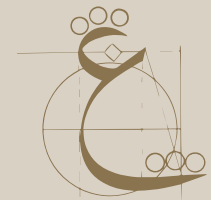
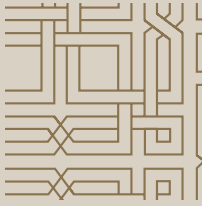




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# Tracing the Ottoman Trade Network in North Greece\*

KUZEY YUNANİSTAN'DA  
OSMANLI TİCARET AĞININ  
İZİNİ SÜRMEK



ANASTASIA DOLOGLOU\*

## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to present and draw a plan of action to promote the Ottoman trade network of Northern Greece. This network had been developed since the fifteenth century and it was a part of the broader system of communication, administration, urban development and economical flow of the Ottoman Empire. The study focuses on the geographic region extending from Thrace to Central Macedonia, emphasizing its monuments and the urban centers that are important for this multidimensional network. Most of these monuments are constructed on lines of the former Roman road the Via Egnatia, also known as the Sol Kol. These buildings of the Ottoman trade network are of a unified historical site that need for equal management beyond national or state identities. In the context of the inter-cultural dialogue promoted in the European framework, this historical site should be understood as a means for cultural exchange and unity for present-day Balkanic societies, for whom once formed the unified Ottoman Empire.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Empire, Trade Networks, Trade Buildings, Northern Greece, Heritage.

## ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Kuzey Yunanistan'daki Osmanlı ticaret ağının yeterli düzeyde anlaşılmasını sağlayacak bir çerçeve çizmektir. 15. yüzyıldan itibaren gelişmekte olan Kuzey Yunanistan ticaret ağı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun haberleşme, yönetim, kentsel gelişme ve iktisadi faaliyetlerden oluşan oldukça kapsamlı sisteminin bir parçasıydı. Araştırma, Trakya'dan Orta Makedonya'ya kadar uzanan coğrafi bölgeye odaklanmakta ve bu çok boyutlu ağ için önemli olan yapıları ve şehir merkezlerini incelemektedir. Bahsi geçen yapıların çoğu Sol Kol olarak da bilinen Roma Via Egnatia yolu üzerinde inşa edilmiştir. Osmanlı ticaret ağının bu yapıları, ulusal kimlikler veya devlet kimliklerinin ötesinde eşit yönetime ihtiyaç duyan müşterek tarihi bir alandır. Avrupada önemsenen kültürler arası diyalog bağlamında, bu tarihsel alan, bir zamanlar Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu teşkil etmiş Balkan milletleri arasında kültürel değişim ve birliktelik için bir araç olarak anlaşılmalıdır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Ticaret Ağları, Ticari Binalar, Kuzey Yunanistan, Kültürel Miras.



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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of the “terrestrial trade network” for most people represents a study of the road networks, the medium for the transportation of goods and for human interaction. To make a research with this point of view, one needs to take specific parameters into consideration: the human factor, the intermediate wishing to communicate and carrying the transportation out, the equipment that making the journey possible and at last the architectural stock satisfying the demands of transportation. Parallel to that point, in the study of the terrestrial commercial network we pay attention to social, financial and historical implications, crystallized over time through artistic creativity, cultural expression, redeveloping of social structures. This thought was the initiative for the study of the Ottoman trade network in Northern Greece as a cultural and historical entity; as a means for protecting and promoting the Ottoman monuments to ensure their long-term sustainability.

The Ottoman were present in Macedonia starting with the fourteenth century. The Roman Via Egnatia and the Via Militaris, lying from Istanbul to the Adriatic Sea and Central Europe coasts, respectively<sup>1</sup>, served as a battering ram for the Balkanic conquests<sup>2</sup>. The following centuries were of periods of major political and institutional upheavals in tandem with the Ottoman state’s ongoing policies of to Ottomanize the urban space and the peripheries<sup>3</sup>. During the Ottoman Era, the terrestrial trade network was an essential element of the social and administrative structure of the Empire. It had a profound impact on its fate, as it was highly related to the economic growth, the international contacts and, the development of the peripheries and the settlements.

The centralized Ottoman state system was an important determinant in the development of urbanism<sup>4</sup>. As Rabah Saoud states “Islam made particular emphasis on the form and design of the city enabling it a greater functionality and responsiveness to meet the socio-economic and cultural needs of the community”<sup>5</sup>. A dense network of towns and villages were safeguarding the tax collection and the economic control of the countryside and simultaneously facilitating the interconnection of the settlements and the transportation of goods to the major urban centers. In proximity to communication networks and related to large landholdings, towns with abundance of natural resources soon became the center of their periphery and accumulated all the financial, commercial and intellectual activity within their walls<sup>6</sup>. The Ottomans introduced an appropriate infrastructure in response to new urban roles and functions: the Friday mosque, with its subordinate buildings, alongside the *bedesten*, formed the religious and economic core of the town. These embodied the symbols of ideology, power and legitimacy of the new ruling dynasty.<sup>7</sup>

1 Κωνσταντίνα Πανάγου, «Διακίνηση βαμβακιού τον 18ο και 19ο αιώνα», Δρόμοι και Κόμβοι της Βαλκανικής (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πολιτιστική Πρωτεύουσα της Ευρώπης, 1997), 201-212.

2 For a thorough study on the historic development of Via Egnatia refer to: Γιάννης Λώλος, *Εγνατία Οδός*, (Αθήνα: Ολκός, 2008) and Traian Stoianovich, “A route type: The Via Egnatia under Ottoman rule”, *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, *Symposium: Halcyon Days in Crete II*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Rethymmon: Crete University Press, 1996), 203-216.

3 Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, A (Athens: Smili, 1994), 158-163.

4 Fatma Acun, “A Portrait of the Ottoman Cities”, *The Muslim World* 92 (Fall 2002), 255-281.

5 Rabah Saoud, “Introduction to the Islamic city”, *Foundation for Science Technology and Civilization* (August 2002), Pub. ID:4012.

6 The role of the town for the Ottoman Empire’s economy and state is covered in great detail in Αιμιλία Στεφανίδου, *Η πόλη-λιμάνι της Καβάλας κατά την περίοδο της τουρκοκρατίας: πολεοδομική διερεύνηση (1391-1912)* (Θεσσαλονίκη: ΑΠΘ-Τμήμα Αρχιτεκτόνων, Διδ. Διατριβή, 1991).

7 Rabah Saoud, “Muslim Architecture under Ottoman Patronage (1326-1924)”, *Foundation for Science Technology and Civilization* (July 2004), Pub. ID: 4064.

Waqfs<sup>8</sup> played an important role in the expanding trade, the emergence of new urban and commercial centers and the diffusion of the Ottoman architectural agenda. Not only did they help in the repopulation of conquered areas, but they formed, as well, a practice for the construction and maintenance of public works (such as road networks and bridges).<sup>9</sup> Urban centers benefited from waqfs with the establishment of pious institutions and public services: mosques and *imârets* stood for the performance of religious duties, *hans* (inn) and caravanserais for the travelers and visitors, *hamams* for pleasure and clearance, aqueducts and road networks.<sup>10</sup> Buildings such as the *bedestens*, the caravanserais<sup>11</sup>, stores and craft shops, providing a more significant part of the urban commercial facilities, belonged to waqfs<sup>12</sup>. Thus, we can argue that the waqf system was directly related to urban economic activity.

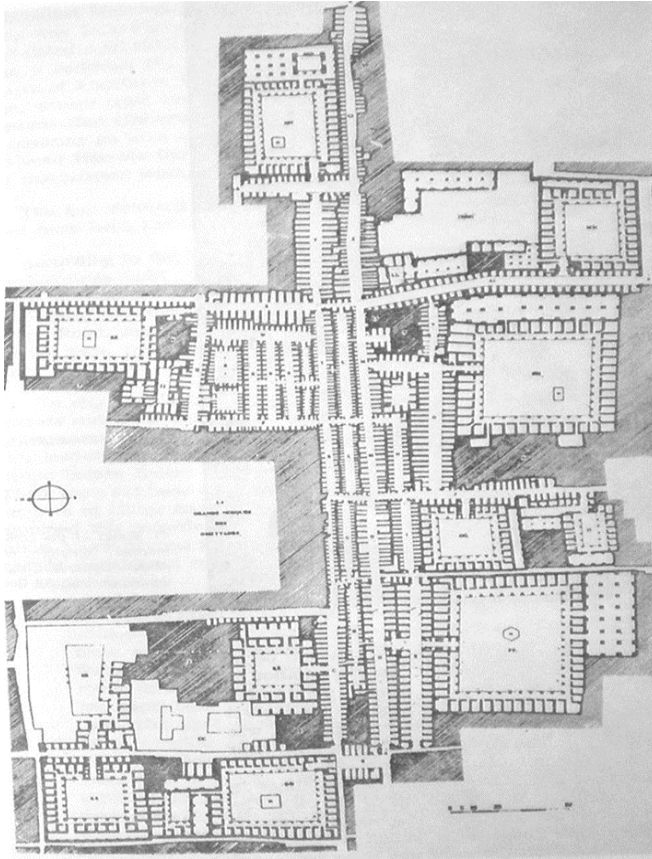


Figure 1. Aleppo. Layout of the commercial and religious center of the town (Cezar M., 1983)

8 Konstantinos Lalenis - Elena Samourkasidou, "Wakfs in Kavala, Greece: A legal, Political and Architectural Heritage Issue", *Archnet-IJAR* 7.22 (July 2013), 206-220.

9 Vassilis Demetriades, "Wakifs along the Via Egnatia", *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, Symposium: *Halcyon Days in Crete II*, ed. Zachariadou Elizabeth (Rethymnon: CUP, 1996), 85-86.

10 Lalenis - Samourkasidou, "Wakfs in Kavala, Greece", 206-208.

11 Ayşil Tükel Yavuz, "The concepts that shape Anatolian Seljuk caravanserais", *Muqarnas* 14 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 80-95.

12 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Urban development in Ottoman Anatolia (16.-17. centuries)", *M.E.T.U. Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 7.1 (Spring 1981), 40-42.

## Mutual Relationship of Roads and Cities

The mobility of the people in the Islamic world is an underestimated phenomenon. From the Seljuks to the Ottomans, the terrestrial routes were means of military, commercial or educational mobilization. Most importantly, routes served for the performance of pilgrimage. The major Balkan centers got connected by a vast and complex network of regional and supra-local roads and, altogether, via Istanbul, with the Silk Road and the old caravan routes, up until China and India. These connections were established to enforce commerce through the financial support and development of the urban centers, and for the amelioration of the existing land routes.<sup>13</sup> The most frequently used commercial roads of the empire at the European Continent followed the path of pre-existing axes.



**Figure 2.** The bridge of Hatzikavoura in Veria. 19<sup>th</sup> c. (Kalligas' archive)

The infrastructure of roads and landscape was inextricably linked with the very essence and function of the trade network. The distribution of trade with caravans, the several-day trips on steep mountain tracks and the lack of safety, demanded frequent or overnight stops for rest and supplies. Fountains and off-road stations (*hans*, caravanserais and *menzilhânes*<sup>14</sup>) served as resting spaces or shelters<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand, constructing bridges<sup>16</sup> in a mountainous area like Northern Greece was imperative to ensure the continuity of movement and smooth trade flow.

<sup>13</sup> Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, 153-157.

<sup>14</sup> *Menzilhâne* is a horse or post station. Colin Heywood, "The Menzilhanes of the Sol Kol in the late 17th/early 18th century", *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699), Symposium: Halcyon Days in Crete II*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Rethymnon: CUP, 1996), 130-141.

<sup>15</sup> Κωνσταντίνος Καρανάτσης, "Παρόδιοι σταθμοί και χερσαίες επικοινωνίες στον ορεινό χώρο. Ταξιδεύοντας το 19ο αιώνα", *1Α' Συμπόσιο Ιστορίας και Τέχνης: Επικοινωνίες και Μεταφορές στην Προβιομηχανική περίοδο* (Κάστρο Μονεμβασίας: 23-26 Ιουλίου 1998), 207-208.

<sup>16</sup> For an excellent work on the bridge of Northern Greece see Γεώργιος Τσότσος, *Μακεδονικά Γεφύρια* (Θεσσαλονίκη: USP, 1997), 215 κ.εξ.



The critical role of the urban centers was the collecting, distributing and processing products and the management of financial profits. With this parallel, towns acted as an off-road station, a socialization and relaxation space. The *bedesten*<sup>17</sup> was the heart of the market and the treasury of the town. Along with the bazaar, *hans* and caravanserais offered shelter and places for mercantile and artisanal activities at the peripheries<sup>18</sup>. Craft industries and weekly bazaars were also placed at the outskirts of the cities.



Figure 3. Sketch of a 19<sup>th</sup> c. *han* in the vicinity of Kavala

As mentioned above, the architectural development and economic growth of a city was largely depended on the waqf institutions' operation. Therefore, to comprehend of the elements that constituted the Ottoman Era's trade networks deeply, we have to take the pious institutions of the urban centers into account, namely mosques, imârets and *hamams*.

### The Sol Kol and Its Urban Centers

The commercial network of Northern Greece was a part of the broader communication road system of the Ottoman Empire. Consciousness of the significance of the Roman Via Egnatia for military and commercial purposes, the Ottomans took the provision for its revival to a great extent.<sup>19</sup> They divided the unique road axis into two branches: the Orta Kol from Thessaloniki to Durres and the Sol Kol to the east, which linked Istanbul with South Greece.<sup>20</sup>

17 Mustafa Cezar, *Typical Commercial Buildings of the Ottoman Classical Period and the Ottoman Construction System* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Cultural Publications, 1983), 159-168.

18 Πασγάλης Ανδροῦδης, *Χάνια και Καραβάν-Σεράγια στον Ελλαδικό χώρο και στα Βαλκάνια* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Ο.Π.Ε.Π. ΑΕ, 2004), 17.

19 Stoianovich, "A route type", 205-213.

20 Heywood, "The Menzilhanes of the Sol Kol", 130-141.

Along with the Sol Kol axis, new urban centers emerged and old ones faced an economic upsurge and architectural renewal. Starting from Loutra (Trajanoupoli), the network passes by Komotini, Genisea, Kavala, Serres, Giannitsa and Veria and ends up in Thessaloniki. Those centers are the main focus of this paper. Although our perception of the early Ottoman Greek towns remains blurry, it is far from certain that they were shaped according to the Ottoman norm.

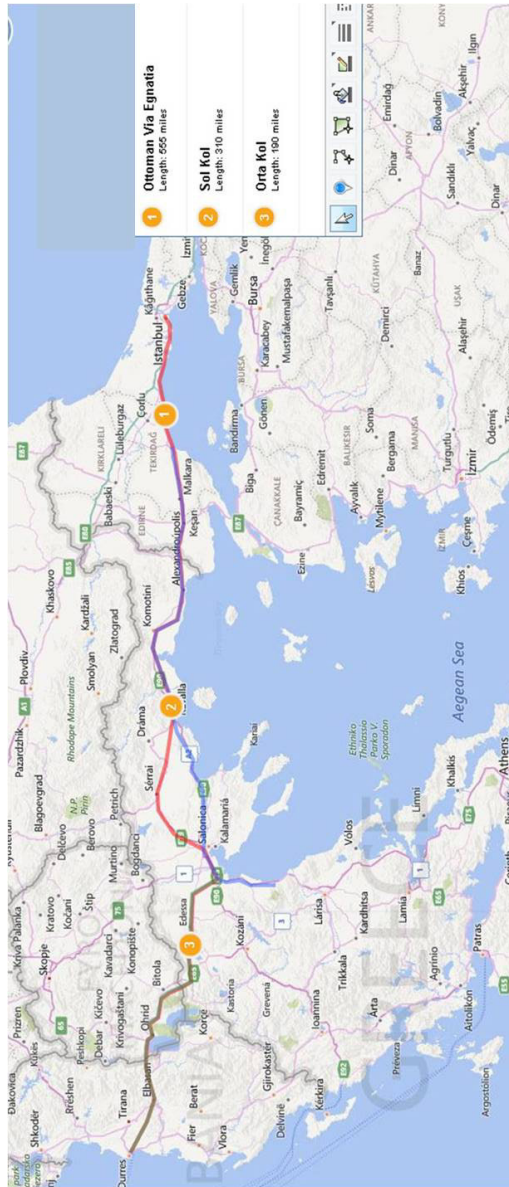
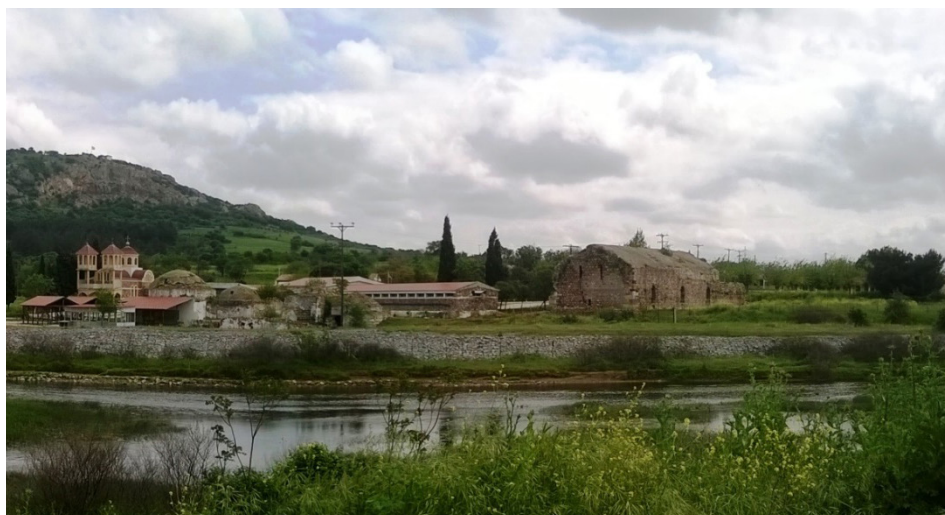


Figure 4. Sol and Orta Kol. The Ottoman Via Egnatia

This study focuses on the geographical region extending from Thrace to Central Macedonia. This choice is due to several reasons: (1) The presence of the most integral network, the Sol Kol, (2) the urban centers of this area forming a cultural unity since they shared the same historical background, a unique commercial and economic tie and, (3) towns of this region preserve an architectural stock of great importance for the promotion and study of the Ottoman trade of Northern Greece.

### Monuments of Ottoman Commercial Networks

Given the diversity and the complexity of the region's trade network, it is necessary to divide the monuments presented in this paper into three categories: (1) the monuments outside the urban centers, (2) the monuments within the cities, and (3) the historical urban complexes. The explanation of these three categories are as follows:



**Figure 5.** Trajanoupoli. The ottoman monuments co-exist with the modern thermal health facilities

1) The majority of road and landscape infrastructure once serving the Sol Kol does not exist today, apart from two stone bridges dating back to the late Ottoman Era, and the building complex at Trajanoupoli. According to historical sources, these bridges formed part of the Via Egnatia. The first one lays on the river Kompasatos at Iasmos<sup>21</sup>, near the town of Komotini, and the second one on the river Aggiti, halfway between the towns of Kavala and Serres; they are both preserved in a good state.<sup>22</sup> The complex of Loutra consists of a *han* and Turkish *hamams*. The former was patronized by Gazi Evrenos Bey (late fourteenth century), is of great interest as it is considered one of the earliest Ottoman construction in the Balkans. Plus, it shows architectural and typological features of the Seljukid architecture of the thir-

21 Ελένη Μιχαλοπούλου (επιμ.), *Η Οθωμανική αρχιτεκτονική στην Ελλάδα*, Συλλογικός Τόμος (ΥΠΠΟ 2009), 311-330.

22 Γεώργιος Τσότσος, *Μακεδονικά Γεφύρια*, 155.

teenth-century from Asia Minor.<sup>23</sup> Here, we also have to add a building in Giannitsa, which is still questionable, but most probably served as a *menzilhâne*.<sup>24</sup>

2) The majority of the monuments within the city frames related to the trade network were preserved. From the four *bedestens* mentioned by Evliya Çelebi in his *Seyahatname* only the *bedestens* of Serres and Thessaloniki still stand. According to Cezar<sup>25</sup>, the six-vaulted *bedestens* of Northern Greece - both dated to the late fifteenth century - belong to the same type of a unified inner space with shops outside and present many typological and architectural similarities. None of the buildings are with their original outer cells; those in use at Thessaloniki's *bedesten* belong to a later reconstruction.



Figure 6. Serres 1920. The Eski Mosque and the Bedesten (Postcard, Central Library of Serres)

Urban *hans* like those in Turkey<sup>26</sup> or other major cities of the Balkans, do not appear in Ottoman Greek towns. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, they are in a progressive demolition, probably because of their humble architecture. An exception might have been the Büyük Kervan Sarayı of Thessaloniki (part of the great complex of the *bedesten* and Hamza Bey Camii) dated to the early sixteenth century. Our knowledge of its typological features, presenting remarkable similarities with the Ottoman caravanserais of Anatolia, is based solely upon Pullan R. and Texier C. (1864).<sup>27</sup> An *han* of this type primarily found in Greek cities of the late Ottoman Era is partly demolished in Genisea, now in use as a house. Until the end of the nineteenth century, another type of *hans* emerged, primarily commercial premises and

23 Ιωάννης Καλαφατζής κ.α. "Η Χάνα στην αρχαία Τραϊανούπολη. Πρόταση αποκατάστασης", *Το Αρχαιολογικό Έργο στη Μακεδονία και στη Θράκη* 22 (2008), 581-588.

24 Γεώργιος Σκιαδαρέσης, "Τα οθωμανικά μνημεία των Γιαννιτσών", *Φίλιππος*, Έτος 21°, 76 (7-9/2012), 44.

25 Cezar, *Typical Commercial Buildings*, 192,195.

26 For example, the *han* of Rustem Pasha in Edirne.

27 Πασχάλης Ανδρούδης, *Χάνια και Καραβάν-Σεράγια*, 168-169.

galleries. Great examples of eclecticist galleries can be found in the Fragkomahalas District in Thessaloniki, the Ottoman financial center of the town.<sup>28</sup> Finally, scarce cells of the late Ottoman Era shops are preserved in the old town centers of Northern Greece.



Figure 7. Thessaloniki. Bensusan Han 1917 (Parallaximag, accessed 15/09/2015).

A significant number of *hamams*<sup>29</sup> is still preserved in various states of condition at the Sol Kol axis towns. The oldest of them is the double *hamam* of Gazi Evrenos (Loutra Kaiafa) in Giannitsa, dated back to the late fourteenth century. The Bey Hamam of Thessaloniki (1444), with its exceptional architecture and decoration, is the biggest in Greece and the oldest in Thessaloniki. The *hamam*'s good maintenance is due to its continuous use up until the early twentieth. The Yahudi Hamam (or Pazar Hamam) in the market district of the city most probably belonged to the waqf of Hamza Bey Camii. Three more *hamams* of the fifteenth century can be found in Serres, Veria and Giannitsa, namely the Eski Hamam, the double Çiș Hamam and the *hamam* of Şeyh İlahi. The hamams of Trajanoupoli, the Paşa Hamam of Thessaloniki, and the bath of Kamenikia in Serres were built after the fifteenth century.

28 Αλέξανδρος Γρηγορίου, *Χάνια, Πανδοχεία, Ξενοδοχεία της Θεσσαλονίκης 1875-1917* (University Studio Press, 2003).

29 Ελένη Κανετάκη, *Οθωμανικά Λουτρά στον Ελλαδικό Χώρο* (Αθήνα: Τ.Ε.Ε., 2004).



**Figure 8.** The double Hamam of Veria Thessaloniki. Bensusan Han 1917 (<http://www.theveriaGRID.org>, accessed 15/09/2015).

Religious architecture, indirectly related to commercial activities, is mainly concerning *imârets* and mosques. Those buildings form the majority of the preserved monuments, and they are represented in all the urban centers of the Sol Kol. The mosques of Komotini (Eski Cami, Yeni Cami)<sup>30</sup> and Genisea (Mustafa Paşa Cami)<sup>31</sup> should particularly be mentioned as they still serve for the religious practices of the Muslim minority and still function as waqf institutions. The magnificent mosques of the fifteenth century in Serres are the unique ones in Greece with royal origins: the Ahmet Bey and the Zincirli Cami.<sup>32</sup> They also gave an economic boost and praised the importance of the town for the royal family. Of course, there are far more mosques to be presented throughout the axis of the ottoman Via Egnatia.

30 The oldest construction of Eski Cami is dated back to the late fourteenth century, and patronized by Gazi Evrenos Bey. It is believed that it was part of the Bey's külliye, that also included the *imâret*.

31 *Η Οθωμανική αρχιτεκτονική στην Ελλάδα*, 311-330.

32 *Η Οθωμανική αρχιτεκτονική στην Ελλάδα*, 279-286.



**Figure 9.** Aerial photo of the Yeni Mosque and part of the Ottoman bazaar in Komotini

In the town of Komotini lies the oldest *imâret* of the presented network. The *imâret* of Gazi Evrenos was built in the late fourteenth century and is connected with the extended building activity and the great waqf of the patron. Features of the Ottoman architecture of the time can be distinguished at the Alaca Imâret in Thessaloniki.<sup>33</sup> Last but not least, the *imâret* of Kavala (of the nineteenth century), the only fully-featured building complex still preserved.

A special mention should also be given to the town of Giannitsa,<sup>34</sup> whose name and architectural renewal are deeply connected with two standout personalities of the Ottoman Era: Gazi Evrenos, and Şeyh İlahi. Their tombs are the places of pilgrimage even in the present-day.

3) This category includes the complexes of craft and industry of the late nineteenth century and the historical trade centers. The building complexes of the tobacco warehouses in Kavala and Genisea form an open museum of architecture and industrial heritage. Smaller unities of warehouses or craft premises are also preserved in Thessaloniki and Veria. In Komotini, the old town center is a unique example of an Ottoman bazaar characterized by the Greek State as a historical site.

33 *Η Οθωμανική αρχιτεκτονική στην Ελλάδα*, 229.

34 See footnote 24.



Figure 10. The tobacco warehouses of Kavala

Apart from the monuments which survived as material entities, we must also adhere to those historical places and architectural creations known today only as reminders through archives and references since their contribution to the reconstruction of our past is substantial. As Sigmund Freud states, “even what seems completely forgotten exists somehow somewhere,” and this is the gist of the word “monument,” the remembrance of an event, of a fact.

### Some Notes on Preserving Cultural Heritage

The current state of the buildings varies from total neglect to the continuous use or the attribution of new roles and functions. While regarding the general observation of the monuments’ interaction with their surroundings, there is a lack of historical coherence and identity of the structured space. Factors that have negatively affected the structure’s physical make-up include environment, natural disasters, improper restoration, haphazard changes made by users and deliberate corruption. The preservation status of the Ottoman monuments in Greece depicts the significant gaps in our knowledge the distortion of our perception, often wilful and motivated by political factors.<sup>35</sup> The Ottoman History is mainly unknown or depicted differently in each country. This is because the nation-states of the Balkans were created through their clash with the Ottoman Empire. The elevation of national consciousness at the same time meant the devaluation of the Ottoman heritage. So anything “Ottoman” was considered as averse to modernization. Today, the academy is more sensitized on the study, preservation and promotion of the Ottoman cultural heritage. This inclination is due mainly to the transnational cooperation among the Balkan countries - through exhibitions and collective projects - to create a communication channel to safeguard and promote our shared heritage jointly.

<sup>35</sup> Aimilia Stefanidou (ed.), *The Ottoman Monuments of Greece. Their Protection, Conservation and Restoration* (Thessaloniki: USP 2010).



While taking the multi-dimensional character, the diversity and the various states of preservation of the monuments into consideration, it is imperative to draw a plan of action regarding the rescue, restitution and promotion of their historically significant network. The aim is to raise public awareness in defending multiculturalism and diversity and at the same time make the first step for the viability of the cultural heritage in the future. The plan of action should lay down the conditions and principles for a series of interventions that focus on the typical treatment of sites and monuments that would ensure the preservation of their unique features and help them overcome the isolation they were condemned due to unfortunate management strategies and historical circumstances.

The plan should take the needs of users and the expectations and intentions of the society into account. It is divided into two subsections: (1) The physical implementation of the project, that is the preservation of the monuments' substance and the promotion of their historical values, (2) the management at a virtual level through the development of multimedia applications and an e-platform for tourism promotion and scientific research.

1) The scenario concerns the narration of the story of the commercial network and the promotion of the monuments through a cultural tour, the 'Grand Historic Tour,' which will start from Thrace and end up in Thessaloniki, having stopovers at the most significant urban centers of the Ottoman Era. At each city-stop, a 'Small Historical Tour' would acquaint the visitors with the Ottoman monuments and the local history, helping them to grasp an overall view of the presented heritage. The plan also provides the necessary infrastructure (signs, accesses, visitors and information centres and gives priority to enhancing of the historical environment of the monuments and a series of interventions for their preservation and restoration. Finally, activities such as the unification of archaeological sites, the re-use of historical buildings and restoration of the historical continuity through the visualization of demolished structures would contribute to historic sites' viability.



Figure 11. The Grand and Small Historic routes

2) The digitalized platform aims at research and for touristic purposes. As far as the tourist field application is concerned, it will be accessible via the internet and information kiosks, having the possibility of being saved on portable technological devices. The information will allow the distant research and comparative study based on personal interdisciplinary

questions on the second level. At the same time, it will be connected with corporations and other related institutions to create an interdisciplinary network of digitalization of the background knowledge and information.

In the context of the inter-cultural dialogue promoted within the European framework, we wish that this study will pave the way for the promotion of the Ottoman trade network throughout the Balkan Peninsula, launching a comprehensive view of the Ottoman heritage in the Balkans beyond the limits and barriers of the nation-states.

## CONCLUSION

“...The road is the oldest and purest expression of relationships. Born of the need for exchange, determined, in its tracing, by the conditions of the natural environment, is nevertheless a human creation, which differs according to the political and economic conditions and the level of culture...”<sup>36</sup>

The literature on commercial networks primarily deals with roads as a means of transportation and transaction. However, other significant dynamics inevitably affected the creation and progress of the networks under the study. These are the human factor as the mediator who wishes to communicate and carry out the transportation, the equipment making the travel possible and, the infrastructure serving the needs of trade and travelers. Therefore, in the study of a commercial network, we should also consider socio-economic and historical dimensions. These two gradually crystallized through the architectural agenda and the artistic expression. The presence of archeological sites, constructions and monuments is significantly projecting the historical continuity of civilizations. So, they to be protected and preserved.

During the Ottoman era, the trade network in the Balkans constituted an element of the Social, cultural, economic and administrative structure of the Empire. With that, it had a profound impact on the state's fate since it was highly engaged with the economic growth, the international state contacts and, the development of the peripheries and settlements. The commercial network of Northern Greece developed starting with the fifteenth century stretched from Loutra (Trajanoupoli) to Thessaloniki, formed a part of the broader communication road system of the Ottoman Empire. There are two reasons for studying the region extending from Thrace to Central Macedonia:

1. the presence of the essential and most integral network, the Sol Kol
2. the urban centers of the area share the same historical background, commercial and economic ties
3. the towns preserve significant architectural edifices for the ottoman trade of Northern Greece.

When analyzing the Ottoman network's multi-dimensional character, the diversity of its monuments, and infrastructure, it is germane to draw a plan of action for rescuing and promoting the historical and cultural networks. The aim here is to raise public awareness to defend multiculturalism and diversity and pave the way for the viability of the cultural heritage in the future.

<sup>36</sup> Henri Cavaillès, *La Route Francaise: Son Histoire, Sa Fonction, Étude de Géographie Humaine*, (Paris: Colins, 1946), 5.

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