution of his people.<sup>3</sup>

Luther did change his position later on, not least because he was influenced by the rapid territorial expansion of the Ottomans and their siege of Vienna in 1529,<sup>4</sup> but his earlier sentiments were nevertheless quite representative of the prevailing belief in Christian vulnerability and defencelessness which arose from a failure to provide an adequate response to Ottoman military successes. Nowhere was this conviction more clearly expressed than during the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, which lasted from the middle of the fourteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century, and which left a deep impact on the history of the whole region, profoundly influencing its subsequent development.<sup>5</sup> During my research of the rich contacts and interactions between Ottoman soldiers and local populations in the Balkans of this time, I have found and identified a series of fascinating late medieval sources that echo Luther's early opinions on the Turks, giving a unique insight into how contemporaries perceived the Ottoman conquerors and how violence-induced change caused by Ottoman expansion affected the usual patterns of trade and migration. In fact, the documents clearly demonstrate how the very presence of the Ottoman army influenced commercial transactions and shaped legal practices that determined them, significantly impacting regional exchange and economy.

These texts, which are mostly kept today in the Dubrovnik State Archives, present the military threat of the Ottoman Turks as a "higher force", a sort of a "natural disaster", or even as punishment from God. By the late 1380s and early 1390s Ottoman raids on the territories of Albania, Serbia and Bosnia became a regular, although an unpredictable occurrence which could not be controlled or prevented. Therefore, any potential manifestation of this danger was deemed very serious and precautions were usually taken in order to avert or limit damage of any kind. This was often expressed in written contracts whereby Ottoman threat, "fear of the Turks", or even news about their imminent arrival were used as justification to look for shelter where people and goods

<sup>3</sup> K.M. Setton, "Lutheranism and the Turkish peril", *Balkan Studies* 3, 1962, p. 141–142.

<sup>4</sup> A. S. Francisco, *Martin Luther and Islam. A Study in Sixteenth-Century Polemics and Apologetics*, Leiden and Boston, 2007, p. 74–79; G.W. Forell, "Luther and the War against the Turks", *Church History* 14, 1945, p. 256–271.

<sup>5</sup> As of yet there is no one comprehensive volume that would cover this issue in its entirety, but for a detailed overview of the key questions see: O.J. Schmitt, "The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans. Interpretations and Research Debates", in O.J. Schmitt (ed.), *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans. Interpretations and Research Debates*, Vienna, 2015, p. 7–44.

could be safe until the danger passed.<sup>6</sup> In certain cases this unavoidable and inevitable occurrence essentially released the interested parties from contractual liability and obligation, meaning that many agreements settled upon in a time of immediate Ottoman danger contained an exemption clause which excluded coverage for damage caused by the Ottomans as an event which was beyond any practical control. In this way, Ottoman military threat was considered to be an overwhelming and irresistible “higher force” which interrupted the expected course of events, caused damage to property and loss of life, ultimately preventing one or both parties from fulfilling their contractual responsibilities.

The aim of this work is to shed more light on this clause and show that its recurrent inclusion in written contracts was not a mere excuse to terminate an agreement, but a realistic reflection of a tangible, constant and latent danger which interfered with the usual trading practices in the Adriatic hinterland, influencing negatively the economy of the region. By causing fear and insecurity with their low-intensity warfare in the border areas and large-scale raiding incursions deep behind the frontier, which particularly affected mobile merchants, the Ottomans steadily paved the way for their final conquest of the Balkans.

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Perhaps the most obvious and best-known instance of the described exemption clause is to be found in a fifteenth-century Cyrillic charter, now kept in the Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences in Zagreb. The document in question is in fact a trade agreement concluded in February 1449 between the Bosnian King Stefan Tomaš, who reigned from 1443 to 1461, and a certain Count Nicholas, the Vicar of Senj. The contract stipulated that both parties would invest 10,000 ducats each into a joint-stock company which was supposed to last for five years. In that time Nicholas could use the money to trade on all sides, establishing shops in Bosnia and Dalmatia, from which the king could then purchase commodities necessary for his household. The profits, as well as losses from the venture, were to be split in half, and the contract closes with a rather curious provision which declares that if Nicholas was to suffer some damages in the king's state, this would be reimbursed at the expense of the king – with the “exclusion of Turkish force”.<sup>7</sup>

The short and blunt concluding statement implied that the king of Bosnia did not want to be held responsible for losses caused by the activities of an Ottoman army in his kingdom and one may justifiably pose the question why was “Turkish

<sup>6</sup> For the development of the “fear of the Turks” motif: H.J. Kissling, “Türkefurcht und Türkenhoffnung im 15./16. Jahrhundert. Zur Geschichte eines ‘Komplexes’”, *Südost-Forschungen* 23, 1964, p. 1–18; J. Kalić, “‘Strah turski’ posle Kosova”, in *Sveti knez Lazar: spomenica o šestoj stogodišnjici Kosovskog boja 1389-1989*, Beograd, 1989, p. 185–191.

<sup>7</sup> “A što bi ga koja škoda našla u našem rusagu – da je na naš razlog, izam turske sile” (3 February 1449), Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Zagreb, čir. I – 5. See also: N. Isailović and A. Fostikov, “Ugovor kralja Stefana Tomaša i kneza Nikole Trogirana o zajedničkom trgovini (Vranduk, 1449, februar 3)”, *Građa o prošlosti Bosne* 8, 2015, p. 73–93.

force”, to borrow the phrase, cited as a reason or, indeed, as an excuse to release the king from contractual liability. But the answer is fundamentally quite simple: the ruler of Bosnia was powerless to prevent or constrain Turkish attacks, and because of this, he could not be held accountable or bear the blame for something that clearly exceeded his control.

This case is a classic example of Ottoman military threat being considered and treated as something that we could define or label today as *force majeure*, *act of God* or *natural disaster*. Namely, these are all well-known legal terms used to denote events, usually external ones, such as an irresistible intervening power that cannot be anticipated or controlled, or an unpreventable occurrence caused by the forces of nature. Such events are usually not foreseeable; they are unexpected and cannot be prevented or avoided, sometimes not even with the exercise of due diligence, precaution or foresight. Most of the time, these are natural and unavoidable catastrophes that interrupt the expected course of events; therefore, they regularly appear as a common insurance clause in contracts whereby they excuse or limit the contractual liability with which the event had interfered. In commercial agreements this can also be applied to actions undertaken by third parties that neither contracted party can control, ultimately preventing them from performing their obligations. So, it can be said that the main hallmarks of such events are: externality, unpredictability, and irresistibility.<sup>8</sup>

While going through the registers of the Dubrovnik State Archives, I came across a whole series of contracts showing all three of these characteristics to be cumulatively and demonstrably present in Ottoman military activities in Albania, Serbia and Bosnia during the late fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century. The used sources mostly, although not exclusively, come from the *Diversa Cancellariae* archival collection that consists of the miscellaneous notes and contracts recorded in the State chancery of medieval Ragusa.<sup>9</sup> The overwhelming majority of these documents are in fact written agreements between Ragusan merchants and various, predominantly Vlach entrepreneurs from the immediate Adriatic hinterland who engaged in the business of transporting goods from the coast to the continental interior.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> E. McKendrick (ed.), *Force Majeure and Frustration of Contract*, Abingdon, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Sources regarding information about medieval Bosnia from this archival collection have recently been gathered and published by E. Kurtović, *Arhivska građa za historiju srednjovjekovne Bosne. Ispisi iz knjiga kancelarije Državnog arhiva u Dubrovniku 1341–1526*, vols. 1–3, Sarajevo, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> On the medieval caravan trade between Ragusa and its hinterland, see: M. Dinić, “Dubrovačka srednjovjekovna karavanska trgovina”, *Jugoslavenski istoriski časopis* 3, 1937, p. 119–146. The issue of Vlachs in the medieval Balkans is quite a complex one with many works of varying quality written about the topic. A good starting point from the perspective of medieval Ragusan sources is: D. Kovačević, “Srednjovjekovni katuni po dubrovačkim izvorima”, in *Simpozijum o srednjovjekovnom katunu*, Sarajevo, 1963, p. 121–141, as it also tries to explain the early meaning of the term *katun* which was used to denote a basic administrative and organizational unit of Vlach communal life in medieval pastoral societies. For a brief discussion of the different ways in which Vlachs engaged in trade activities during the late Middle Ages, see: Eadem, “Učešće vlaha u trgovinskoj razmjeni tokom XIV i XV vijeka”, *Radovi Akademije nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine* 73/22, 1983, p. 79–84.

According to the sheer multitude of such contracts preserved in the Dubrovnik Archives, these men were usually responsible for all kinds of things regarding the safe transport of merchandise. They had to answer for any cargo that had been badly attached to the caravan or if the goods were spoiled upon immersion into water during the crossing of rivers. They were also bound to protect the whole consignment from theft, fire, or poor oversight, and obliged to compensate any sustained damage to its owners.<sup>11</sup> From the late 1380s, however, such contracts began including various clauses as a response to the increased military activity of the Ottoman army in their vicinity, and these provisions obviously implied that both parties wanted to additionally ensure themselves from any potential risk of being attacked. The individuals transporting the goods particularly did not want to be held responsible for any harm and loss of property incurred at the hands of the Ottoman Turks.<sup>12</sup> In certain circumstances the impending threat of the Ottoman military was so great that it was used as justification to terminate the contract completely or even to liberate one or both parties from fulfilling their contractual requirements. Therefore, these clauses usually appear in times of intensified Ottoman activity on and beyond their frontiers, during frequent and far-reaching raids that left strong traces in other sources as well.

One of the earliest preserved documents of this kind is dated to January 1388 when a group of men drew up a contract detailing how they were supposed to go by barge to the River Drin in Lezhë, in present-day Albania, and ship some wooden planks to Ragusa on behalf of a certain shield-maker called Francesco. The deal explicitly specified that in the case a Turkish, or any other enemy army obstructed the commander of the barge and the sailors from loading the wood, they were then not obliged or expected to carry out their commitment.<sup>13</sup> This is a prime example of a contract being potentially terminated on account of an assumed Ottoman military threat.

In the summer of the same year, at a time of increased Ottoman presence in Albania as well as on the borders of Serbia and Bosnia,<sup>14</sup> another comparable contract was concluded, on this occasion between a certain Hrebeljan Perutinić

<sup>11</sup> M. Dinić, “Dubrovačka srednjevekovna karavanska trgovina”, 138–139.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>13</sup> “Radauan Jechsich et Helya Boglinouich et Milos Priboeuich et Pribil Grubaceuich faciunt manifestum, quod ipsi ad melius se tenendo se obligant ire cum quadam barcha [...] ad flumen Lessi et inde conducere ligna de calpone in proximo viagio nitida et pulcra et squadrata cum illa longitudine et grossicie, de quibus fecerunt duas mensuras, scilicet ipsi ex una parte et magister Franciscus pavesarius, cui se obligant ex alia parte [...] et dicta ligna tot quot portare poterint cum barcha promiserunt dare et assignare dicto magistro Francisco pavessario omnibus suis sumptibus, laboribus et expensis descarganda in terram ad portum Ragusii. Et ex adverso magister Franciscus se obligat dictis patrono et marinariis soluere eisdem pro qualibet trabe predictarum ad dictam mensuram grossos XV, cum fuerint descargata et acceptata a dicto magistro Francisco. Verumtamen si dicti patronus et marinarii impedimento Turchorum aut malarum gentium non possint caricare, non teneantur in tali causa ad predictam obligationem [...]” (6 January 1388), L. Thallóczy, K. Jireček and M. Sufflay, *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia*, vol. 2, Vindobonae, 1918, p. 99–100.

<sup>14</sup> S. W. Reinert, “From Niš to Kosovo polje. Reflections on Murad I’s Final Years”, in *The Ottoman Emirate (1300–1389)*, Rethymnon, 1993, p. 169–211; E. O. Filipović, *Bosansko kraljevstvo i Osmansko carstvo (1386–1463)*, Sarajevo, 2019, p. 93–101.

who agreed to transport twenty loads of textiles and other merchandise from Ragusa to the market town of Prijepolje on the behalf of Bogoje Marojević. The arrangement stated that if Hrebeljan was not able to carry the said loads to the aforementioned place, due to the appearance of the “fear of the Turks” – *timor Turchorum*, or in the case of their arrival, he was required to stay with the goods and take them to a location specified by Bogoje. If he failed to do as was agreed, Hrebeljan was supposed to pay Bogoje the proper value of each lost load and all the damages that ensued from the loss.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, two years later, in 1390, a couple of men promised a Ragusan merchant that they would take his seven loads of textiles and carry them to Prijepolje. The contract explicitly indicated that should they hear “news of the Turks” along their way, the kind of which prevented them from securely continuing their voyage, they were expected to take the textiles to a safe place in the Ragusan district. In that event, they were also to be paid fully as they would have been had they managed to arrive to their final destination.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the mere “news” of a prospective Ottoman military threat was grounds enough to absolve one party from completely fulfilling their obligation. As a matter of fact, Ottoman attacks were relatively big, important and serious events meaning that any information about the movement and routes of Ottoman soldiers was, more often than not, genuine and reliable as it spread quickly among the distressed local

<sup>15</sup> “Crebeian Peruthinich facit manifestum quod ipse se obligat Bogoe Maroeuich de portando ipsi Bogoe sagmas viginti pannorum et mercimoniorum usque in Pripolle. Cum hoc pacto, quod ipse Crebeian non debeat deferere dictas somas usque ad dictum locum et si causa ceteri quod superueniret timor Turchorum vel aduentus ipsorum, quod ipse Crebeian teneatur et debeat sociare dictas sagmas usque ad illum locum quem ei nominauit et dixerit dictus Bogoe et ipsas sogmas ut premititur usque ad ipsum locum nominatum per ipsum Bogoe nunquam deferere. Quia si non fecerit et dictas sogmas non sociat et ipsi Bogoe non hoberint ipse Crebeian teneatur et debeat soluere ipsi Bogoe vallorem dictarum sagmarum verum de hiis que perderentur ac etiam omne dampnum quod ex talii perditione sagmarum ipsi Bogoe superueniret [...]” (4 July 1388), Dubrovnik State Archives (hereafter: DSA), *Diversa Cancellariae* (hereafter: *Div. Canc.*), vol. 27, fol. 135r. For more information on the caravan trade routes from Ragusa to Prijepolje in the late Middle Ages, see: R. Ćuk, “Karavanske stanice u Polimlju u srednjem veku”, *Mileševski zapisi* 2, 1996, p. 7–24.

<sup>16</sup> “Micey Clapcich Drobgnach et Bosidar Bogosalich Drobgnach, faciunt manifestum quod ipsi se obligant et promittunt Radoslao Zuetchouich, presenti et acceptanti, conducere salmas septem pannorum in Prepogle saluas. Et dictus Radoslao promittit et se obligat dare et soluere dictis Miceo et Bosidari yperperos sex pro singula salma. His pactis et conditionibus expensis inter dictas partes, videlicet, quod si in camino dicti Miceus et Bosidar auerent noua Turchorum propter quod non possent secure sequi viagium suum usque in Prepogle teneantur predicti reducere retro dictas salmas usque ad locum securum in districtum Ragusii, et sit reducendo debeant habere integrum suam nauulum predictum sicuti haberent si pertingerentur usque in Prepogle. Si vero derobatores viarum predarentur dictas salmas et equi essent salui, tunc dicti Miceus et Bosidar teneantur reficere dicto Dobroslao totum illud quod esset ablatum a dictis predonibus. Si vero dicti predones violenta manu dictas salmas simul et equos predictorum Micey et Bosidar ita quod totum simul perderetur tunc non teneantur dicti Miceus et Bossidar aliquod reficere ipsi Radoslao.” (13 August 1390), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 29, fols. 126r–126v. On the role of the Drobñjak Vlachs in the transport of goods from Ragusa to Prijepolje, see: M. Malović-Đukić, “Drobñjaci u karavanskoj trgovini Polimlja u srednjem veku”, *Mileševski zapisi* 2, 1996, p. 25–33.

population. Actually, the very reference of such danger in a contract can be considered as an announcement of a forthcoming assault, the details of which only become apparent in other sources from later times.

And as the Ottoman military pressure on the usual trade routes increased with the subjugation of the Lazarević and Branković families after the battle of Kosovo in 1389 and the conquest of Skopje in late 1391, as well as with repeated Ottoman attacks on the Kingdom of Bosnia throughout the last decade of the fourteenth century, the caravan leaders and their commercial partners from Ragusa were required to take further precautions in their mutual dealings. Commercial agreements from this period logically included provisions on what to do and how to behave in times of such danger. So even if the persons who transported goods were reluctant to accept any responsibility for damages and losses in the case of an Ottoman attack, some of them did agree to remain with the caravan and take it to a safe place, but with all the necessary precautions taken. Hence, Jurien, son of Klapac from the Drobnjaci *katun*, who appears frequently in agreements of this kind, concluded a contract with a group of Ragusan merchants in June 1392, promising to carry their cloths and other kinds of merchandise to the lands of lord Vuk Branković. He agreed to do so safely and legally, always being advised to the best of his abilities to evade damages and dangers that might occur to the cargo. And if in the case of the “fear of the Turks”, or some other armies, it proved to be expedient for the rescue of the merchandise to flee or relocate it to a secure site, Jurien was allowed to escape the situation, but not without the cargo. In fact, he was unambiguously ordered: where he would flee with “his head and person”, he would have to carry and protect the merchandise.<sup>17</sup>

Because 1392 was a year of intensive fighting between the Ottoman and Hungarian armies on the territory of Serbia,<sup>18</sup> a number of similar contracts have survived from this period. Namely, the same Jurien Klapčić, a little over a month after he had concluded the first agreement, struck up a new deal to take the cargo

<sup>17</sup> “Jurien Clapçich Drobnach facit manifestum quod ipse se obligat et promittit Iuanis Marcouch, Radoslao Bratosalich et Vitcho Medoeuich merchatoribus pro treginta sex salmis pannorum et merchanciarum pro quibus conduxerunt et nauřauerunt dictum Jurien quod ipsas eis debeat conducere et portare usque ad contratam domini Volchi Branchouich, videlicet, quod ipse Jurien fideliter et legaliter conducet dictas salmas sempre eundo auisati quam melius poterit a dampnis et periculis que euenire possent dictis salmis et mercanciis. Et si causa essent quod timore Turchorum vel aliarum gencium essent expediens pro saluamento merchanciarum predictarum aufugere vel ipsas reconducere ad locum securum, ipse Jurien illas aufuget et reconducet toto suo posse et non aufuget sine mercanciis predictis cum equis vel aliter illas post se dimittendo, scilicet, ubi aufuget caput et personam similiter aufuget et saluabit mercancias. Et si ipse Jurien facerent aliter et ob hoc dampnum aliquod occurreret dictis mercanciis dictus Jurien promixit et se obligauit dictis merchatoribus soluere et reficere omne dampnum quod reciperent in dictis suis merchanciis preterea ipse Jurien promixit et se obligauit dictis mercatoribus quod si per gentes ipso Jurien fieret aliquam furtum vel dampnum in dictis salmis et mercanciis ipse Jurien integre soluet et reficiet eisdem mercatoribus furtum illud et dapnum vel ea que eis deficerent in defectum et culpam gentis ipsius Jurien [...]” (4 June 1392), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 30, fols. 110v–111r.

<sup>18</sup> V. Trpković, “Tursko-ugarski sukobi do 1402”, *Istoriski glasnik* 1–2, 1959, p. 93–121; P. Engel, “A török-magyar háborúk első éve 1389–1392”, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 111, 1998, p. 561–577.

belonging to a Ragusan merchant and his associates, all in all 48 loads of goods, and move it to the village of a certain Pribil Kučinić who was a vassal of lord Vuk Branković. The contract stipulated that if any of Jurien's men would commit a theft or if some things would be stolen or damaged, Jurien was supposed to completely compensate all the losses his men caused. Furthermore, in the case some news about the armies of the Turks or Hungarians would appear while they were travelling with the said loads, and it happened to be appropriate to flee and save themselves for the security and safekeeping of the merchandise, Jurien was obliged, at the request of the said merchants, to return the whole consignment to Ragusa or elsewhere where it could be safe. In fact, where he was to save his head and his animals, he was also ordered to save the merchandise and not to leave it behind.<sup>19</sup>

In October of the same year a group of Vlachs likewise promised to travel to the village of Pribil Kučinić with the goods and at the request of a Ragusan merchant called Nikša de Zamagno. They were supposed to carry the cargo across Bosnia, to protect it and defend it from any persons with all their might, not leaving it in any kind of danger or exposed to potential robbery, not even in the case of the Turks or others. In fact, they agreed to defend and save both Nikša and his goods with all their might, under the pain of having to recompense both damage and interest. It was also stipulated that at Nikša's request they were to carry the merchandise along other safer ways as well.<sup>20</sup> Just two days later another contract was concluded that was almost a carbon copy of the previous one, albeit with different individuals involved. Here the men who transported the goods also promised to defend the merchant and his goods in all situations, even in the

<sup>19</sup> "Jurien filius Clapeçi Drobnach facit manifestum quod ipse se obligat et promittit ser Theodoro de Mlaschagna et eius sociis Ragusiensis per quos fuit nauicatus, videlicet, quod ipse fideliter et legaliter portabit quadraginta octo salmas eorum mercanciarum cum albergis pro precio quo inter se conuenerunt usque in villam Pribilli Cuchnich, hominis domini Volchi, et quod per gentes ipsius Jurien non fiet aliquod furtum et si fieret furtum vel dampnum ipse Jurien illis integre reficeret illud furtum et dampnum factum per gentes suas. Item quod si eundo cum dictis salmis occurreret aliquod nouum de gentibus Turchorum vel Ungarorum unde esset oportunum fugere et se saluare ab illis pro securamento et saluamento mercanciarum ipse Jurien reportabit dictas mercancias Ragusium vel alio ad locum securum ubi placuerit dictis mercatoribus et ubi saluabit caput suum et animalia ibi saluabit mercancias et ipsas post se non relinquet. Quod si non faceret et ob id dicti mercatores reciperent aliquod dampnum ipse Jurien promixit illud dampnum dictis mercatoribus integre reficere. Renuntiando. Et si causa occurreret reportandi dictas mercancias quod dicti mercatores teneantur ipsi soluere per rationem." (9 July 1392), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 30, fol. 124v.

<sup>20</sup> "Ninoe Nicholsich, Bogdan eius filius, Budiouy Goyachouich, Bogdan Jurinouich, Stoycho et Vochxa Vlatouchouich, faciunt manifestum quod ipsi promittunt et se obligant ire in presenti viago ad petitione ser Nichxe de Zamagno per viam de Bossina usque a Pribil Cuchgnich cum mercimonio ipsius Nichxe. Et ipsum mercimonium conduceris, saluare et deffendere a quibuscumque personis toto suo posse et non recedere ab ipsi mercimonio et dicto Nichxa in aliquibus periculis vel robariis tam occaxione Turchorum quam aliter, scilicet, toto eorum posse cum eorum brigata deffendent et saluabunt tam ipsum Nichxam quam eius mercimonium sub pena eis damnum et interesse. Et si etiam placeret ipsi ser Nichxe ire cum dictis mercimoniis per aliam turiorem viam quod predicti teneantur ire et conducerere ut supra." (15 October 1392), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 30, fol. 151v.

“occasion of the Turks or others”.<sup>21</sup> These two documents actually show that in certain specific circumstances the merchants wanted additional insurance and requested a kind of an armed escort for themselves and for their merchandise as well. We can only suppose that this service came at a greater cost as, unfortunately, the price paid is not stated in the text of the concluded contract.

For the year 1393 we have a further two contracts concluded by the aforementioned Jurien. In the first one he agreed to transport goods for Theodore de Prodanello, a prominent Ragusan nobleman, and his associates. The job was a big one; 135 loads of textiles, meaning 135 horses in the caravan. The second contract was almost as big, and it stipulated that he would take a hundred loads of cloth and other kinds of merchandise, for two other esteemed Ragusan businessmen: Andrew de Binzola and Simon de Bona. Both caravans were supposed to travel from Ragusa to the River Lim and the village of Pribil Kučinić, and in both cases Jurien promised not to abandon the travelling merchants and their fellows in the event of “some rumours of the Turks or other evil armies”. Additionally, he pledged to escort them to Ragusa at the petition of the said merchants if any such doubts were to occur during their trip.<sup>22</sup>

Ottoman soldiers continued to undertake relentless raiding campaigns throughout the border regions of the Balkans for several years after their success at Nicopolis in 1396. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the consequences of these attacks left significant traces in the source material from that time.<sup>23</sup> In January of 1397 a certain Herak Milošević took it upon himself to transport 43 loads of textiles and other goods for a group of Ragusan merchants to a place called Glavica, promising he would safeguard the cargo from any theft or damage, and saying he would repay

<sup>21</sup> “Vladoe Milatouich, Bayach Petanich, Bogdan Nadichnich} faciunt manifestum quod ipsi promittunt et se obligant ser Nichole de Pozza et societati ire in presenti viago ad petitione Codelin Daboouich per viam de Bossina usque a Pribil Cuchgnich cum mercimonio ipsorum Nichole et societatis. Et dicti Codelin et ipsi mercimonium conducere et conducenti facere, saluare et deffendere a quibuscumquam personis toto suo posse et non recedere ab ipso mercimonio et dicto Codelin in aliquibus periculis vel robariis tam occaxione Turchorum quam aliter, scilicet, toto suo posse cum eorum brigata deffendent et saluabunt tam ipsum Codelin quam predictum mercimonium sub pena omnis damnum et interesse. Et si etiam placeret ipsi Codelin ire cum dictis mercimoniis per aliam turiorem viam quod predicti teneantur ire et conducere ut supra.” (17 October 1392), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 30, fol. 152r.

<sup>22</sup> “Jurin Clapsich Drupinach facit manifestum quod ipse conuenit et promisit ser Theodoro de Prodanello et sociis de conducendo a Ragusii ad Lim ad Pribil Chuchnich, hominem domini Volch, salmam centum treiginta quinque pannorum ad saluamentum. Et quod non debeat defere ipsum ser Theodorum et socios propter aliquam dubium Turchorum vel aliarum gentium malefactorum quod teneatur reuertit Ragusii si aliquam dubium occurrerent in itinere ad petitionem dictorum mercatorum.” (29 April 1393), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 30, fol. 21r. “Jurien Clapsich Drupinach facit manifestum quod ipse conuenit et promisit ser Andrea Do. de Binzola et ser Simoni de Bona et aliis mercatoribus de conducendo a Ragusio ad Lim ad Pribil Cuchnich, hominem domini Volch, somam centum pannorum et mercadendie ad saluamentum. Et quod non debeat defere Lauro de Cotruli et socios mercatores propter aliquod dubium Turchorum vel aliarum gentium malefactores et quod teneatur reuertit Ragusium si aliquam dubium occurrerent in itinere ad petitionem ipsorum mercatorum.” (12 December 1393), *ibid.* fol. 88v.

<sup>23</sup> V. Langmantel (ed.), *Hans Schiltbergers Reisebuch*, Tübingen, 1885, p. 7–8. See also: E. O. Filipović, “The Ottoman-Serbian Attack on Bosnia in 1398”, in: Aşkin Koyuncu (ed.), *Uluslararası Balkan Tarihi ve Kültürü Sempozyumu – Bildiriler*, cilt 1, Çanakkale, 2017, p. 119–125.

all losses apart from those incurred at the hands of other soldiers. And if he was to sense some news about a Turkish or some other army, at the appeal of the merchants he was supposed to take their merchandise to a secure location. For that he was to be paid according to the agreed rate. Also, he was to remain with the cargo, not abandoning it until he brought it to Glavica or to a different safe place.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, in August of the same year, a couple of Vlachs arranged to organize a caravan which would transport twenty loads of goods for two Ragusan merchants to Likodra in western Serbia. They were supposed to reimburse all thefts or damages inflicted on the cargo along their way, but in the case of the appearance of a strong Turkish army or some other enemies, due to which they could not pass along their way, the said Vlachs were supposed to return the loads to Ragusa or to some other place, whereby they would be paid for this redirected transport according to the agreed tariff.<sup>25</sup> In November of 1398 Radoje Stanković, a Vlach from the Maleševci *katun*, promised a society of Ragusan merchants that he would take their goods to Ustikolina in eastern Bosnia. And if he heard some bad news about the Turks or other enemies that he could not resist, he was supposed to return the merchants and their goods to a place that they chose. If some of his associates happened to commit a theft, he was ordered to pay it back.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> “Cherach Millosseuich, Vlachus de Mallisseç, facit manifestum quod ipse conuenit cum Giucho Dobroeuich, Stiepcho Maroeuich et Giucho Raynaldi de Stanbicis, pro se et eorum sociis garauani iturus cum conuenientibus, portare de Ragusio usque ad Glauiča omnibus expensis portature dicti Cherach quadraginta tres salmas pannorum et aliarum mercanciarum dictorum Giuchi et Stiepchi et eorum sociorum quas ipsi Cherach dare voluerint ad portandum pro yperperis VII pro qualibet salma soluenda dicto Cherach pro dictis mercatoribus. Promittens ipse Cherach et se obligans dictis mercatoribus predictas salmas custodire ab omni furto et dampno quod per eius gentes fieri possim in illis. Et si furtum vel dampnum fieret in illis eidem reficere et soluere dictum saluo quantum per forciam aliorum gentium. Et si noua aliqua sentirentur de aliquo exercitu Turchorum vel aliarum gentium ipsas salmas ad omnem requisicionem dictorum mercatorum portare ad locum securum ubi fuerit requisitis per rationem dicti nauli seu portature et cum persona sua ipsas ballas sociatur et ab illis nonquam recedere donec illas portauerit ad dictum locum Glauiča vel ad locum securum.” (17 January 1397), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 32, fol. 14v.

<sup>25</sup> “Rado Stanhouich Vlachus, Pribien Pocrauçich eius socius} faciunt manifestum quod ipsi conuenerunt cum Vaxilio Paulouich et Domcho Tripetich, presentibus et conuenientibus pro se et eorum sociis garauani presentis portare eis de Ragusio usque in Lichoder, super equis ipsorum Vlachorum et omnibus eorum expensis, salmas viginti pannorum et aliarum mercium dictorum mercatorum quas eis dabunt ad portandum ad rationem yperperorum IIIIor<sup>+</sup> pro qualibet dictarum salmarum. Pro parte solutionis cuius portature dicti Vlachi fuerunt confessi recepisse a dictis mercatoribus medietatem dicti nauli illis soluendi et alteram medietatem debent habere cum posuerint dictas salmas ad saluamentum ad dictum locum. Cum pacto quod si aliquod furtum vel dampnum fieret dictis mercatoribus in dictis eorum ballis quod predicti Vlachi teneatur integre reficere et emendare ipsis mercatoribus dictum dampnum. Et si causa esset quod superueniret fortium gentium Turchorum vel aliorum inimicorum propter quod non possent tuti transire quod dicti Vlachi teneantur reconducere dictas ballas Ragusium vel ad alium locum tutum ad omnem requisicionem ipsorum mercatorum et debeant habere solutionem propter dictam reconducere per rationem et non possint nec debeant deferere cum eorum personis dictas salmas donec illas posuerint in loco tuto. Et si illas defererent et dampnum eueniret ipsis mercatoribus quod ipsi vlachi teneant dictis mercatoribus dictum dampnum reficere ad meliustenendum.” (22 August 1397), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 32, fol. 77r.

<sup>26</sup> “Radoy Stanhouich de Maleseuize conuenit et promisit Maroe de Lebro, Brathoslauo Predoeuich et Radoslao Volotich, cum eorum societate conducere salmas quinquaginta statim pannorum et mercimonii de Ragusio usque in Usticholigne. Promittens ipse Radoy et se obligans cum eorum societate

Apparently, the Ottoman threat also influenced business transactions that did not involve transport of goods from one place to the other. Namely, in February 1397 a certain Dobriey Tvrtković from Konavli near Ragusa received a hawk from Živko Mikojević, promising to take care of it, train and tame it, until the end of next August. If he lost the bird, or if the bird died of his own fault, Dobriey was obliged to pay Živko as much as the hawk was worth or give him one good mare in exchange. In the case that Dobriey had to return the hawk before the stated term because of the “fear of the Turks” – *timor Turchorum*, or some other army, he was to be paid for his work according to the established tariff and according to the time he had the hawk.<sup>27</sup> Here the unpredictable and irresistible force of the Ottoman army was used as a legal reason and valid excuse for an early termination of an agreed contract, whereby one party was released from contract liability in the case of a potential attack.

Since the first decade of the fifteenth century was marked by civil war in the Ottoman Empire the traders and their partners had a brief respite from Ottoman raiding activities and the described clause does not appear in contracts during this interval. Moreover, it seems that the Ragusans managed to achieve some kind of settlement with the Ottomans regarding the safety of their merchants.<sup>28</sup> Things, however, began to change in 1413 when the fighting between the remaining Ottoman princes escalated on the territories of Serbia and Bulgaria. In June of that

fideliter toto suo posse conducere ipsos mercatores et mercimoniam ad saluamentum. Et si sentirent aliqua mala noua Turchorum et inimicorum quibus non possent resistere quod ipse reducet toto suo posse ipsos mercatores ad saluamentum prout iure ipsos fuiert deliberatum pro meliori et quod si aliquo de eius comitiua comiceretur furtum vel damnum ab ipsis mercatoribus inferrent quod ipse Radoy soluet et satisfacient in ipso itinere. Pro quibus suprascripti Maroe, Brathoslauo et Radoslao dare et soluere promisit dicto Radoy yperperos quinque pro qualibet salma. Et sit fuerunt contenti et promiserunt obligando se ut supra una pars alteri et tanquam de obseruando predicta.” (30 November 1398), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 32, fol. 203v.

<sup>27</sup> “Dobriey Tuertchouich de Chanali facit manifestum quod ipse habuit et recepit a Giucho Michoeuich, presente et dante ipso Dobriey unam accipitrem ipsius Giuchi ad tenendum et custodiendum et mutandum usque per totum mensem augusti proxime. Promittens illa fideliter tenere, custodire et mutare usque ad dictum terminum et in fine termini dare et consignare illum mutatum. Et si defectu vel culpa dictam accipitrem perderetur vel moriretur obligauit solutorum dicto Giucho quantum valet vel ei dare I alia equa bonam placentem ipsi Giucho. Et si causa timor Turchorum vel aliarum gentium ipse Dobriey reportaret dictam accipitrem dicto Giucho ante terminum predictum quod teneatur illam recipere et ipsi soluere pro eius labore per rationem temporis que ipsam tenuit. Et dictus Giuchus debet soluere dicto Dobriey pro eius labore tenendi et mutandi dictam accipitrem per menis augusti perperos tres pro parte solutionis eius mute. Dictus Dobriey fuit confessus recepisse perperum unum. Renuntiando. Cum pacto quod si accipitre moriretur tamen mutum quod teneatur restituere dictum perperum receptum. Item fuit confessus recepisse a Vochsa Ratchouich presente et dante unam aliam accipitrem ipsius Vochse mutatam ad tenendum et mutandum pactis et condicionibus suprascriptis et pro parte dicte mute fuit confessus recepisse perperum I ut supra.” (13 February 1397), *Div. Canc.* vol. 32, fol. 118r.

<sup>28</sup> On the early relations between Ragusa and the Ottoman Empire, see: I. Božić, *Dubrovnik i Turska u XIV i XV veku*, Beograd, 1952, p. 1–22; M. Ivanović, “Cyrillic correspondence between the Commune of Ragusa and Ottomans from 1396 to 1458”, in *Srdan Rudić and Selim Aslantaş (eds.), State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, Belgrade, 2017, p. 43–53.

year Klapac Stanković, a rather prominent figure from the Maleševci *katun* of Vlachs, promised a certain Radoš Ljubojević that he would transfer his goods to the Church of St. Peter on the River Lim with forty horses. In the case Klapac failed to appear in Ragusa with his horses at the stated time, Radoš was allowed to find other horses at Klapac's expense. This clause would be valid, quite expectedly, only unless Klapac was prevented from arriving in time by news about the Turks or other armed forces, due to which it would not have been safe to travel. In that case he was not bound to come. All he had to do was let Radoš know about this in time.<sup>29</sup> Here we have an obvious example of someone possibly being prevented from fulfilling their contractual obligation, whereby they incurred no penalties in the event that the said deterrence came at the hands of Ottoman Turks.

In the next decade there is a curious lack of records such as these. We can speculate as to why that was so, especially since Ottoman military activities did not subside in this period, but one possibility might be that both the traders and the Vlachs from the hinterland began taking greater care and refrained from travelling or trading in times of overt danger. Indeed, in certain extreme cases the Ragusan government strictly prohibited its merchants from going to those areas that were gripped by war.<sup>30</sup> This, however, did not mean that the clause completely died out, as there are still a few available examples from the 1420s and 1430s that shed some light on this practice.

In the spring of 1424 there was a heavy Ottoman attack on the Kingdom of Bosnia, intended to punish the independent activities of the Bosnian ruler who was an Ottoman vassal.<sup>31</sup> The repercussions of these raids were felt until summer as can be seen from the fact that a potential renewed attack against Bosnia is mentioned in a couple of contracts concluded in July that year. In the first of them, a company of Ragusan merchants were assured by Bogeta Nenković that their goods would be carried safe and sound on a caravan consisting of 34 horses, to Vrabač in Bosnia, or, if the merchants wished so, as far as Konjic, with the usual promise that their cargo would be well taken care of. If some damage happened to the goods on the account of Bogeta's fault or mistake, or indeed, of his associates, he was supposed to pay. If thieves and robbers attacked the caravan, Bogeta and his companions were to cautiously defend and remove the merchants from this situation, along with their

<sup>29</sup> "Clapaç Stancouich promisit et se solemniter obligavit Radosio Gluboeuich hinc ad dies decem proximos venire ad ciuitatem Ragusii cum equis quadraginta et cum ipsis recto tramite portare mercantias dicti Radosii et eius socii usque Ecclesiam sancti Petri in Limo. Et hoc ideo quia dictus Radossius promisit dare dicto Clapaç perperos quinque et grossos tres pro singulo equo. Et in causa quo non veniret ad terminum suprascriptum cum dictis equis ad ciuitatem Ragusii ad portandum dictas mercancias quod tunc ipse Radossius possit reperire alios equos sumptibus dicti Clapaç saluo quod si interim sentirentur aliqua noua Turchorum vel aliarum gentium armorum propter quas iter non esset tutum quia tunc non teneatur venire, scilicet, solum indicare dicta noua dicto Radosio. Et si aliquod furtum committerent illi de societate dicti Clapaç in mercanciis quod dictus Clapaç teneatur illud furtum emendare." (5 June 1413), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 39, fol. 264v.

<sup>30</sup> A. Veselinović, "Zabrane i prekidi trgovine u Srbiji u doba Despotovine", *Istorijski glasnik* 1–2, 1983, p. 25–42.

<sup>31</sup> Filipović, *Bosansko kraljevstvo i Osmansko carstvo (1386–1463)*, p. 279–281.

goods. At the very end of this lengthy contract, it was additionally stipulated that in the case some Turks entered Bosnia or if some other news would follow in the meantime, preventing the merchants to take up the journey or causing them to have second thoughts about their trip, then Bogeta would not be paid for the horses he brought to Ragusa.<sup>32</sup> In this instance the merchants ensured themselves from having to pay for the horses that they could, in certain circumstances, not be able to use.

Just three days after this contract was concluded in Ragusa, Klapac Stanković and Dubravac Milićević drew up a similar deal. They promised to take a caravan of goods to Prijepolje, keeping it safe and inviolable at all times from any risks and dangers, including those that might arise from the local Slavic lords and certain special persons, with one exception being the Turks.<sup>33</sup> This means that the two men were quite ready to cover all damages and expenses the caravan could incur during their trip, apart from those inflicted by the Ottoman Turks. Consequently, this is one more case in which imminent military threat of the Ottomans was used as a pretext to liberate one contracted party from completely fulfilling their obligation.

<sup>32</sup> “Bogheta Nenchouich Vlachus super se et super omnia sua bona obligando promisit ser Federicho Raphaelis de Goze, Dobrie Veselchouich, Nixa Vochoeuich et Voynaç Vochoeuich, mercatoribus Ragusii, presentibus et stipulantibus, dare et conducere Ragusium ipsis mercatoribus usque ad diem vigesimam presentis mensis equos triginta quatuor, bonos et sufficientes pro salmis portandis et personas sufficientes pro ipsis equis et salmis. Et ipsos equos habet onere in Ragusio ex salmis mercanciarum ipsorum mercatorum et aliorum suorum sociorum quas sibi dare voluerit et ipsas salmas mercanciarum bene ordinatas et cum equis predictis et personas opportunis portare usque Vrabaç saluas et illesas, et si dictus mercatoribus placuerint etiam usque Cogniç et de ipsis salmis tam die quam nocte bona solcite et dilligenter curam habere. Et si causa culpa vel deffectu ipsius Boghete et sociorum suorum vel ex eo quod male ligate et ordinate essent ipse salme et equi debiles in aliquo damnificarentur vel perderunt quod ipso causa dictus Bogheta ad emendam et solucionem eius de quo damnificate esset siue perditum foret vel acceptum ex eis teneatur et obligatus sit. Et si casu aliquo per predones et robatores fieret inuasio et insultum contra eos mercatores et salmas predictas quod dictus Bogheta et socii sui cum ipsis mercatoribus esse et stare sedulo teneatur et debeat ad euicionem et deffensam ipsorum mercatorum et salmarum predictarum. Pro solucione quarum salmarum si portate fuit usque Vrabaç promiserunt ipsi mercatores prenominati eidem dare et soluere yperperos tres et dimidium ad rationem cuiuslibet salme, et si eas portaret usque Cogniç eidem dare et soluere teneatur ad rationem yperperorum quatuor pro qualibet salma. Cum hac conditione quod si conductis dictis equis Ragusium ipsi mercatores omnes ipsos equos supra promissos non vellent quod pro omni equo quem dimiserunt ex ipsis sibi soluere debeant yperperos duos. Et si ipse non conduceret dictos equos XXXIII<sup>o</sup> quod pro omni equo ommissio conducere teneatur solucione ipsis mercatoribus yperperos quatuor. Cum hoc etiam pacto, quod si causa aliquo Turchi intrarent Bosnam vel alia nouitas sequiretur isto interim adeo quod impedaretur inter et dubitarent ipsi mercatores de itinere eo causa dicto Boghete pro equis conductis nichil soluere teneatur. Que omnia vicissim attendere adimplere et obseruare promiserunt partes predictae.” (12 July 1424), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 42, fol. 295v.

<sup>33</sup> “Clapaç Stancouich et Dubrauaç Milichieuich} promiserunt super se et omnia ipsorum bona ad meliustenentem portare et conducere omnibus ipsorum expensis triginta salmas pannorum siue aliarum mercanciarum usque ad quadraginta quot erunt necessarie Grubacio Cranienuich et Milecte Pribetich et aliis mercatoribus euntibus cum presenti carouano saluas et illesas ab omnibus risiciis et periculis tam dominorum quam spetialium personarum excepto a Turchis in Pripoglo. Et dicti Grubatius et Milecta promiserunt pro se ipsis et pro aliis mercatoribus pro quibus promiserat de rati habitatione dare et soluere dictis Clapaç et Dubrauaç pro quolibet salma condotta ad dictum locum yperperos quinque cum dimidio.” (15 July 1424), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 42, fol. 296v.

The years that followed constituted a period of intensive strengthening and consolidation of Ottoman authority over the territories of Serbia and Bosnia, meaning that the majority of traditional trade routes eventually came under Ottoman control. Furthermore, after a period of gradual accommodation and adaptation all interested parties became acquainted with the new conditions and terms of commercial exchange meaning that there was less need to include such exemption clauses in contracts. Even so, this did not mean that Ottoman military operations completely stopped and there are still several recorded occasions when contractual partners sought to avoid incurring possible damages by resorting to the described insurance provision. For example, in the year 1435 a certain Vlach Drobnjak by the name of Gradisav Kovačević promised a Ragusan wool-worker that he would transport for him the value of a hundred gold ducats in textiles to Sjenica and other lands of the Vlachs. In the text Gradisav promised to stay with the wool-worker and his goods, saying that he would protect him, his merchandise and animals from any damage, except from losses that would arise from the violence inflicted by the forces and soldiers of the Turks, or of two other well-known Bosnian nobles – Voivode Radosav Pavlović and Voivode Stjepan Vukčić.<sup>34</sup> Also, in December of the same year, Miroslav Novaković swore that he was going to safely conduct a caravan of goods belonging to Cvjetko Vlakanović and his associates to Komarane. He stated that he would save the merchandise from any danger of theft, fire, water, robbery or threat of any other soldiers, excluding the risk of Turkish violence which, “God forbid”, was seen as grounds enough to absolve the said Miroslav from responsibility for the transported loads.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> “Gradissauus Chouazeuich, Vlachus Dropgnach, super se et bona sua promisit et se obligauit Dobrassino Braicouich lanario presenti et stipulanti eundem Dobrassinum cum mercanciis ipsius proprii Dobrassini, videlicet, pannorum ad valutam centum ducatorum auri, ad saluamentum ab hinc conducere in Senizam et alias partes et contratas Vlacorum ubi melius videbitur, in quibus finire possit dictas suas mercancias, et abinde huc eum reducere ad saluamentum, cum animalibus et mercanciis suis quas emerit et conducere voluerit. Cui Dobrassino tam eundo quam stando et reduendo cum dictis suis mercanciis ut prefertur si damnum vel impedimentum illum fieret teneatur ipse Gradissauus, eum et res et mercancias et animalia eius franchas liberare et sine damno conservare. Eo tamen saluo et excepto quod a violentia quia fieret sibi per potenciam et exercitu Teucrorum, voiuode Radossau et voiuode Stipani [...]” (26 July 1435) DSA, *Diversa Notariae* vol. 20, fol. 50r.

<sup>35</sup> “Mirossauus Nouachouich, frater Vlatchi, se solemniter obligando et per aptay renutiando promisit Cuietcho Vlacanouich et sociis carauani, venire die mercuri proxime futuri cum bonis et sufficientis equis vel equabus Ragusium et ibidem leuare et caricare salmas decem et nouem pannorum dictorum Cuietchi et sociorum et eas una cum Clapaz Stanchouich aut eius filio Vlatcho, conducere ad saluamentum usque in Comarane, villam domini dispoti Sclauonie, precio iperperos decem cum dimidio pro qualibet et singula salma. Pro parte quorum denarios ex nunc dictus Mirossauus confessus fuit recepisse a dicto Cuietcho grossum unum, residuum habere debet cum conduxerit ut supra dictas salmas recipere in se dictus Mirossauus omne periculum furti, ignis, aque, rapine et alterius gentis periculi, saluo quam periculo violentis Turchorum, quod Deus auertat, quo causa interuenientis ad nichilum teneatur idem Mirossauus pro dictis salmis. Cum pacto quod non veniente dicto Mirossauo et attendentis ut supra ad vecturam dictarum pannorum, quod dictus Cuietchus et socii possint accipere alios vecturales expensis, damno et interesse dicti Mirossau, et etiam cum pacto quod si prohiberetur pro dominum Ragusii de conducendo dictas salmas, quod presens pactum sit nullius valoris et teneatur Mirossauo Nouachouich restituet dicti yperperis ut supra receptis pro parte. Et declaratum quod dicti Cuietchus et socii non possint

The final example we will concentrate our attention on comes from 1464, almost a year after the Ottomans managed to conquer the Bosnian Kingdom and in a period of intensive conflict against the Hungarians. The contract was composed in the office of the Ragusan notary public and concerned a loan of 17 gold ducats that Milorad Radovinović, also known as De Buchia, borrowed from Radoslav Radonjić, who was also known as Messita. Two men were named as guarantors for the debtor and pledged that they would settle the debt to the creditor by paying three ducats annually until the loan was completely recompensed. They also declared that they would not be bound to pay the money in the case and for the duration of war, attacks and the violence of the Turks, or the plague.<sup>36</sup>

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The recurring presence of the described insurance clause in contemporary business arrangements necessarily implies that Ottoman attacks, which resulted with damage and loss of property, were a realistic, as well as a relatively common and frequent occurrence. Otherwise the contracted parties would not have gone through the trouble of mentioning them in their agreements at all. As it stands, the tangible, constant and latent danger the Ottomans posed throughout their conquest of the Balkans had to be taken into account and considered prior to the commencement of many commercial transactions. One can only speculate as to how many times the merchants ended up on the receiving end of such assaults before it became almost routine to include this provision in their contracts. And the written examples presented in this work concern only those instances when people had no other choice or were actually brave enough to take the risk of completely losing their merchandise, investment and profit to the Ottoman Turks. It can be assumed that a greater deal of traders did not want to gamble or jeopardize their

caricare et ponere supra singula salma ultra pannos sex. Et teneatur et debeat ire et se reducere cum carauano quo voluerant mercatores ipsorum pannorum et non delinquere ipsos mercatores.” (8 December 1435), DSA, *Div. Canc.* vol. 49, fol. 183v.

<sup>36</sup> “Pauchus Dabisiuouich de Tribigne et Milich Radouinouich super ipsos et omnia eorum bona se constituerunt plegios et principales pro Milorad Radouinouich dicto De Buchia, debitore Radossau Radognich dicti Messita de ducatos auri sedecim pro carta Notarie publicatam manu ser Bartholomei de Sfondratis de Cremona, notarii comunis Ragusii in 1461, die XXIII januarii et de pluri de ducato uno mutato per dictum Radossauum dicto Milorad ultra debitum carte, de soluendo dictos ducatos decem septem in hunc modum et ad hos terminos, videlicet, ducatos tres quolibet anno usque ad completa solutionem dictorum ducatorum XVII. Declarando quod si esset guerra aut impetus et vis Turcorum aut pestis quod durante guerra impetu et vi Turchorum aut peste, predicti plegii non teneantur ad soluendum, scilicet, remota guerra vel Turcorum aut peste teneatur ad solutionem predictam. Hoc etiam expresso et declarato quod si predicti plegii non attenderent ad solutionem predictam quolibet anno ut dictum est quod dictus Radossauus possit exigere a dictis plegiis totum illud quod restaret ad soluendum de suprascriptis ducatis XVII. Et quod dictus Radossauus illud quod recipiet teneatur subscribere sub carta aut sub presenti pacto.” (4 March 1464), DSA, *Diversa Notariae* vol. 47, fol. 152v.

saleable assets in this way, and that they avoided such situations altogether. The majority were probably forced to shift their business activities to other areas which were perhaps less profitable or commercially viable, meaning that the Ottoman military caused a significant disturbance in the previously existing trading networks and patterns.

But from the Ottoman perspective, there was an obvious rationale to all of this. Apart from the treasure attained through pillage and plunder, their raiding activities in the cross-border fault lines also served to highlight the contrast between the lands ruled by the Ottomans and those that were not. Namely, the Ottomans only attacked merchants in the proverbial *Dar al-Harb* or the “domain of war”, as opposed to their treatment in the *Dar al-Islam* on the other side. In territories under Ottoman jurisdiction the situation was completely reversed from the presented examples, and as the Ragusans themselves testified on many occasions, their merchants were well protected there.

Thus it can be said that the instigation of fear and insecurity with low-intensity warfare was just another tool in the Ottoman arsenal, an integral segment of their methodical, pragmatic and practical approach to the conquest of the Balkans, as well as an effective and persuasive bargaining chip that could pressure the local population to ultimately accept their rule, steadily paving the way for complete Ottoman domination of the whole region.

That is also why Ottoman military threat gradually stopped appearing as an excuse from contractual liability in Ragusa, becoming virtually extinct by the 1430s, especially after Sultan Murad II issued a charter to the commune of Ragusa in December 1430, stating that nobody was allowed to harm them in any way, and that their merchants could: “travel freely along the whole land of my lordship, trading legally where ever they go in the western and eastern sides, by land and by sea, in Serbia, in Albania, in Bosnia, and in those lands, and towns, and counties of my lordship that are in my lordship’s charter”.<sup>37</sup>

By that time the Ottomans had managed to subdue any existing resistance and establish their authority over most of the local Slavic and Albanian lords, meaning that the aforementioned demonstration of military power was no longer necessary. But it can be said that before then, their relentless disruptive activities were seen by contemporaries as something that was entirely beyond any control; an act of a higher force that could not be prevented, resisted or stalled, and that in its essence fully resembled the characteristics of inevitable natural disasters – hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, or floods.

filipovic@europe.com

<sup>37</sup> (6 December 1430), Ć. Truhelka, “Tursko-slovenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive”, *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini* 23, 1911, p. 5–6; Lj. Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, knj. I/2, Beograd – Sremski Karlovci, 1934, p. 229–231.

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