

## THE BLACK SEA AND THE BALKANS UNDER OTTOMAN RULE\*

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### Özet

Anadolu Platosu ve Balkan Yarımadası, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ana ağırlık merkezleriydi. Anadolu ve Balkanlar'daki Osmanlı fetihleri pek çok etkenin neticeleridir. Bizans'ın zayıflaması, Osmanlı fetihlerine giden yolu açmıştır. Bu yüzden, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu önemli miktarda Ortodoks Hıristiyan nüfusu idare etmiştir. Osmanlılar'ın süratli genişlemesi, Osmanlı imparatorluk zihniyetinin bir sonucudur. Bu makalede evvela Osmanlı fetihleri ve bu fetihlerin psikolojik ve siyasi yönleri bilhassa Balkan Yarımadası bakımından ele alınacaktır. Karadeniz Havzası da imparatorluk için son derece önemliydi. 18. yüzyıla değin Karadeniz'de Osmanlılar'ın karşısında bir rakip bulunmamaktaydı ki Karadeniz bu dönemde neredeyse bir "Osmanlı Gölü" haline gelmişti. İkinci olarak, Karadeniz'in siyasi ve iktisadi bir bölge olarak önemine değinilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Balkanlar, Karadeniz, Osmanlılar

### Abstract

The Anatolian Plateau and the Balkan Peninsula were the main power bases of Ottoman Empire. Ottoman conquests in Anatolia and Balkans were consequences of many factors. The decline of Byzantium, paved the way for Ottoman conquests. Thus the Ottoman Empire, ruled a significant Orthodox Christian population. The rapid Ottoman expansion was the consequence of Ottoman imperial mind. The first aim of this article is to focus on Ottoman conquests and their political and psychological aspects regarding especially the Balkan Peninsula. The Black Sea Basin was very important for the empire. There was no rival to the Ottomans in the Black Sea until the 18<sup>th</sup> century; it was almost an "Ottoman Lake". The second aim of this article is to show the importance of Black Sea as a political and economic zone.

**Key-words:** Balkans, Black Sea, Ottomans

## INTRODUCTION

Ottoman Empire, born out as one of the emirates in western Asia Minor ("Bithynia" region of the Byzantine Empire) in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, was able to become the dominant power of Asia Minor and Europe as well in the following centuries. There were other emirates which declared their indepen-

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dence during the turmoil after the disintegration of Seljuk Empire in Anatolia. Historical data shows that some of those emirates were stronger than the Ottomans both politically and militarily. As a consequence, Ottoman conquests targeted Byzantine possessions. Ottoman victories against the Byzantine Empire also strengthened the Ottoman position vis-à-vis other emirates. Internal conflicts and the decay of the Byzantine central administration and external threats posed by Serbia and Bulgaria in the Balkans created a fertile ground for Ottoman advance.

Ottoman raids against the Byzantine Empire in consequence increased the prestige of the Ottomans amongst other Anatolian emirates, and caused the influx of warriors (sing. "Ghazi") into the Ottoman territory. Paul Wittek emphasized the role of Ottomans as a "warrior state" fighting with a religious zeal, conducting an endless war against the "infidel" with the purpose of widening dar'al-Islam (abode of Islam). However, Wittek exaggerated the concept of religious warfare. There are many instances in the Ottoman history showing Ottoman pragmatism and flexibility in foreign affairs. The Ottoman example was not unique. Contrary to the well accepted assumption, religious differences were not always the main determinants of medieval foreign policies. Maritime states of Italy, like Venice and Genoa, didn't hesitate to develop peaceful relations with the Ottomans, against all the prohibitions declared by the Pope concerning especially the trade with Muslim states. So it is very clear that the practice of Byzantines and maritime states of Italy referring to Ottomans as "infidels", or the Ottomans calling those the same, ceased for the sake of political and economic interests, consequently ended "Holy War" and leading to development of close relations with each other. Religious differences were mostly remembered at the times of conflict and used to legitimize the war. From that point of view, it is not surprising to see Venice, one of the main supporters of the Crusades against Muslims, as the first Christian state to obtain commercial privileges from a Muslim state, the Ayyubids, at the end of the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> It seems that religion was not the only determinant in the foreign policy perceptions of powers at that time, especially regarding maritime republic of Venice. They preferred a flexible foreign policy in order to protect their interests.

It is evident that even before the Ottomans, a culture of peaceful coexistence started to develop in Anatolia. Cities and towns with mixed populations inevitably were places of contact and interaction. However, the role of religious warfare can't be ignored completely. It was one of the dominant factors especially in the border areas of Seljuk and Byzantine empires. According to Paul Wittek; those areas ("uc", in Turkish) and conditions existing there, were very different from cities and towns, and border areas of both sides were very similar in many aspects. They were populated with

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Theunissen; *Ottoman-Venetian Diplomats: The Ahd-names*, Rotterdam, 1960, p:4

people always ready to fight (Byzantine warriors were named as *akritai*) whose main economic activity was booty and plunder.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the first part of this paper will deal with issues like the status of non-Muslims in territories ruled by Muslims in Anatolia, the relations between each group and contacts. Also, the decline of the two empires (Byzantine and Seljuk) and the resultant power vacuum that emerged as a result should be examined in order to fully show the conditions which paved the way for the rise of other power centers in Anatolia and Balkans, including the Ottomans.

The term "Balkan" is a Turkish word which means "thickly wooded mountain range"<sup>3</sup> and also it's the name of a mountain range passing modern Bulgaria in east-west directions. The Ottoman name for Balkan Peninsula is "Rumeli", "the land of the Romans". The Ottoman Empire was a Balkan-Anatolian empire especially before the conquests of Selim I's (including Syria and Egypt) in 1520s. The second part of this paper will give a brief survey of Ottoman imperial mindset while touching upon the nature of Ottoman conquests. It will try to provide answers for the following questions often asked: How the Ottomans managed to expand their territories in a relatively short period and rule a very mixed population for many centuries? It will also demonstrate the importance of Balkans for the Ottomans as the core region of the empire with Anatolia.

The Balkan Peninsula is surrounded with the Black Sea in the east and it's a fact that prohibits us from studying their histories separately. Their history interwoven with those of others forces us to use a broader perspective. Fernand Braudel refers to the Black Sea as a part of the "Mediterranean World". This view is strengthened with the foundation of Greek colonies in the antique period which were in the following centuries to become Latin colonies on the coasts of Black Sea with their vivid commercial life. The third section of the paper will examine Ottoman policies regarding the Black Sea especially during the rule of Mehmed the Conqueror. The decline and destruction of the Golden Horde and the emergence of the Crimean Khanate and the latter's status within the empire will also be included in my analysis. Istanbul, with its huge population, was the biggest consumer of food in the empire. The Ottoman sultans were forced to provide a sufficient amount of grain and meat for their subjects at a reasonable price. A rise in the food prices could trigger uprisings which would end up even with the dethroning of sultan. Thus food provisioning for the imperial capital was one of the main concerns of every sultan. For this reason, the importance of

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Wittek; *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Doğuşu [The Rise of the Ottoman Empire]*, (Trans. By:Fatmagül Berktaş), Pencere Yayınları, İstanbul, 2000, p.29

<sup>3</sup> Sir James Redhouse; *Redhouse Sözlüğü (Türkçe/Osmanlıca – İngilizce)*, Sev Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1998, p:129

Black Sea Basin as the “granary” of empire will be shown in the third section.

### **THE DECLINE OF BYZANTINE AND SELJUK EMPIRES: THE EVE OF THE OTTOMAN CONQUESTS**

Beginning from 293 to 305, the Roman Empire was ruled according to the new administrative structure introduced by the Emperor Diocletian. Known as “Tetrarchy” (“The rule of the fours”), the empire was ruled by two emperors, bearing the title of Augustus, and each had serving under them a deputy, named Caesar who was to succeed the Augustus. The senior Augustus was to rule the eastern portion of the empire.<sup>4</sup> Emperor Constantine, son of Constantinus, succeeded his father as the Augustus of the Western Empire, from 312 on publicly supported Christianity and after a long struggle to control the empire against his rivals, was able to restore his rule. In 324, Constantine the Great chose Byzantium, an old colony at the mouth of Bosphorus, as his imperial seat and renamed it “Constantinopolis nova Roma”.<sup>5</sup>

The very term “Byzantine” is a product of the later centuries. The subjects of the empire called themselves “Romans” or “Christians”<sup>6</sup>, and the emperors always claimed to be the successors of Roman emperors. As put forward by Donald M. Nicol:

*“Byzantine is a convenient term to describe the culture of the medieval world that centered on Constantinople. It was not a word that the inhabitants of that world were in the habit of employing. They saw themselves as Romans or Romaioi, and their empire as that eastern portion of the Greco-Roman world of antiquity which had, by God’s grace, survived all the catastrophes and changes that had afflicted the western part of the old Roman Empire.”*<sup>7</sup>

In a palace coup in 476, the last of the Roman Emperors in the West, Romulus, was deposed by his barbarian general Odoacer, and the latter set up himself as king in Italy.<sup>8</sup> In the following centuries the Byzantine Empire faced new threats in almost every direction: Persia and Muslim Arabs in the east, and the Huns, Avars, Slavs, Bulgars and Pechenegs in the west. The possessions of the empire faced fragmentation; however, it was still a glorious empire, ruling a vast area in the Near East.

In Byzantine ideology, all groups outside the orbit of Byzantine Empire were regarded as “Barbarians”. The Empire dealt with them in different ways. Settling them in border provinces and benefitting from their military

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Sarris; “The Eastern Roman Empire from Constantine to Heraclius (306-641)”, (in) Cyril Mango; *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p.19

<sup>5</sup> Cyril Mango; “Introduction”, (in) Cyril MANGO; *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p.2

<sup>6</sup> Averil Cameron; *The Byzantines*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007, p.1

<sup>7</sup> Donald M. Nicol; *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261-1453*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p.1

<sup>8</sup> Sarris; op.cit, p.40

power was an important method. In diplomatic level, sending crowns to their leaders as an act of claiming suzerainty, playing off one group against the other and triggering internal strife by supporting rival chieftains, a divide and rule policy supported by the famous “Byzantine intrigues”, were the other methods that served the survival of the empire. However, the most important Byzantine solution was converting those “pagans” into true Christians. This policy shaped both the religious and cultural map in the Eastern Europe. Byzantine missions spread over the Black Sea Basin. The Bulgars, a Turkic tribe with a strong Slavic element, under Khan Boris accepted Christianity in 860s and in the following centuries Christianity was to become the dominant religion in the Balkans. Circa 988, Princess Olga’s grandson Vladimir was baptized, and a religious mission was sent to Kiev. In an effort to convert the Hungarians, a monk named Hierotheos, was appointed as the “Bishop of Tourkia (Hungary)”.<sup>9</sup> However, “baptizing” as a foreign policy instrument, didn’t work all the time. The Orthodox Bulgars and Serbs together with Russians were to cause trouble for the empire in the following centuries.

The population of Eastern Anatolia consisted mainly of Armenians and monophysite Jacobites and had weak ties with the empire.<sup>10</sup> The disputes over religious matters and the Byzantine policy aiming at the subjugation of Armenian Church and persecution of Armenians, made things even worse. Constantine X, in the search of new sources of revenue, disbanded the Armenian militia forces (50.000 men) whose members had certain privileges like tax exemptions. Then he re-imposed the taxes. With John J. Norwich’s words:

*“Thus it was that Byzantium lost an invaluable buffer state and gained instead, not an Armenian bulwark as it had hoped, but what might a century ago have been called an Armenian Question- a disaffected and discordant minority within the Empire which created more problems than it solved. The Armenian princes, left to themselves, would have put up as stiff a resistance to the Muslim invaders as they always had ; now, demoralized and resentful, they found themselves wondering whether even conquest by the Turks would prove appreciably worse than their present subjection to the Greeks.”<sup>11</sup>*

The tension between Greek and Armenian elements of the Byzantine society was really high. When Romanus visited Sebastia (modern Sivas in Turkey) during his campaign in 1069, the Greek inhabitants complained to him that *“when Sebastia had been sacked by the Turks (1059), the Armenians had been more violent and un pitying toward the Greeks than had the Turks themselves! So it was that Romanus ordered his troops to attack Sebasteia, a*

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Shepard; “Spreading the Word: Byzantine Missions”, (in) MANGO; *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p.231

<sup>10</sup> Claude Cahen; *Osmanlılardan Önce Anadolu [La Turquie Pré-Ottomane]*, Trans:Erol Üyepazarci, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2008, p.7

<sup>11</sup> John Julius Norwich; *Byzantium (The Apogee)*, Penguin Books, London, 1993, p.341

*Byzantine city, and then he swore that he would destroy the Armenian faith.*"<sup>12</sup>The victory of Seljuk armies under the command of Sultan Alp Arslan at the Battle of Manzikert (Tr. Malazgirt) in 1071 was a turning point in the history of Anatolia. The Turkic mercenaries serving in the Byzantine army deserted the Emperor and joined the Seljuk army.<sup>13</sup> The Seljuk Sultan released the captured Emperor Romanos and his release caused a civil war which left the Byzantine territory unprotected in the east. The arrival of Oghuz Turks began not in style of raids for booty, but with the purpose of settling in the newly conquered territories. Turkification was a long process to last centuries that was fed by the massive influx of new settlers. Paul Magdalino states:

*"Thus, twenty years after the battle of Manzikert, the Turks were established on the west coast of Asia Minor, and their occupation was progressing beyond the nomadic stage: a branch of the Seljukid family was creating the nucleus of an independent sultanate behind the walls of Nicea, in the Asiatic hinterland of Constantinople, while in Smyrna an emir called Tzachas, who had spent some time in Byzantine service, had built himself a fleet with which he was attempting to capture the Aegean islands."*<sup>14</sup>

The Seljuks invaded most parts of Anatolia and moved their capital to Nicea (Tr. İznik), a city located just a few hundred kilometers south of Constantinople. That was regarded as a real threat by the Emperor so he asked Pope Urban II for help against the Seljuks in 1095, and that was a perfect justification for entering the Byzantine lands.<sup>15</sup> However, the arrival of Crusaders created trouble not only for the Seljuks but also for the Byzantine Empire, while the undisciplined flock looking for booty passed through the Balkan Peninsula and finally reached Constantinople still pillaging whatever they could find. The emperor quickly transported them to Anatolia to save the capital.<sup>16</sup> The emperor now had to deal with the Latins too. Nicea was conquered in 1097 and handed over to the Byzantines. The imperial seat of Seljuks was moved to Iconium (Tr. Konya).The Crusaders finally reached Jerusalem in 1099. But problems quickly arose. The Crusaders were establishing small kingdoms in places they conquered.<sup>17</sup> Those problems were paving the way for the sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Also, the influence of Latins was increasing in the empire

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<sup>12</sup>(Reported by Matthew of Odessa) Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1971, p.93

<sup>13</sup> Laszlo Rasonyi; *Tarihte Türklük*, Trans: H.Z. KOŞAY, Örgün Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2007, p.243

<sup>14</sup> Paul Magdalino; "The Medieval Empire 8780-1204", (in) MANGO; *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p.185

<sup>15</sup> Cameron; op.cit, p.45

<sup>16</sup> Georg Ostrogorsky; *Bizans Devleti Tarihi [Geschichte des Byzantinisches Staates]*, Trans: Fikret İşıltan, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 2006, p.335

<sup>17</sup> See especially Steven Runciman; *Haçlı Seferleri Tarihi [A History of the Crusades]* (3 Vols.), Trans: Fikret İşıltan, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara,1998

especially in the areas of commerce and shipping. City-states like Venice, Genoa and Pisa were able to get concessions and privileges from the emperors and form colonies in the imperial territory. There were perhaps sixty thousand Latins living in Constantinople, living in their quarters on the coast of Golden Horn.<sup>18</sup> According to Magdalino, shipping and maritime communications don't seem to have rated very high in Byzantine politics, society and culture so Italian city-republics filled the gap in the empire's naval capability.<sup>19</sup> W. Heyd criticizes Byzantine merchants for their inertia and leaving the commerce to the Latins.<sup>20</sup> However, it should be kept in mind that it was not easy for the Byzantine merchants to compete with the Latins because of the privileges the latter obtained. That was another reason fuelling anti-Latin sentiments in Constantinople especially after the Great Schism of Churches in 1054. So it is not surprising to see Byzantine flocks attacking Latin colonies in Constantinople.<sup>21</sup> Still, however, the Black Sea was closed to all foreigners and the empire had almost a monopoly over it. With Georges Bratianu's words, it was a "*un lac Byzantine-a Byzantine lake*".<sup>22</sup>

The Fourth Crusade (1204), followed by the sack of Constantinople and fragmentation of Byzantine territory by the Crusader kings, was a serious blow for the Empire. City-republics of Italy had the ability to enter and form colonies on the Black Sea coasts, only after they gained the control of Constantinople and the Straits. Imperial seat was moved to Nicea where it was going to stay until 1261. However, the Byzantines were experienced enough in diplomacy to benefit from the deadly competition between Venice and Genoa. Genoa was seeking revenge against Venice (because the Venetians sacked the Genoese colony in Akka) and as W. Heyd underlines, even the fear of excommunication by Pope, was not sufficient to force them to refrain from forming an alliance with the Byzantine emperor in Nicea, Michael Palaiologos (Michael VIII). Thus, the Treaty of Nymphoeum was signed between the parties in 13 March 1261. The Genoese side, promised to help the emperor in his attempts to re-conquer Constantinople by sending an armed fleet and in return the emperor granted them many privileges including the formation of new colonies throughout the empire. Genoa was allowed to form colonies on the Black Sea coasts and their goods were going to be exempted from customs taxes. According to the treaty, only the Ge-

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<sup>18</sup> Cameron; op.cit, p.46

<sup>19</sup> Magdalino; op.cit, p.197

<sup>20</sup> W. Heyd; *Yakındağu Ticaret Tarihi [Histoire du Commerce du Levant au Moyen-Age]*, Trans: Enver Ziya Karal, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2nd Ed., Ankara, 2000, p.63

<sup>21</sup> For Byzantine-Venetian relations see: David M. Nicol, *Bizans ve Venedik, Diplomatik ve Kültürel İlişkiler Üzerine [Byzantium and Venice, A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations]*, Trans: Gül Çağalı Güven, Sabancı Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2000

<sup>22</sup> Georges Bratianu; *La Mer Noire, Des Origines a la Conquete Ottomane*, Societatea Academica Romana, München, 1969, p.173

noese merchants were to benefit from the Black Sea trade. However, the Byzantines preferred a balanced foreign policy and in the following years almost the same privileges were granted to the Venetians too.<sup>23</sup>

After the Fourth Crusade, the relations between the Byzantine and Seljuk Empires seemed stable and peaceful. The Nicean Empire, at that time was busy with planning to re-conquer Constantinople.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand the Seljuks were conquering cities in other parts of Anatolia like Sinop, Antalya and Alaiye. In this period, almost ceased trade was revived again. The Seljuks, obtained the above mentioned port cities, and gained important outlets to the sea. The land routes crossed Anatolia in north-south and east-west directions. The trade route starting from Antalya or Alaiye (modern Alanya) passed through Sivas and Tokat to the Black Sea ports of Sinop and Samsun. The trade with Crimean port of Sudak/Soldia (Tr. Suğdak) mainly included furs and slaves. Slaves of both gender had a high demand especially in Egypt whose army consisted of *mamluks* (slaves). At that time slave trade was in the hands of Latins. Seljuk policy attempted to support trade by every possible means. Many caravanserais were built on these roads which provided security, food and bed free of charge. Merchants, whose goods were stolen or damaged in sea accidents, received compensations. They introduced a mechanism like modern insurance.<sup>25</sup> In March 1220, the Venetians and Seljuks concluded a treaty. In its text it was mentioned that this treaty was the renewal of the two earlier treaties.<sup>26</sup> Thus in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the trade in Anatolia flourished. There were even Russian and Kıpçak (Cuman) merchants from Deşt-i Kıpçak (Steppe of Kıpçaks) in Sivas and Syria, and Seljuk subjects were present in Crimean ports, they had built a mosque in Sudak.<sup>27</sup>

The rise of Mongol Empire, caused immigration of Turkomans en masse into Anatolia over whom the Seljuk Sultans didn't have a tight control. There were certain religious differences between the sedentary population of Anatolia and the new-coming Turkomans. They were Muslims; however they preserved their old faith of Shamanism under the polish of Islam.<sup>28</sup> The difference between them and the sedentary population can be seen easily by the religious orders they supported. The sedentary population supported the order of Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi later known as *Mevlevilik*, a religious order supporting the Seljuk authority with members of middle and high class of the society including also people of Christian faith

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<sup>23</sup> Heyd; op.cit, p:480-487

<sup>24</sup> Vryonis; op.cit, p.132

<sup>25</sup> Osman Turan; "Selçuklu Kervansarayları", *Bellekten*, Vol:X Issue: 39, July 1946, (pp:471-496) Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, p.473

<sup>26</sup> Theunissen; op.cit, p:55

<sup>27</sup> Cahen; op.cit, p:121-123

<sup>28</sup> Fuat Köprülü; *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluşu*, Akçağ Yayınları, 4th ed., Ankara, 2006,p.77



under the heavy influence of Persian culture.<sup>29</sup> This order had negative views on the Turcoman heterodox religious leaders (known as “baba” or “derviş”) and attacked their beliefs. The devastating revolt of Baba İshak (known also as Babai Kiyamı), fed by heterodox preaching, was only suppressed with an army including many Christian mercenaries.<sup>30</sup> With the battle of Köseadağ in 1243, the Seljuks were crushed and became a vassal state of the Mongol Empire. In the following years the internal strife in Seljuk Empire weakened its control over different Turcoman tribes scattered through Anatolia. For the advantage of those Turcoman tribes, after the reconquest of Constantinople in 1261, Byzantine control over Asia Minor was neglected and at the end weakened. It was this environment in Anatolia which paved the way for emergence of many independent emirates at the beginning of 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The presence of many non-Muslims in Anatolia who lived under the rule of Muslim states for a long time, inevitably caused contact and interaction. The employment of Christians in the army as mercenaries and in bureaucracy as state officials strengthened the ties between each group.<sup>31</sup> Especially the Armenians, who were suppressed by Byzantine authorities due to the disputes over their faith, were really integrated into the Muslim society. The Seljuk sultans had close contacts with their religious leaders. This explains the letter II. Kılıçarslan sent to the Armenian Patriarch Mihael in Malatya after his victory against the Byzantine army, in which he stated that the victory was won with the help of the prayers of the Patriarch.<sup>32</sup> It may be surprising to see that Christians adopted Turkish (names like Kaya, Arslan, Yağmur, Çiçek, etc.) and Islamic personal names (like Hamza, Allahverdi, etc.) a tendency which went on during the Ottoman period too.<sup>33</sup> This emerges as an important problem for the historians working on Ottoman documents especially related with Bursa and the surrounding region, former Bithynia; because it is not possible to infer one’s religion from the name unless it is explicitly stated in the document. On the other hand Irene Beldiceanu-Steinherr mentions another possibility: Those Christians would be the Cuman settlers (a Turkic tribe that lived around the Balkans and the Black Sea Basin) brought there by the Byzantine Emperors in order to strengthen the imperial military structure and to populate the deserted areas that were Christianized afterwards.<sup>34</sup> Another tendency was to visit

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<sup>29</sup> Fuat Köprülü; *Anadolu’da İslamiyet*, Akçağ Yayınları, Ankara, 2005, p.50

<sup>30</sup> Vryonis; op.cit., p.134

<sup>31</sup> Cahen; op.cit., p.160

<sup>32</sup> Osman Turan; *Selçuklular ve İslamiyet*, İstanbul, 1971, p.12

<sup>33</sup> Osman Çetin; *Sicillere Göre Bursa’da İhtida Hareketleri ve Sosyal Sonuçları (1472-1909)*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 1999, p.37

<sup>34</sup> Irene Beldiceanu-Steinherr; “Bitinya’da Gayrimüslim Nüfus”, (in) *Osmanlı Beyliği 1300-1389 [The Ottoman Emirate 1300-1389]*, (Ed) Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, Trans:Gül Çağalı Güven, İsmail Yerguz, Tülin Altınova, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul, 2000, p.12

each other's sanctuaries. Many Christians visited Muslim sanctuaries and many Muslims visited the Christian ones. That was a tradition both in Anatolia and later in the Balkans during the Ottoman period. F.W. Hasluck gives a detailed list of these sanctuaries.<sup>35</sup>

In Islamic law, non-Muslims especially Christians and Jews who are named as "*ehl-i kitap*" (people of the book), had to be protected by the state. If they come to Muslim territory and stay there for a short period for example as merchants, (generally accepted duration is one year) they gain the status of "*mustamin*". During their stay, they are under the state's protection and they don't pay "*jizya*", the poll tax.<sup>36</sup> If they live permanently in Muslim domains, they gain a different status named "*zhimmi*". In addition to the taxes paid also by the Muslims, they have to pay the *jizya* while they are exempted from the military service. The old, the clergy and the poor are exempted from *jizya*. They have the right to take their cases regarding issues like inheritance and marriage to their special courts while maintaining their religious institutions and schools. They can take bureaucratic positions. However they can't be elected as president of the state and can't be appointed to the critical posts like high-level military command. <sup>37</sup>In return, the state had to protect them against any threat and even to declare war on other states if they are attacked, while providing freedom of faith. Regarding the regulations of clothing, there are different views. Some of the Muslim scholars (ulema) found it important to distinguish the subjects by their clothing. <sup>38</sup>When the Mongol armies invaded Anatolia, the Mongol governor Timurtash, "...found the clothing and hats of the Jews and Christians to be indistinguishable from those of the Muslims. He announced that the non-Muslims should wear conical hats with yellow turbans so that they could be distinguished from the faithful..."<sup>39</sup>

Conversion to Islam followed by Turkification was the result of many factors and a long process. With Vryonis' words:

*"The historical events indubitably exercised a profound influence on the psychology of the Christians. They had experienced and witnessed the defeat of Byzantium and they were now subjects of military conquerors who professed an alien faith. Undoubtedly some saw in this fact a proof of Islam's validity. Others were prepared for assimilation by the preaching of dervishes*

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<sup>35</sup> F.W. Hasluck; *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans*, The ISIS Press, İstanbul, 2000, Vol:1 p.96-117

<sup>36</sup> Ahmet Yaman; *İslam Hukukunda Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Fecr Yayınevi, Ankara, 1998, p.235

<sup>37</sup> Bilal Eryılmaz; *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Gayrimüslim Tebaanın Yönetimi*, Risale Yayınları, İstanbul, 1996,p.21

<sup>38</sup> For the regulations regarding non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire see: Ruth Lamdan; "Communal Regulations as a Source for Jewish Women's Lives in the Ottoman Empire, *The Muslim World*, Vol:95, April 2005, pp:249-263 and Betül İpşirli Argıt; "Clothing Habits, Regulations and Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Issue:24, 2005, pp:79-96

<sup>39</sup> Vryonis; op.cit, p.224

*and ulemas, and by the religious syncretism that tended to equate Islamic practices and saints with those of the Christians. In any case strong economic and social motivations were ever present. Converts would escape the onerous tax of the djizye, and their agricultural tax would be lightened. Others might hope for administrative positions and lands.”<sup>40</sup>*

Forced conversion is strictly prohibited by Islamic law, however both political and economic incentives were used for encouraging people to convert. In spite of all these incentives Osman Çetin’s study, based on the Ottoman judicial registers shows us that the movement of conversion was limited. For the years between 1472 and 1909, in a very cosmopolitan city, Bursa, he was able to detect only 835 conversions.<sup>41</sup>

### **THE NATURE OF THE OTTOMAN CONQUESTS**

The aim of this section is not to give a full political history of Ottoman conquests. Instead I will here mostly focus on the nature of Ottoman conquests and the relations between the conquerors and the conquered. The main idea of this section is that the Ottomans were not only trying to conquer countries, but they were trying to conquer people’s hearts with the ideal of a just rule.

The emirates of Anatolia were to fill the power-vacuum that was created with the decline of the two empires. Former members of the Byzantine-Seljuk civil and military bureaucracy were to be under their service. The fiscal crises in the Byzantine Empire, forced the emperor to decrease the personnel count of the Byzantine navy. “*With no hope of alternative employment in the Empire, many of them took service with the Italians or even with the Turks rather than die of hunger.*”<sup>42</sup> The Ottomans benefited from the declining Byzantine rule and the resentment of the population fed up with corruption and malpractices. Contemporary Greek observer Pahimeres, reports that before the Battle of Bafeus (1301) fought between the Ottoman and Byzantine armies, the inhabitants of Nicea hated the governor because of his malpractices and of the privileges granted to the soldiers serving in the fortress after his abolition, Pahimeres adds that many of them chose to serve on the Ottoman side.<sup>43</sup>

Due to all of the reasons listed above the Ottomans were able to enlarge their territory very rapidly: In 1326 Bursa, an important commercial center of that time was conquered. Later in 1331 Nicea/İznik, famous with its strong walls, was conquered too. Ottoman Emirate attracted numerous

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<sup>40</sup> Vryonis; op.cit, p.359

<sup>41</sup> Çetin; op.cit. ,p.34

<sup>42</sup> Nicol; *The Last Centuries...*, p.108

<sup>43</sup>(quot. In.) Halil İnalçık; “Osman Gazi’nin İznik Kuşatması ve Bafeus Muharebesi”, in) *Osmanlı Beyliği 1300-1389[The Ottoman Emirate 1300-1389]*, (Ed) Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, Trans: Gül Çağalı Güven, İsmail Yerguz, Tülin Altınova, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul,2000, p.80

Turcomans throughout Anatolia, after seeing Ottoman victories against the Byzantines; they became willing to join the Ottomans.

Internal strife in the Byzantine Empire forced the emperors to ally with the Ottomans in order to get military support from them. The Ottomans supported Emperor Cantacuzenos in his wars against the Serbs and Bulgarians. By participating in the Balkan campaigns of the Byzantine emperor, Ottoman military command gained experience and information about the situation in the Balkans.<sup>44</sup> The gaining of a foothold in the Balkans in 1354, Tzympe, on the Gallipoli Isthmus, was a mile stone in Ottoman history. It was to serve like a bridge-head for the following Ottoman conquests. At time same time, the Ottomans extended their rule over the Emirate of Karesi (controlled almost southern parts of the Gallipoli) whose navy provided the Ottomans a useful tool. It was an Ottoman policy to form relations of vassalage prior to the final conquest. That was a slow process of course. After eliminating the native dynasty, the Ottomans applied the timar system and started to rule the country directly. <sup>45</sup>This policy was applied both in Anatolia and the Balkans. In 1369 Adrionople (Tr. Edirne) was conquered and Ottoman military commanders on the borders started their raids as far as Serbia. In 1387 Thessalonica was conquered, and John V Palaiologos agreed to become a vassal of Sultan Murad.<sup>46</sup>

Similar to Anatolia, in the Balkans as well, the Ottomans benefited from the internal conflicts and the power-vacuum. Peter F. Sugar summarizes the situation in the Balkans before the Ottoman conquests as follows:

*"In the middle of the fourteenth century the Balkan Peninsula was in turmoil. The second Serbian empire was disintegrating, and the Byzantine Empire, which in previous centuries had always been able to fill the vacuum left by similar collapses in the area, was too weak to play this role. Political chaos was paralleled by social and religious controversy. The lower classes were trying to shake off the rule of the traditional noble ruling element, and heresies, which often represented social class differences, flourished. Members of the Slav ruling families were fighting each other, and a similar struggle for the throne was in progress in the Byzantine Empire. It was the latter struggle that brought a new force, the Ottomans, into the Balkans."*<sup>47</sup>

Heterodox dervishes played an important role in the Ottoman conquests. In many cases they participated in the conquests with their followers, and later the sultans granted privileges and distributed fiefs<sup>48</sup> to

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<sup>44</sup> Şerif Baştav; "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluşu Esnasında Bizans ve Avrupa", *Belleten*, Vol:68, April 2004,p.3

<sup>45</sup> Halil İnalçık; "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", *Studia Islamica*, No:2 (1954), pp.103-129

<sup>46</sup> Cameron; op.cit, p.59

<sup>47</sup> Peter F. Sugar; *The Southeastern Europe Under Ottoman Rule 1354-1804*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1996, p.3

<sup>48</sup> Here I used the term "fief", but in Turkish it is named "timar" and it must be kept in mind that the Ottoman "timar" was very different from especially the Western European fief.

them.<sup>49</sup> Ömer Lütfi Barkan described them in 1950s as “colonizer Turkish dervishes”. They founded new villages especially in insecure lands, near the mountain passes or bridges, opened new agricultural lands. Their first step was to build a zaviye/imaret. These institutions were providing security in their neighborhoods and serving travelers. They were the centers of propaganda; they also organized the settling of new-coming Turkish population. So in a short time new villages with Turkish population were founded which controlled the countryside.<sup>50</sup>

Pious foundations (waqfs) and imarets (public kitchens) played an important role in Ottoman conquests. Even in the formation years of the empire, Sultan Orhan founded a waqf in Mekece in 1324 with the purpose of serving the travelers and the poor.(written in Persian, it's also one of the oldest Ottoman documents survived.)<sup>51</sup> Heath W. Lowry, gives us a valuable insight about these institutions. He uses the narrative of XV. century Ottoman chronicler Aşık Paşazade (his book is known as *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*). Aşık Paşazade reports the activities of Sultan Orhan after he conquered Nicea<sup>52</sup>: (I preferred Lowry's translation)

*“He [Orhan Gazi] established an imaret at the edge of the Yenişehir Gate [...] when the doors of the imaret were first opened and its first food prepared, it was distributed by the blessed hands of Orhan Gazi himself. He served as the imaret's apprentice on the opening evening.”*<sup>53</sup>

Lowry than states the importance of that act, he summarizes the Ottoman policy:

*“...Aşıkpaşazade likewise highlights the casual linkage between accommodation and conversion, i.e. the fact that good treatment of the conquered led many Bithynian (and later Balkan) Christians to accept not only the political reality of the new order but also the religion of its dynasty, Islam. A Muslim conqueror feeding his newly acquired Christian subjects with his own hands is a striking image.”*<sup>54</sup>

The Ottomans followed a policy of deportation(exile) (in Turkish “iskân siyaseti”). Many families were sent to the Balkan Peninsula from Anatolia following the Ottoman conquests. In some cases that was an act of

<sup>49</sup> Irene Melikoff; *Uyur İdik Uyardılar, Alevilik-Bektaşilik Araştırmaları*, Trans: Turan Alptekin, Demos Yayınları, İstanbul, 2006, p.199 (See especially p.197-209)

<sup>50</sup> Ömer Lütfi Barkan; “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri”, *Türkler Ansiklopedisi*, Vol:9, Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, Ankara, pp:133-153

<sup>51</sup> İ. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı; “Orhan Bey Vakfiyesi”, *Belleten*, Vol:V Issue:19 July 1941, pp:277-288

<sup>52</sup> The text in Turkish is as follows: “... Yenişehir kapısını çıktığı yerde bir imaret yaptı... İmaretün kim kapısı açıldı, ta'am kim bişdi Orhan Gazi ol ta'amı kendü mübarek eliyle üleşdürdi ve çırağın dahi evvel gece kendü yakdı ...”, Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, (Eds) Kemal Yavuz, M. A. Yekta Saraç, Gökkuşbu Yayınları, İstanbul, 2007, p.314

<sup>53</sup> Heath W. Lowry; “Random Musings on the Origins of Ottoman Charity: From Mekece to Bursa, İznik and Beyond”, (in) (Eds.) Nina Ergin, Christoph K. Neuman, Amy Singer; *Feeding People, Feeding Power, Imarets in the Ottoman Empire*, Eren Press, İstanbul, 2007,p.71

<sup>54</sup> Lowry; “Random Musings on the Origins...”, p.72

punishment, families who violated the laws were chosen. On the other hand volunteers were present too. Peasant families looking for land or pastures for animal breeding were sent to the Balkans.<sup>55</sup> In Ottoman “tahrir defters” (cadastral surveys) it’s possible for the historians to track these deportations. In the tahrir defter of Arvanid (an Ottoman province in modern Albania) dated 1432, we can see many examples of deportees. Their origins are indicated with words like Saruhanlı (modern Manisa in Turkey) or Engürülü (modern Ankara).<sup>56</sup>

In Ottoman society there was a privileged group known as “askeri”, a social class under the government’s service including Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This class included the highest level officials, lowest rank of timarlı sipahis (fief holders) and other auxiliary forces. They were exempted from many taxes for the services they provided. It was the main aim of the Ottomans to provide security and stability in the areas they ruled, which were preconditions for welfare and commerce. Thus, the Ottomans formed auxiliary forces from the villagers in rural areas. They acquired tax exemptions for their services like guarding and repairing bridges, roads, mountain passes, and water canals. This organization, named as “derbend teşkilatı” can be seen in Ottoman administrative structure from the beginning of Murad II’s rule (1421-1451). This organization was very functional especially in the mountainous Balkan areas. The Christian members of this organization were named as “martolos, klepth and armatol” in the Balkans.<sup>57</sup> The willingness of the Ottomans to employ its Christian subjects at various levels of bureaucracy positively served the integration process. They were the members of military class (askeri) like the grand vizier (şadrazam) who was the head of civil and military bureaucracy. The rest of the society, who paid taxes, was named “reaya” (the flock). Another important Ottoman policy was accepting former land holders into the class of askeri. By that way, many of the local elites in the Balkans were transformed into Ottoman sipahi, they were granted fiefs, exempted from taxes and in return they were to serve as local security force, collect decided taxes and join the Ottoman army with their men during a campaign.<sup>58</sup>

While cooperating with the former elite class, the Ottomans couldn’t have neglected the rest of the society, the reaya. Ottoman peasantry, in contrast to the serfs in Europe, had certain rights which were overseen by the

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<sup>55</sup> Hüseyin Arslan; *16. yy. Osmanlı Toplumunda Yönetim, Nüfus, İskan, Göç ve Sürgün*, Kaknüs Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p.181

<sup>56</sup> (Published By) Halil İnalçık; *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, 1987 (see various pages.)

<sup>57</sup> Cengiz Orhonlu; *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Derbend Teşkilatı*, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1990, p.17

<sup>58</sup> For Christian sipahis in the Balkans especially see: Halil İnalçık; “Stefan Duşan’dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’na”, (in) Halil İnalçık; *Fatih Devri Üzerine Tetkik ve Vesikalar*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayinevi, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Ankara, 2007, pp:137-184

strong state bureaucracy. Before the decay of Ottoman land administration (timar sistemi) in 17<sup>th</sup> century, the small family farms, named as “çift” (an area that can be plowed by two oxens) were the main production units in agriculture. After the conquest, it was the first action of the Ottomans to appoint the town a “subaşı” (local military commander responsible for the security as well as administrative tasks and head of the timarlı sipahis) and a “kadı” (a judge with also many municipal responsibilities like inspecting markets and craftsmen). After that, a group of trusted men were to prepare the cadastral survey (“tahrir” is the name of the process and the records are named as “tahrir defteri”) a document which showed all the revenue bringing assets of an area. The amount of revenue deriving from customs, markets, agricultural lands (even the number of fruit trees were included), as well as the number of buildings, houses, bakeries, public baths and the population structure (like the religious structure of population and households) were all recorded. After the approval by the Sultan, the tax estimations based on the cadastral survey, a “kanunnâme”, the text of the laws regarding amount of taxation and fees for crimes and rights and responsibilities of both the timarlı sipahi and reaya, duties of reaya like corvee (the word “angarya” is used by the Ottomans, a word borrowed from Latin which is also used in English as “angary” for corvee or forced labour) in a province, was added to the beginning of cadastral survey. From that time on, the administration and taxation of the province had to be based on the cadastral survey and the kanunnâme- règlemente organique. The surveys were to be renewed if the conditions changed in the province (after earthquakes, fires, wars, diseases which had the capacity to destroy buildings, crops and kill people) otherwise the next survey took place at the beginning of a new Sultan’s rule or generally after a 15-30 year time period. By the method of tahrir, everyone knew their responsibilities and rights; if their rights had been attacked they were to appeal to the court and even send “şikayetnâme” (petition for complaints) to the imperial capital which could end with the abolishment of privileges of timarlı sipahi for his abuses against the reaya. İnalçık underlines the difference between the code of Serbian monarch Stephen Dusan and the Ottoman law: Dusan’s code required the peasant to work for his lord two days a week while the Ottoman kanunnames envisaged only three days a year.<sup>59</sup> Peter F. Sugar lists the advantages of peasantry in Ottoman period:

*“The arrival of the Ottomans prevented the full enslavement of the Balkan peasant. In the Ottoman Empire the cultivator belonged to the reaya class, but so did about 90 percent of all inhabitants of the state. He retained certain legal, personal and property rights and could take his grievances to a court in which a trained jurist and not his lord acted as a judge. For these reasons the*

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<sup>59</sup> Halil İnalçık; *The Ottoman Empire, The Classical Age 1300-1600*, Phoenix, London, 2000, p.7

*gulf separating landlords and peasants never became as deep as it did in those states in which feudalism reached full maturity.”<sup>60</sup>*

The Ottoman policy, especially after the conquest of Constantinople, during the reign of Mehmed II, was to cooperate with the Orthodox Church. Thus, Gennadios who heavily opposed the unification with Rome, was appointed as Patriarch (he took the name Scholarius). The Ottomans regarded the Catholic Church in Rome and the Pope as enemies of the empire because of their role in the Crusades of the past, and their ties with Catholic Hungary and later Austria who were the main Ottoman rivals in the Balkans. On the other hand, the Orthodox populations living in the former Byzantine lands were generally hostile to Pope. The motto of “Better Islam than the Pope” reflects the general public opinion. It was this feeling which helped the Ottomans to establish good relations with the former Byzantine jects.<sup>61</sup>The Orthodox Church became an Ottoman institution and the Patriarch was a high level Ottoman official with the rank of vizier. Halil İnalçık states the importance of Muslim-Orthodox cooperation:

*“The Ottomans established their empire by uniting Muslim Anatolia and the Christian Balkans under their rule and, although continuous Holy War was the fundamental principle of the state, the empire emerged, at the same time, as protector of the Orthodox Church and millions of Orthodox Christians.”<sup>62</sup>*

In Ottoman period, not all the Balkan lands were directly ruled by the Sultans. Principalities like Wallachia (Tr. Eflak), Moldavia (Tr. Boğdan), a city-republic like Dubrovnik (in Latin Ragusa) and Transylvania (Tr. Erdel) were tribute paying Ottoman vassals. They had a special status: Not a part of Dar’al Harb nor Dar’al Islam; they were considered as a part of Dar’al Ahd (Non-Muslim countries who developed friendly relations with Muslims and sometimes became vassals, this status is documented in Ahd-nâme). Suraiya Faroqhi lists their functions:

*“At least at certain times, such dependencies served as the venues of diplomatic and/or commercial exchanges that the authorities in Istanbul certainly had approved of, but did not wish to carry out in full view of everyone. One manner of dealing with such sites was to keep them outside the regular Ottoman administrative system altogether, or to at least have the central power represented only by low-level dignitaries. Dubrovnik (in Italian: Ragusa) constitutes the best documented instance of this type; when the military threat was limited, apparently there was little motivation to dignify relations*

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<sup>60</sup> Peter F. Sugar; “Major Changes in the Life of the Slav Peasantry under Ottoman Rule”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol:9, No.3 (October 1978), pp.297-305, p.303

<sup>61</sup> L. S. Stavrianos; *The Balkans Since 1453*, Rinehart, New York, 1961, p.61

<sup>62</sup> İnalçık; *The Ottoman Empire...*, p.7



with 'the infidel' by managing them under the auspices of a high-ranking provincial governor."<sup>63</sup>

The Ottomans appointed their rulers who were elected according to the local procedures, and protected them from the attacks of other states. Dubrovnik, a city republic positioned on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, became an Ottoman vassal with the treaty (ahdnâme) of 1442, and was obliged to pay a yearly tribute of 1000 ducats (In the following centuries the tribute reached 12500 ducats). Dubrovnik paid the lowest customs duties existent in the Ottoman Empire so it became an important trade center.<sup>64</sup> Its merchants could be found anywhere in the Balkans. Wallachia and Moldavia too were tribute paying states whose princes (sing.voivoda, Tr. Voyvoda or bey) were elected by the local elites (sing.boiar, Tr. Boyar) and then appointed by the Sultan. They had several obligations regarding the foreign policy and international trade, but they were autonomous in their internal matters. In their treaties the most important obligation regarding the foreign policy was the general Ottoman principle: "be the friend of [my] friends and the enemy of [my] enemies – dostu dost ve düşmana düşman olup".<sup>65</sup> However, because Prince Dimitrie Cantemir took side with the Russians in 1711, local nobles were not preferred by the Ottomans any more. Instead, Greeks from the Phanar (Tr. Fener) district of İstanbul, the well known Phanariots were appointed as princes. The presence of these vassal states provided the Ottomans buffer-zones with their enemies, and helped the Ottomans to save money, which was going to be spent if they ruled the principalities directly.

While ending this section, I must add that the Balkans provided the Ottomans an important base of power. During the Battle of Ankara (1402), while most of the soldiers from Anatolian provinces deserted to Tamerlane (Timur), they were the Serbian cavalries who defended Sultan Bayezid (whose wife was a Serbian princess) with the remaining loyal soldiers. Famous Ottoman historian Mehmed Neşri, completed his book (a history book which includes Turkish history from the prehistoric period to the reign of Bayezid II) in 1492 and presented it to the Sultan. In his book for example, Neşri accuses the Serbian princess for making Bayezid I, drink wine, "*Sultan Bayezid learnt drinking wine and chatting from the daughter of Laz*".<sup>66</sup> That is the reflection of reaction to the centralization policies of

<sup>63</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi; *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London, 2004, p.80

<sup>64</sup> Nicholas H. Biegman; *The Turco-Ragusan Relationship*, Mouton, The Hague, 1967, p.26-27

<sup>65</sup> Mihai Maxim; *Romano-Ottomanica, Essays&Documents From the Turkish Archives*, The ISIS Press, İstanbul,2001, p.12

<sup>66</sup> Mehmed Neşri; *Kitabı-ı Cihan-Numa (Neşri Tarihi)*, (2 Vols.), ( (Ed. By) Faik Reşit UNAT, Mehmed A. Köymen, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 3rd Ed. , Ankara, 1995, Vol:1, p.333 Turkish text is below: "*Ve Sultan Bayezid şarab içüb sohbet itmeyi Laz kızından öğrendi. Yoksa ol vakte değin nesl-i Osman her giz şarab içmiş değüldi.*" (Here the term "Laz", refers to the Serbian Despot Lazar. The Ottomans named his territory as "Lazeli" and his successors as "Laz oğlu".

Bayezid I, a policy which included employing converts and slaves (Tr. "kul") as governors in Muslim provinces of Anatolia after the conquest instead of Muslim aristocracy, destruction of other independent emirates and introducing Ottoman land and taxation system (timar). In Islamic law, private property (mülk) is protected heavily against the abuses of state. By destroying local dynasties in Anatolia and introducing Ottoman methods of taxation and administration, huge amount of land was confiscated by the state and many local elites lost their former privileges. After the war, during the interregnum period (Tr. Fetret Devri) which lasted from 1402 to 1413, the possessions in Anatolia were in anarchy, emirates previously destroyed by Bayezid I were re-established with the military help of Tamerlane and the struggle for throne between the sons of Bayezid I, weakened the state. In the Balkans, however, if we accept small territorial concessions, the Ottoman rule was still powerful enough to provide the sultans the necessary force to re-unite the Empire. The Balkan Peninsula was also out of the reach of Tamerlane's forces, a vital factor for the survival. Again in the period of Mehmed the Conqueror, his land reform of confiscating the property of Muslim pious foundations (sing. vakf, plural. evkaf) which lost their function, created another wave of reaction and resentment among the Muslim circles of Anatolia. Pious foundations were non-touchable and their property was regarded as property of God. Thus, the confiscation was strictly forbidden. On the other hand, with this protected status, establishing pious foundations was a safe way of transferring and securing revenue for the next generations. By adding an article stating that the administrators of the foundation have to be the founder's sons and grandsons in the establishment deed (Tr. Vakıfname or Vakfiye Senedi) of pious foundation; those people were to receive a fixed amount of money for their administrative services. As a result of the increase in the amount of lands, houses, and shops owned by pious foundations, keeping in mind that their revenue was exempted from many taxes; the state lost an important amount of revenue. Trying to strengthen the central administration and increasing the revenues of state for its political and military projects, Mehmed the Conqueror confiscated the possessions of some of the pious foundations. Causing great reaction, this policy was reversed only when his son Bayezid II ascended to the throne.

The Anatolian and Balkan Peninsulas together were the heart of the empire. Coping with the local forces in the Balkans were easier than Anatolia. After the destruction of local dynasties in the Balkans, the only major threat was emanating from external forces like Hungary and later Habsburg Dynasty as well as Venice, there was no serious revolt in the Balkans until the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **THE BLACK SEA (KARA DENİZ): AN OTTOMAN LAKE**

After Mehmed the Conqueror conquered Constantinople, the Ottomans were able to control the Straits; however they still didn't have full control of the Black Sea Basin. The Genoese colonies were well established especially on the Crimean Peninsula. They almost had a monopoly during the Byzantine rule over the "*Mare Maggiore*". The Genoese colonies included Caffa/Feodosia (Tr. Keefe), Cembalo (Tr. Balaklava) and Soldaia (Tr. Suğdak) while the Venetians due to their agreement with the Golden Horde, controlled Tana (Tr. Azak).<sup>67</sup> The Genoese were in an advantageous position when compared with the Venetians. Also, one of the most important port cities of Anatolia, Trebizond (Tr. Trabzon) was under the rule of Trebizond Empire.

Constantinople, as the Queen of Cities with its huge population during the Byzantine and later Ottoman rule, depended mostly on the resources of Black Sea region. According to Fernand Braudel "*the Black Sea was the supplying region without which the mighty capital couldn't survive...*".<sup>68</sup> It was a centre of international trade. Charles King draws a picture of trade relations of Black Sea with its neighboring areas:

*"...the Black Sea was already at the center of an economic network that extended from the mulberry groves of China to the silk houses of Marseilles, from the fairs of Novgorod and Kiev to the bazaars of Tabriz. It lay at the crossroads of major international highways. "Silk routes" wound from China through Central Asia, across the Caspian to the Volga, then overland to the Don river and from there into the Sea of Azov and the ports of Crimea; or along a southern road, across central Asia and Persia, then through Armenia to the port of Trebizond. The rivers of the north carried traffic through Poland and Russia to the Baltic Sea, an ancient route that had once brought amber to the Mediterranean but now bore silk, fur and animal hides to the growing cities of northern Europe. Manufactured goods, especially textiles, arrived from central Europe and then spread out across the Eurasian steppe. Cereals and spices flowed in the opposite direction, into Central Europe or out through the Bosphorus to the Aegean."*<sup>69</sup>

In Byzantine period, maritime trade in Black Sea was almost a monopoly of the Latins. Mehmed II, didn't follow the same policy. He wanted to secure his capital, control the flow of goods and receive the customs duties for his imperial treasury. As early as 1454, after an agreement with the Crimean Khan, an Ottoman fleet was sent to help the Khan to conquer Keefe. However, the town was able to withstand. After that, parties made an agreement according to which the Genoese was to pay 1200 gold pieces

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<sup>67</sup> Şerafettin Turan; *Türkiye-İtalya İlişkileri*, Metis Yayınları, 1990, p.53

<sup>68</sup> Ferdinand Braudel; *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol:1, Trans: Silan Reynolds, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, p.110

<sup>69</sup> Charles King, *The Black Sea, A History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, p.82

every year.<sup>70</sup> It was that strategic thinking which led to the conquests of Amasra, Sinop and Trabzon in 1461 and campaigns of Kefe (1475) and Moldavia (1476). His ultimate aim was to transform the Black Sea into an Ottoman Lake.<sup>71</sup>

Struggle for the throne had always been the Achilles heel of the Khanate. Mengli Giray after gaining control of the Khanate, tended to ally with Muscovy against Poland and the Golden Horde. On the other hand relations with the Genoese were getting worse for the Ottomans. In 1475, an internal struggle triggered by the Genoese, ended up with uprising of Tatar aristocracy against Mengli Giray, he fled to the Genoese. Ottomans were then, invited by the Tatar aristocracy to intervene in Crimean affairs and as the first of all to drive the Genoese out the Crimean Peninsula.<sup>72</sup> An Ottoman fleet of 300 ships under the command of Gedik Ahmed Paşa was sent to Crimea for this purpose. Finally, all the Genoese possessions were conquered and the Ottomans became suzerain of Crimean Khanate.<sup>73</sup> In a letter sent to Mehmed II by Mengli Giray in 1475, the Khan mentions a treaty and states one of its articles which obliged him to be the friend of sultan's friend and the enemy of sultan's enemy, a formula common in Ottoman ahdnames.<sup>74</sup> However, we see that, the Crimean Khans were not willing to be fully dependent on the Ottomans. They sometimes followed policies against the Ottomans.<sup>75</sup> After the conquest, the Ottomans formed a new province (Tr. Eyalet) named Kefe (including Kefe, Kerç, Taman, Mankub, İnkirman, Suğdak, Taman and Balıklığo) and appointed a governor. Most of the coastal areas were under direct Ottoman rule. Kefe was an important center of Black Sea trade and also the center of Ottoman diplomatic relations with the Muscovy.<sup>76</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was the supply center of Ottoman troops campaigning in Iran, and most of the Ottoman forces from the Balkans were transported to Iran via Kefe.<sup>77</sup>

In the fourteenth century, famous Arab traveler İbn-i Batuta (d.1369) visited Kefe, and he mentions Kefe with its big markets and a great port which can shelter 200 ships. He then states: " *I later found out that it was*

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<sup>70</sup> Alan Fisher; *The Crimean Tatars*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1978, p.5

<sup>71</sup> Halil İnalçık; "Yeni Vesikalara Göre Kırım Hanlığı'nın Osmanlı Tabiliğine Girmesi ve Ahidname Meselesi", *Belleten*, Vol:VIII, April 1944, Issue:30 (pp:185-231), p.195

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.205

<sup>73</sup> Muzaffer Ürekli; *Kırım Hanlığı'nın Kuruluşu ve Osmanlı Himayesinde Yükselişi (1441-1569)*, Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, Ankara, 1989, p.16-17

<sup>74</sup> İnalçık; "Yeni Vesikalara Göre...", p.227

<sup>75</sup> Ürekli; op.cit., p.47

<sup>76</sup> About Kefe especially see Yücel ÖZTÜRK's study based on Ottoman documents regarding Kefe, which provides a broad insight into the commercial history of Kefe. Yücel Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe 1475-1600*, T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, Ankara, 2000

<sup>77</sup> Öztürk; op.cit, p.93-99

one of the most famous and busiest ports of the world.”<sup>78</sup> Ottoman customs register shows that it was still a busy port during the Ottoman rule visited by many ships every year. It also weakens the general assumption that Muslims didn’t take part in trading activities in the empire; it lists many Muslims as merchants and ship-owners.<sup>79</sup>

Istanbul, the Imperial City, with its huge half-million population, was the main consumer of food and goods produced throughout the empire. Its population’s welfare was one of the main concerns of the sultans. Travelers from Europe were surprised with the low prices of food items in İstanbul. The Imperial City consumed 500.000 kilograms of wheat every day, 4 million of sheep, 3 million of lamb, 200.000 of cattle every year.<sup>80</sup> The Ottomans used mostly private capital to deal with the grain provisioning problem. Merchants had to obtain an official license from the authorities in order to invest in grain trade and transportation. Government capital was used for reserving the necessary amounts of grain for the use of Palace and Army.<sup>81</sup> The grain produced in Mediterranean areas of the Empire (including Asia Minor and Egypt) was reserved for the imperial purposes and stored in granaries because it was more durable than the grain of Black Sea area. The grain of Black Sea Basin could be stored in the granaries for duration of maximum one year. Thus it was to meet the daily needs of İstanbul and was distributed to the bakeries.<sup>82</sup> The amount of grain (wheat and barley) brought to İstanbul in 1758 by the private capital was 6.510.000 kiles equal of 166.656 tons<sup>83</sup>. (1 kile of İstanbul:25,6 kilograms) Unkapanı, a district of İstanbul on the coast of the Golden Horn, was the place where the ships carrying grain from the Black Sea regions like modern Romania, Bulgaria, Thrace and Crimea destined.<sup>84</sup> The grain then was recorded by the state officials there.

The Crimean Khanate as a vassal of the Ottomans were able to provide them auxiliary forces of light Tatar cavalry, a force consisting between 40.000 and 100.000 men.<sup>85</sup> Also, Crimean Khanate formed a buffer zone

<sup>78</sup> İbn-i Batuta; *Büyük Dünya Seyahatnamesi [Tuhfetü'n-Nüzzar fi Garaibi'l-Emsar ve'l-Acaibi'l-Esfar]*, Yenişafak Yayınları, İstanbul

<sup>79</sup> (Published by) Halil İnalçık; *The Customs Register of Caffa, 1487-1490*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1995

<sup>80</sup> Robert Mantran; *XVI ve XVII. Yüzyılda İstanbul'da Gündelik Hayat [La Vie Quotidienne a Constantinople au Temp de Soliman le Magnifique et de se Successeurs (XVIe et XVIIe Siecles)]*; Trans: Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1991, p. 143

<sup>81</sup> Lütfi Güçer; “Grain Supply of Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century”, (in) Charles ISAAWI; *The Economic History of Turkey, 1800-1914*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980, (pp .26-31), p.27

<sup>82</sup> Salih Aynural; *İstanbul Değirmenleri ve Fırınları, Zahire Ticareti (1740-1840)*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p.13

<sup>83</sup> Güçer; op. cit., p.29

<sup>84</sup> Mantran; op.cit. ,p .42

<sup>85</sup> Rhoads Murphey; *Ottoman Warfare 1500-1700*, UCL Press, Padstow, 1999, p.11

and avoided other powers like Poland and Muscovy to reach the Black Sea. *"It is no accident that the Russian appearance on the shores of the Black Sea (which brought about a sudden and serious deterioration of Ottoman power) could take place only after the Crimean Khanate had been tamed in the late eighteenth century."*<sup>86</sup> Thus until the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), Black Sea was closed to all foreign ships, and a Turkish lake with strong Ottoman positions around it.

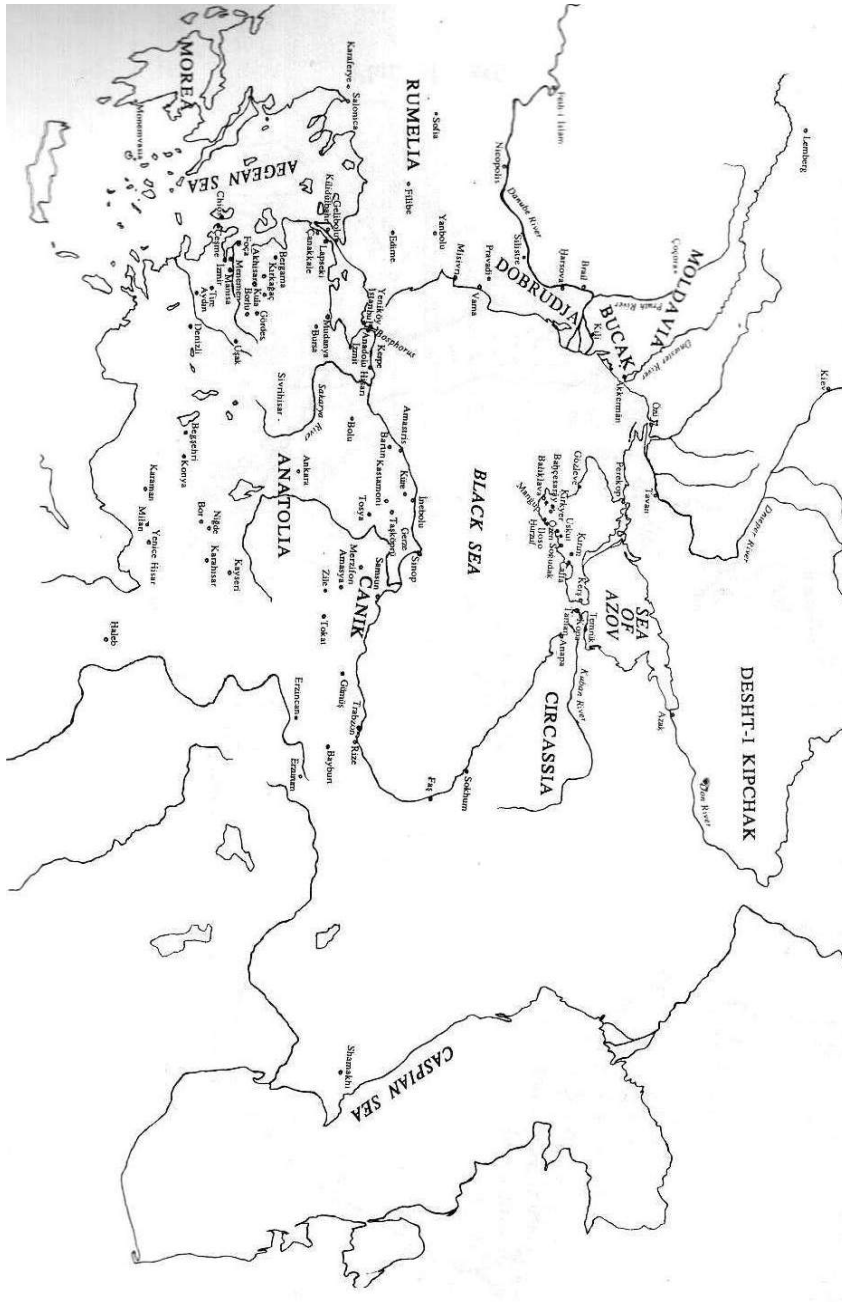
## CONCLUSIONS

As shown throughout the paper, Ottoman Empire was an Anatolian-Balkan Empire with a dominant Muslim and Orthodox population. The Balkans played an important role as a power base and a source of natural resources. By controlling Anatolia and the Balkans and later the Crimean Peninsula, the Ottomans were to control the Black Sea, and turn it into an Ottoman lake for some time. Ottoman Sultans, just at the very beginning were willing to cooperate with the Orthodox Christian population of Anatolia. Especially when Mehmed II conquered Constantinople, he saw himself as the successor of Roman emperors. Thus he used the title "Kayzer-i Rum" ("Caesar of the Roman Empire", this title was also one of the main reasons of the rivalry with the Habsburgs and Romanovs who also claimed the same title and considered themselves as the successors of the Empire) and tried to integrate the Orthodox population into the imperial structure by giving privileges to the Church. The Ottomans, at the height of their power, were able to fulfill their promises to the subjects of the state, a just rule for everybody. There was no serious uprising in the Balkans even three centuries after the Ottoman conquest. The Ottomans, by appointing converts to high posts and incorporating the Christian elite into Ottoman society ruled a cosmopolitan society, while at the same time protecting the rights and freedoms of the peasantry. To sum up I can state that, during the first centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, the Ottomans managed to conquer the hearts and minds of Balkan people.

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<sup>86</sup> Fisher; *The Crimean Tatars*, p.38

**MAP I- THE BLACK SEA BASIN**  
(Source: Halil İnalçık, *The Customs Register...*, p.205)



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