



Reclamation of Agrarian Space in Parts of Ottoman Rumeli, 15th – 16th centuries (Case study of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra)

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Abstract

The study focuses on the process of reclamation of agrarian space on the territory of the Thracian valley, the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra. Based on different archival material – Ottoman registrations of 15th and 16th centuries, chronicles and ' accounts it reveals features of the local environment and the adaptation of the colonized Muslim population to the conquered territories. In the analyses of the economic activities and the agrarian profile of the villages we use a different approach which is more secure in times of inflation as it was the last decades of the 16th century. We define the number and quantity of different agrarian productions but not as a quantity in money but to show each agrarian production as a tax portion to the total tax portion of the villages instead of comparing enlisted numbers of the registered taxes. It traces back the process of reclamation of the agrarian space by revealing the agrarian profile of the registered newly established settlements. The main observations refer to the role of the semi-nomadic groups of the yürüks who were engaged more in agriculture, than in pastoral nomadism.

Keywords: agriculture, pastoral nomadism, yürüks

Öz

Çalışma, Eskihisar Zağra kazasının yer aldığı Trakya vadisindeki tarım alanlarının değerlendirilmesi sürecine odaklanmaktadır. 15. ve 16. yüzyıl Osmanlı kayıtları gibi farklı arşiv materyalleri, kronikler ve seyahat raporları; yerel çevrenin özelliklerini ve bölgeye yerleştirilmiş Müslüman nüfusun fethedilen bölgelere adaptasyonunu ortaya koyuyor. Köylerin ekonomik faaliyetlerinin ve tarım profilinin analizinde, 16. yüzyılın son on yıllarında olduğu gibi enflasyon zamanlarında daha güvenli olan farklı bir yaklaşım kullanıyoruz. Farklı tarımsal üretimlerin sayısını ve miktarını tanımlıyoruz. Fakat bu; para cinsinden bir miktar olarak veya kayıtlı vergilerin miktarlarının listesinin karşılaştırılması şeklinde yapılmıyor. Her bir tarımsal üretimin köylerin toplam vergi miktarındaki payı gösterilmeye çalışılıyor. Kayıtlardaki yeni kurulan yerleşim yerlerinin tarım profilini ortaya çıkararak, tarım alanının değerlendirilmesi sürecini geriye doğru izlemek mümkün olmaktadır. Ana gözlemler, kırsal göçebelikten ziyade tarımla uğraşan yarı göçebe Yörük gruplarının rolüne işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: tarım, kırsal göçebelik, Yörükler

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The struggle between the different *beyliks* in Anatolia led to the birth of the Ottoman state that later became an empire controlling huge territories on three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe. The success of the 16th “classical age” is related not only to political power, expansion of territories and functioning administrative system, but also meant economic growth and struggle for economic hegemony in the Mediterranean world.¹ This territorial expansion depended on the economic growth and the establishment of a tax system that functioned on each provincial level. In the European territories – *Rumeli* - one of the challenges they faced during the 14th century from an economic point of view were the depopulated areas including the parts in Thracian valley.

The present paper is based on different archival materials – Ottoman *taputahrir defters* of 15th and 16th centuries, travelers’ accounts, chronicles, and focuses on the important topic of reclamation of agrarian space in parts of Ottoman Rumeli – the territory of modern Eastern Upper Thrace, where during the 15th and 16th centuries, the Ottoman kaza of Eskihişar Zağra was situated. It aims to reveal the process of the “adaptation” of the colonized Muslim population, predominantly semi-nomadic groups (*yürüks*), to the local environment and shown by their economic activities. It traces back the process of reclamation of the agrarian space by revealing the agrarian profile of the registered newly established settlements. The approach we apply is to define the number and quantity of different agrarian productions but not as a quantity in money but to show each agrarian production as a tax portion to the total tax portion of the villages. This approach shows the agrarian profile of the lands, i.e. the biggest portion was for the cereals, then the vegetables, vineyards and etc. This provides an excellent possibility for the researcher not only to examine and trace the process of reclamation of agrarian land but to outline the stages of how the environment influenced both – the establishment of a settlement network and modified the agrarian profile of the newly founded villages in some parts of Ottoman Rumeli, present Eastern Upper Thrace.

The kaza of Eskihişar Zağra (Zağra-i Atik), is situated in modern Eastern Upper Thrace and almost overlaps with the present territory of Stara Zagora district. The earliest preserved Ottoman registration of 1489² reveals that it was a city with only Muslim population. Since its existence in the Late Medieval Ages is beyond any doubt, the researchers are more likely to define it as a city that has existed before the Ottoman conquest and soon after that, it was repopulated by colonized Muslim population.³ The average altitude in this part of the Thracian valley is 160 m, the field is heavily cut by Maritsa (*Meriç*), Tundzha (*Tunca*) and Sazlyka rivers’ tributaries and this in Ottoman times meant areas with marshy lands.

The old Bulgarian historiography is more likely to see the destruction of settlement network predominantly due to the Ottoman invasions,⁴ while researchers of the last more than 20 years reveal a more complicated process that affected the situation with the settlement network in the valley. It suffered

¹ Halil İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300 – 1600* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973).

² BOA, TT 26, ff. 2 – 63.

³ Machiel Kiel, “Urban development in Bulgaria in the Turkish Period: The Place of Architecture in the Process,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4/ 2 (1989): 83. See also: Ömer Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir iskân ve kolonizasyon metodu olarak. Vakıflar ve temlikler,” *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2 (1934): 283-296; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, “XVI Asırda Çirmen Sancağı’nın Sosyal ve Demografik Tarihi,” *Türk Tarih Kurumu* IV (1956): 1795-1801; Николай Тодоров, „По някои въпроси на балканския град през XV – XVII век,“ [По някои въпроси на балканския град през XV-XVII век], *Исторически Преглед* 1 (1962): 32-38; Страшимир Димитров, „За приемствеността в развитието на балканските градове през XV-XVI в.,“ [За priemstvenostta v razvitiето na balkanskite gradove prez XV-XVI v.] *Балканистика* 2 (1987): 9-38.

⁴ Васил Златарски, *България през XIV-XV век. Лекционен курс* [Balgaria prez XIV-XV vek. Lektsionen kurs] (София: Издателство „Изток – Запад“, 2005), 212-242; Петър Ников, „Турското завладяване на България и съдбата на последните Шишмановци,“ [Turското zavladayavane na Balgaria i sadbata na poslednite Shishmanovtsi] *Известия на историческото дружество* IX/ 4 (1928): 7-8, 42-46; Димитър Ангелов, „Турското завоевание и борбата на балканските народи против нашествениците,“ [Turското zavoevanie i borbatana balkanskite narodi protiv nashestvenitsite] *Исторически преглед* 4 (1953): 374-398.

during the long-term war conflicts between the medieval Bulgarian kingdom and the Byzantine Empire which also resulted as depopulation of the area.⁵

Numerous Ottoman sources of 15th and 16th centuries (detailed and synoptic registrations) reveal the dynamics of establishment of settlement network.⁶ The Ottoman chronicles date back the conquest of the region under study soon after the fall of Edirne.⁷ The city and the center of the kaza Eskihisar Zağra by the year of 1489 had a Muslim primary school (muallimhane), mosque, and representatives of the Ottoman administrative and military system, and was part of Paşa sancak – this all by no doubts indicates the early conquest of the territory.⁸ The settlements of the territory of the *kaza* under study are part of two different military and administrative territorial units – *sancaks*, in the Ottoman Empire – the Pasha (central parts) and the Niğbolu *sancak*.

The data preserved in the Ottoman registrations of 15th and 16th centuries provides interesting information on the settlement network, and more precisely, the establishment of a new settlement network, predominantly small and unstable villages with registered yürük taxpayers. In details, the information from the second half of the 15th century (1489-1491) refers to 91% registered Muslim taxpayers and 9% Non-Muslims. The formation of the Muslim community is result of migration and colonization of representatives of different parts of Anatolia. As long as the registrations provide information on the region we could assume that the majority of them were from the region of Karaman, Saruhan, Aydın and Menteşe.⁹ Another interesting information is that more than 80% of them are registered as yürük taxpayers. The characteristics of the settlement network refer to 72.1% unstable, small newly found villages with Muslim taxpayers and 27.9% stable, presumable old villages that existed before the Ottoman conquest of the territory of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra. The new settlements are situated predominantly up to 200 m altitude with, in the lower parts of Thrace, while the settlements with registered Non-Muslim population are stable and situated above the altitude of 200 m.

Interesting observations could be made referring the villages part of the Niğbolu sancak. Throughout 15th and 16th centuries the ottoman registrations mention five villages, situated on the territory of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra as part of Niğbolu sancak.¹⁰ The villages are outside the lower parts of Thrace. They are big and stable settlements which most probably had existed before the ottoman conquest of the area and 86.6% of the taxpayers are Non-Muslims. We can assume that these settlements represent the

⁵ Grigor Boykov vd., *Balkan City or Ottoman City? A Study on the Models of Urban Development in Ottoman Upper Thrace 15th – 17th c. : Proceedings of the Third International Congress on the Islamic Civilization in the Balkans 1 – 5 November 2006, Bucharest, Romania* (İstanbul: İRCICA, 2010), 69 – 84; Stefan Dimitrov vd., *Demographic characteristic of the urban population in Dimetoka during the XV-XVIth centuries: Dünden Bugüne Batı Trakya (Western Thrace from Past to Today)* (İstanbul: Şen Yıldız Yayıncılık Hediyeleş Eşya ve Tekstil San ve Tic. Ltd. Şti, 2016), 335-343.

⁶ Başbakanlı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), İstanbul, TT 26, ff. 1-62; National library “St.St. Cyril and Methodius” (NBKM), Oriental department (Or D), Hk 12/9, f. 39; NBKM, Or D, Cl 7/2, f. 8; NBKM, Or D, F. 88, a.u. 752, f.9; NBKM, Or D, Defters № 649, f. 68, 83-83; BOA TT 77, ff. 459-542; BOA TT 439, ff. 322-328; NBKM, Or D, Th. 37/50; BOA TT 382. ff. 655-666; BOA TT 311, ff. 72-75; BOA TT 494, ff. 421-514; BOA TT 498, ff. 30-39, f. 260, ff. 355-362, ff. 625-639.

⁷ There are variety of hypotheses referring the year of the conquest of Edirne by the Ottomans. See: Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire, the Classical Age 1300-1600* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 23-54; Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, “La conquête d’Adrianople par les Turcs: la pénétration turque en Thrace et la valeur des chroniques ottomans,” *Travaux et Mémoires. Centre d’histoire et de civilisation byzantines* 1 (1965): 439-461; Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire 1300-1481* (İstanbul: Isis Press, 1990), 30; Elizabeth Zacariadu, “The Conquest of Adrianople by the Turks,” *Studi Veneziani* 12 (1970): 211-217.

⁸ Rossitsa Gradeva vd., *Administrative system and provincial government in the Central Balkan territories of the Ottoman empire, 15th century : The Turks*, Cilt 3, *Ottomans* (Ankara, Yeni Türkiye Publications, 2002), 498-507.

⁹ Ayşe Kayapınar, Levent Kayapınar, vd., *Anadolu Beylikleri ve Balkanlar : Anadolu Beylikleri* (İstanbul, Siyen Yayınları, 2018), 451 – 524.

¹⁰ NBKM, Or D, Hk 12/9, f. 39; NBKM, Or D, Cl 7/2, f. 8; NBKM, Or D, F. 88, a.u. 752, f.9; BOA 439, ff. 322-328; NBKM, Or D, Th. 37/50; BOA TT 382. ff. 655-666;

characteristic of the old settlement network. It is suggested that the Ottomans administrated a certain region soon after its conquest.¹¹ Furthermore, the mentioned settlements might outline the south border zone of the Second Bulgarian kingdom at the time the ottomans conquered the region since the territory of Niğbolu sancak is considered to match the territory of the Second Bulgarian kingdom.¹²

The registrations for the 16th century confirm what is stated about the second half of the 15th century. The information of the first half of the 16th century refers to the same small and unstable villages in the Thracian valley with predominant Muslim population.¹³ The process of the establishment of a stable settlement network in the region continued for more than a century with ongoing migration of Muslim population a great part of whom were the semi-nomadic groups of the yürüks colonized in the valley and known with their pastoral life and practicing agriculture as a supplement to their economy. The newcomers could easily adapt to the local environment providing huge pasturelands, rivers and swamps – similar to the environment conditions in parts of Ottoman Anatolia where Ottoman registrations show high numbers of registered semi-nomadic groups.¹⁴ In the second half of the 16th century the different Ottoman registrations show the increase of stable and big settlements (50.9 %) still with predominant Muslim taxpayers of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra. I assume that these changes in the settlement network refer to the process of sedentarization of some seminomadic groups of the yürüks. A detailed analyses of the agrarian profile of the region will shed more light on the suggested hypothesis.

The reconstruction of the agrarian profile of the region under study will allow us to make observations on the process of adoption of the migrated Muslim population to the local environment. It was stated that the majority of the migrants were representative of the yürüks from different parts of Ottoman Anatolia – Karaman, Aydın, Menteşe, Saruhan. To reveal the process of reclamation of the agrarian space we shall try to define the number and quantity of different agrarian productions as a tax portion to the total tax portion of the villages and not as a quantity in money. This approach shows the agrarian profile of the lands, i.e. the biggest portion was for the cereals, then the vegetables, vineyards and etc.¹⁵ This approach allow us to make observations regardless inflation processes of the second half of the 16th century¹⁶ and makes possible to compare different portions estimated for the first and the second

¹¹ Rossitca Gradeva vd., *Administrative system and provincial government in the Central Balkan territories of the Ottoman empire, 15th century : The Turks. Vol. 3, Ottomans* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Publications, 2002), 498-507.

¹² Милена Петкова-Енчева vd., *Администриране на селища в Тракия през XVI век. Една хипотеза за южната граница на Шишманова България според информацията от османски данъчни регистри от XVI век* [Administrirane na selishta v Trakiya prez XVI vek. Edna hopiteza za yuzhnata granitsa na Shishmanova Balgaria spored informatsiyata ot osmanski danachni registry ot XVI vek] : *Из практиката на османската канцелария. Сборник материали от международната конференция „Османските регистри – извор за историята на Балканите* (София: Народна билбиотека „Св. св. Кирил и Методий, 2011), 195-197.

¹³ Milena Petkova, “The Process of Sedentarization of Semi-nomadic Groups of the Yörüks in Parts of 16th Century Ottoman Rumeli: Tax Control or Migration Control?,” *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies* 2//3 (2019): 30 – 33.

¹⁴ İlhan Şahin, *Osmanlı Döneminde Konar – Göçerler. İncelemeler – Araştırmalar* (İstanbul: Eren, 2006), 53–201; Halil İnalçık, *The Yürüks: Their Origins, Expansion and Economic Role : The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire. Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies and Turkish Ministry of Culture Joint Studies, 1993), 97-136; Doğan Yörük, “XV – XVI. Asırlarda Akşehir Ken Merkezinin Nüfus Yapısı,” *Bilig. Türk Dünyası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 45 (2018): 165-198; Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1983), 35 – 107.

¹⁵ The same approach was applied by Stefka Parveva in her research on the region of Edirne and South-west Peloponnese in the 18th century. See: Stefka Parveva, “Rural Agrarian and Social Structure in the Edirne region during the second half of the Seventeenth century,” *Etudes balkaniques*, 3 (2000): 55-90; Idem, *Agrarian land and harvest in South-west Peloponnese in the early Eighteenth century: Village, Town and People in the Ottoman Balkans 16th – mid – 19th century* (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2009), 61-110.

¹⁶ Ömer L. Barkan, “The Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: a Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6 (1975): 9-28; Linda Darling, *Revenue-raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560 – 1660* (Leiden: E.J. Brill), 35-39; Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 112-148.

half of the century. The conclusions and observations refer only to registered taxpayers in the *defters* under study. It is important to outline that the data represents the average production of each of the registered agricultural crops and at least one or two years passed before the Ottomans start to collect what was once declared during the registration.¹⁷

The village and its boundaries was the most known place for the medieval peasants, the place where they could practice different agricultural activities. Preserved copies of judicial record in the Ottoman registrations provide detailed information on the local environment of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra.¹⁸ The data of Ottoman sources reveals regions in Thracian valley with high density of small rivers, swamps and fields of reed and pasturelands on the territory of the kaza. This was the environment where semi-nomadic groups settled and use the land for reclamation and grow of different grains and other crops. In Ottoman Anatolia they reclaimed land in marshy zones to grow wheat, cotton and rice.¹⁹ The information about swamps in the Thracian valley is provided also in other sources. The History by Leonis Diakoni and his “Historiae”, 10th century describe the territory as full of forests and bush woods along “with swamps and small rivers”.²⁰ An imperial order (ferman) of 1566 related to the forthcoming Ottoman army from Istanbul to Thrace states to build new bridges to secure the moving of the troops. Kethüda Mehmed was in charge to investigate where the swamps and flooded areas were.²¹ The travellers’ accounts of 17th and 19th centuries also describe big areas of swamps and bush woods.²²

We shall start the analyses of the agrarian production with the grains – wheat, barley, rye, millet. The traditional cultivation of cereals on the Balkans served as the main source for food and was an essential product of market exchange. Furthermore, the results of the archaeological excavations refer to the cultivation of different kinds of grains during the period of 11th – 12th centuries.²³ Production of grains formed the biggest part of the tax revenues in the region. Wheat is grown in every village on the territory of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra and often its production was more than the substantial *minimum vital*. As it is stated for Islamic societies, one-third of the earnings was for the sustenance of the family.²⁴ In the region under study the peasants had surpluses of agrarian production. We could assume that these

¹⁷ Nicoară Beldiceanu, Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, “Règlement ottoman concernant le recensement (première moitié du XVI^e siècle),” *Südost-Forschungen* 4 (1978): 1-40; Huri İslamoğlu-Inan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire: Agrarian Power Relations and Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia during the 16th Century*, *Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage Series, Vol 1* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 36-37; Suraiya Faroqhi, “Taxation and Urban Activities in Sixteenth Century Anatolia,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 1 (1979-1980): 19-53; Spyros Asdrachas, “Aux Balkans du X^e siècle producteurs directs et marches,” *Etudes Balkaniques* 3 (1970): 46; John C. Alexander, *Counting the Grains: Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Reading the Ottoman Mufassal Tahrir Defters*: Mélanges Prof. Machiel Kiel (Arab Historical Review for Ottoman Studies), 19-20 (Zaghouan, 1999): 57-58.

¹⁸ BOA, TT 498, f. 361.

¹⁹ Halil İnalçık, *Empire and Population : An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire. Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 37.

²⁰ In the present paper we use the Bulgarian translation of Leonis Diakoni’s “Caloensis Historiae libri decem ve vellitione bellica Nicephori Augusti” published in: Красимира Гагова, *Тракия през Българското средновековие. Историческа география [Trakiya prez Balgarskoto srednovekovie. Istoricheska geografija]* (София: Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски, 2002), 22.

²¹ Translation of the document is published in: Елена Грозданова, Стефан Андреев, *Българите през XVI век по документи от наши и чужди архиви [Balgariite prez XVI vek po dokumenti ot nashi i chuzhdi arhivi]* (София: Отечествен фронт, 1986), 47.

²² *Немски пътеписи за Балканите XVII – средата на XVIII век.* [Nemski patepisi za Balkanite XVII – sredata na XVIII vek] (София: Наука и култура, 1986), 146; *Френски пътеписи за Балканите XV – средата на XVIII век.* [Frenski patepisi za Balkanite XV – sredata na XVIII vek] (София: Наука и култура, 1975), 410-411; *Английски пътеписи за Балканите (края на XVI – 30те години на XIX век)* [Angliyski patepisi za Balkanite (kraya na XVI – 30te godini na XIX vek)] (София: Наука и изкуство, 1987), 555-556.

²³ Борис Борисов, „Икономиката на Североизточна Тракия през XI – XII век,” [Ikonomikata na Severoiztochna Trakiya prez XI – XII vek] *Известия на Старозагорския исторически музей* 1 (2002): 30-36.

²⁴ Halil İnalçık, *The State Treasury and Budgets : An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire. Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 77 – 78.

surpluses of grain production were sold at the closest city market by the peasants. The cultivation of different kind of grains provided the livelihood of the population, and it was also part of the necessary amount of food for the domestic animals.²⁵ So, the average share of the produced wheat during the 16th century is 54% and the average amount of the cultivated barley, rye and millet comprises 22.7 %. The data refers to all the settlements from the lower parts, i.e. the newly founded villages, and also to settlements above 200 m altitude. Thus the produced grain production in total on the territory of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra comprises 76.7% of all the tax amount.

Agriculture was the most important economic activity in the Ottoman Empire, therefore it is stated to be a priority for the state. The wealth was derived mainly from tax resources in the conquered lands where the main purpose were the collected revenues, i.e. for fiscal reasons.²⁶

The next sector of the agrarian economy which is presented in every village on the territory of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra is the tithe on beehives. The production of honey and wax is in the third place after the production of wheat and other cereals. This production is presented in Muslim and Non-Muslim settlements, which makes it a well-known and well-controlled sector of the agrarian economy widely spread at different altitude. The average share of the tithe on beehives is 3%.

The orchards presented a separate and important part of the income of the settlements with predominant yürük population. There are details on the type of orchards in some of the registered villages – pears and others, but the information is insufficient to make observations on the species of orchards in the Thracian valley. Very often the taxation of orchards is entered together with the walnut trees. During the 19th century the production of walnut trees were used to produce oil with better quality than the olive oil.²⁷ During the 16th century the average amount of the portion of the orchards is 1% of all the tax revenues.

The vegetable gardens were also located within the village boundaries, as it is described in the documents providing information on the village borders (*sinirname*) they were situated near wells, channels or small river inflows. The portions of the vegetable gardens is only 0.5% of the total registered agrarian production.

The share of lentil comprised only 0.1% of the total amount of the tax revenues during the 16th century. It is noteworthy that the production of legumes are too poorly represented in the tax registrations. For the second half of the century when the registrations seem to be more complete the data of absence of cultivated legumes is even more surprising. I assume that the drought during the second half of the 16th century that affected the production of the other agricultural products like the grains for example, affected the cultivation of the legumes as well.

In addition to growing grains, vegetable and orchards, the peasants in the Thracian valley and the region of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra cultivated vineyards whose average portion for the 16th centuries is 0.4%. It is interesting to observe that in some of the settlements for which no vineyards are recorded

²⁵ Цветана Георгиева, „Хлябът, който разделя и събира светове“ [Нлябат, koito razdelya svetove] *Български фолклор* 1 (1993): 7-19; Страхимир Димитров vd., *Добруджанското земеделие през XVI век* [Dobrudzhanskoto zemedelie prezz XVI vek] : Сборник в чест на проф. Хр. Гандев. Изследвания по случай 75 години от рождението му (София: БАН, 1985), 112-113; Gilles Veinstein vd., *La grande sécheresse de 1560 au Nord de la Mer Noire: perceptions et réactions des autorités ottomanes : Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete III* (Crete: Crete University Press, 1999), 273-278; Evangelia, Balta, *L'Eubée a la fin du XVe siècle. Économie et Population. Les registres de l'année 1474* (Athens: , 1989), 64-71; Huri, İslamoğlu-inan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire: Agrarian Power Relations n Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia during the 16th c.* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 45-46.

²⁶ Halil İnalçık, *The Rural Landscape and the Settlement of Nomads : An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 158-161.

²⁷ *Етнография на България* [Etnografiya na Bulgaria] (София: БАН, 1964), 24 – 25.

register provides information on tax collected for the production of wine or the import of wine (fuç-i hamır). This information refers only to a small number of settlements – 6, with predominant Non-Muslim population.

The average amount of the production of rice during the 16th century is 4 % and only Muslim population is engaged in its cultivation. The rice was cultivated near the river inflows of the Thracian valley with predominant yürük settlements. I assume this was not only related to their ability to reclaim land from marshy areas but from a certain point of view reveals processes of the sedentarization of the semi-nomadic groups. The issue of whether it was a policy of the ottoman state to settle nomadic groups is still an open discussion, though most of the researchers accept the thesis that it was a state policy part of the conquest of depopulated areas.²⁸

The observations on the livestock breeding are limited due to the characteristic of the sources which are related to present data of tax revenues used for the formation of different revenues like timars and zeamet. Since the yürüks were the predominant Muslim population in the village of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra, the sheep breeding could have comprised large income for the state treasury and therefor registered as *mikatta*'s which are not included in the *taputahrir* defter under study. Therefore, the full portion of the livestock breeding could not be estimated using only *taputahrir* registrations for the study. What the registrations under study show is an average portion referring the registered livestock breeding during the 16th century comprising only 7.8 %.

Conclusion

Despite the limitation framework of the research due to the specifics of the historical sources, the results allows to assume the following suggestions. The biggest portion of the agricultural production was the one of the grains where the wheat dominated on the territory of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra. The registered taxpayers cultivated orchards, had vegetable gardens, vineyards – the last ones are well represented in the village with Non-Muslim taxpayers, in the area between 200-600m altitudes. The rice is presented only in the Muslim villages, in the lower parts of Thrace. We could assume that a certain percent of the taxpayers were engaged in sheep breeding, the incomes from it were not included in the registers under study. Muslims are the majority of the registered taxpayers and representatives of the semi-nomadic groups. They established new settlement network in the Thracian valley and managed to reclaim land of marshy and bushy areas near the river inflows. The process of adoption to the conquered lands continued more than a century since the Ottoman conquest in the second half of the 14th century. This process reveals the sedentarization of parts of the semi-nomadic groups which are presented as reaya engaged in different agricultural production – grains, vegetables, orchards, legumes, etc. This sedentarization and agricultural activities led to the “economic” conquest of the territory of the kaza of Eskihisar Zağra.

²⁸ Ömer L. Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Sürgünler [Part 1],” *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 11 (1949-50): 524-569; Ömer L. Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Sürgünler [Part 2],” *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 13 (1952): 60 – 81; Ömer L. Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Sürgünler [Part 3],” *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 14 (1953-54): 20 – 236; Halil İnalcık, “Ottoman Methods of Conquest,” *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103 – 129; Harun Yeni, “The Utilization of Mobile Groups in the Ottoman Balkans: A Revision of General Perception”. *Oriental Archive*, 83 (2013): 83– 205.

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