

The Process of Sedentarization of Semi-nomadic Groups of the Yörüks in Parts of 16th Century Ottoman Rumeli: Migration Control or Tax Control?

Milena Petkova*

Abstract:

The present article is an attempt to reveal the process of adaption of the colonized Muslim population in parts of Ottoman Rumeli – modern Eastern Upper Thrace, where the majority of the migrated population were the semi-nomadic groups of the yörüks. After the establishment of new settlement network in the region at the end of the 15th and first half of the 16th centuries, the huge pasturelands and swamps were converted to regular exploitations under the çift-hane system by the semi-nomadic groups. Last led to the sedentarizaion of some of the yörüks and changes in the settlement network. A role in the process played the ottoman state by implementing special tax policy toward the yörük taxpayers.

Key words: Ottoman Balkans, 16th Century, Yörüks, settlement, migration

What Braudel once suggested was a theoretical description of “spaces” introducing the terms and underlining the differences between “world economy” and “world-economies”.¹ He, then asserted, the Ottoman Empire as an example of being a world-economy-a

* Assist. Prof. Dr., Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9278-5316
e-mail: mlnpetkova@gmail.com

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¹ Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism. 15th-18th century*. Vol. III. *The Perspective of the World*, (California: University of California Press, 1982), 69.

fragment of the world, an economically autonomous section, but also outlined its place as a power in the struggle for hegemony and economic relations in the Mediterranean world.² With all the discussion these terms lead throughout time they took a significant place in the research in the field of economic history.³

Some researches define the basic of the Ottoman economy with the farms, the household and the pair of oxen—the çift-hane system, as the key unit of taxation and land holding. Different issues referring to the methods of reclamation of agrarian space, forms and functioning of the agrarian space, production, fiscal practices and tax policy, the price revolution of the 16th century⁴, the classification of arable lands in accordance with the registered agricultural activities—core provinces and periphery territories and the adoption of fiscal practices from the medieval Balkan states,⁵ the registration and the exact data it contains,⁶ rural agrarian structure in the Ottoman Empire, are still a subject of

² Ibidem, pp. 20-22.

³ Andre Gunder Frank, *World-economies or [one] World Economy? A Critical Reading of Braudel's Perspective of the World*, 1993.

⁴ 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: Brill, 1995), 35-39; Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 112-148.

⁵ Heath Lowry, "The Ottoman Tahrir Defterleri as a Source of Social and Economic History: Pitfalls and Limitations", *Studies in Defterology. Ottoman Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1992), 3-18; Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "Les registres ottomanes comme source pour l'histoire préottomane. Fiscalité et formes de possession de la terre arable dans Anatolie préottomane," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3 (1976): 236-237.

⁶ Nicoara Beldiceanu, Irène Beldiceanu - Steinherr, "Règlement ottoman concernant le recensement (première moitié du XVI^e siècle," *Südost-Forschungen* 4 (1978) : 1-40; Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire: Agrarian Power Relations and Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia during the 16th c.* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 36-37; Suraiya Faroqhi, "Taxation and Urban Activities in Sixteenth Century Anatolia," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 1 (1979-1980): 19-53; Spiros Asdrachas, "Aux Balkans du XV^e siècle producteurs directs et marchés," *Etudes balkaniques* 3 (1970): 46; Idem, "Sociétés rurales balkaniques aux XV^e-XVI^e siècles: Mouvements de la population et des revenus," *Études balkaniques* 13/2 (1977): 49-66; Amy Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials. Rural Administration around Sixteenth Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 18-19; John Alexander, "Counting the Grains: Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Reading the Ottoman Mufassal Tahrir Defters," *Arab Historical Review for Ottoman Studies* 19-20 (1999): 57-58, etc.

researchers' interest and many of them debatable.⁷ The debate on the "world-economy" term goes along with the economic overwhelming growth of the Ottoman empire, the reforms, the spread of political and military power, traditionally referred to as "classical age".⁸

The discussions on the economic development of the Ottoman Empire during the "classical age" could be considered and related to two important issues in the history of the Ottoman Empire: the first one, I assume, is the colonization of Muslim population in the Balkans⁹. This continuing process of migrations of population for many historians and researchers is related to the spread of Islam and the formation of

⁷Vera Mutafchieva, *Osmanska sotcialno-ikonomicheska istoriya* [Ottoman Social-economic History] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo Petar Beron), 1999, 64-89; Halil İnalçık, "State, Land and Peasant," *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300 – 1914* Eds. Inalçık, H. & Quataert, D. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 11-43,143-154; Linda Darling, *Revenue-raising and Legitimacy. Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560-1660* (Leiden:Brill, 1996), 34-76; Stefka Parveva, "Rural Agrarian and Social Structure in the Edirne Region during the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century," *Village, Town and People in the Ottoman Balkans 16th mid-19th Century* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009), 11-61; Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe. Taxation, Trade and Struggle for Land 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 121-173; Suraiya Faroqhi, "Rural Society in Anatolia and the Balkans during the Sixteenth Century," *Turcica* 11 (1979): 136-141; Idem, "The Peasants of Saideli in the Late Sixteenth Century," *Archivum ottomanicum* 8, (1983): 215-250; Amy Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials. Rural Administration around Sixteenth Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 44-63; Evangelia Balta, *L'Eubée a la fin du XV^e siècle. Économie et Population. Les registres de l'année 1474* (Athènes: Association des Études d'Eubée, 1989), 23-67; Idem, "Économie et espace rural en Eubée aux XV^e-XVI^e s.: du document fiscal à la construction d'un modèle," *Problèmes et approches de l'histoire ottomane* (Istanbul, 1997), 21-96; Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 23-46; Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire: Agrarian Power Relations and Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia during the 16th c.* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

⁸Halil İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (NewYork: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 23-114.

⁹Mehmet T. Gökbilgin, *Rumeli'de Yürükler, Tatarlar ve Evlâd-i Fâtihân* (İstanbul: Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1957), 13-29; Idem, "Rumelinin İskanında ve Türkleşmesinde Yürükler," III. *Türk Tarih Kongresi içinde, Türk Tarih Kurumu* (1943): 648-660; Ömer L. Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Sürgünler," *İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* C. 15, 1-4 (1953-1954): 209-237; Ömer L. Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler, I, İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler," *Vakıflar Dergisi* S. 2 (1942): 293.

institutions maintaining the functioning of the new religion.¹⁰ In general, the colonized population from Asia Minor to the Balkans played a key role in the “demographic” conquest of regions and what followed was the “economic” seizure of the newly populated district. Though the number of the population growth in Anatolia and what caused the movement is disputable, migration processes from Asia Minor to Ottoman Rumeli started as soon as the conquest of these territories by the ottomans.¹¹ Part of the colonized population were the semi-nomadic groups of the *yörüks* who, during a long-going process, adapted to the environment of the newly conquered lands. During this long-lasting process of colonization and transition were shown the ruling abilities of the Ottoman state and the Ottoman elite to take advantage of the migrations and the tax policy implemented to the newcomers. To some extent this policy affected the semi-nomadic groups as well and it lead to the sedentarization of parts of the *yörüks* who became *reaya* engaged in agriculture.

The migration of the *yörüks* spread to different regions on the Balkans and their adaptation proceeds with various intensity in correlation to the specific local conditions.¹² Furthermore, it is considered as heritage of the early Ottoman frontier zones, one of

¹⁰ Evgeni Radoshev, *Pomatsite. Hristianstvo i Islam v Zapadnite Rodopi s dolinata na reka Mesta XV v. – 30te god. na XVIII vek* [The Pomaks. Christianity and Islam in the Western Rhodope Mountains and the valley of Mesta river, 15th c. to – 1730s] Part 1 (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Narodnata biblioteka “Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy”, 2008), 9-143; Evangelia Balta, *Les Vakıfs de Serrès et de sa region aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles* (Athènes: Centre de Recherches Néo-Hélléniques F.N.R.S, 1995), 35-38; Vassilis Demetriades, “Vakıfs along the Via Egnatia,” *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380 – 1699) . Halcyon Days in Crete II: A Symposium Held in Rethymnon 9 – 11 January 1994*. Ed. E. Zachariadou (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1996), 85-95.

¹¹ Michael Cook, *Population Changes in Rural Anatolia, 1450-1600* (London-New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 23-89; Huri İslamoğlu – İnan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire: Agrarian Power Relations and Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia during the 16th c.* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 36-145; Halil İnalçık, “The Ottoman Decline and Its Effects upon the Reaya”, *IIe Congrès International des Etudes du Sud-est Européennes, III Histoire et littérature* (Athènes:1970), 4-21; Oktay Özel, “Population Changes in Ottoman Anatolia during the 16th and 17th Centuries: The “Demographic Crisis” Reconsidered, ” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004) : 183-205.

¹² Halil İnalçık, “The Yörüks: 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, 1993), 97-136; İlhan Şahin, *Osmanlı Döneminde Konar-Göçerler* (İstanbul: Eren, 2006), 35-40.

which was Thrace¹³, becoming an area of Muslim colonization following the established pattern of the Ottoman expansion in western Anatolia. This demographic expansion proceeded along with the sedentarization of the semi-nomadic groups of the *yörüks*¹⁴. Usually following a well-defined route from summer to winter pasturelands, sometimes the nomadic groups migrated to far distanced territories in search for new pasture lands. This migration process is considered to indicate either weakened state's control or when more powerful nomadic groups made them leave the territory.

The present paper intends to draw your attention to a small part of the Ottoman imperial territories—the Ottoman kaza of *Eskihisar zağra* (*Zağra-i atik, Zağra-i Eskihisar*), modern Eastern parts of the Upper Thracian Valley, where on micro history level could be traced the process of establishment of a new settlement network result of colonization of Muslim population¹⁵. Our next step is to reveal the state policy toward the new-comers, or how the Ottoman authorities implemented their tax policy in the newly conquered lands in *Rumeli*. The territory of the kaza of *Eskihisar zağra* was part of *Paşa sancak*, one of the earliest established administrative units (*sancak*) on the Balkans.¹⁶

Turcoman migration started in the frontier zone of Western Anatolia was followed by migration to the Balkans where, in some parts of the peninsula, was established a new settlement network.¹⁷ The

¹³ Mustafa Gökbilgin, *Rumeli'de Yürükler, Tatarlar ve Evlâd-i Fâtihân*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1957), 10-13; Mustafa Gökbilgin, "Rumelinin İskanında ve Türkleşmesinde Yürükler", *III. Türk Tarih Kongresi içinde* (Ankara: 1943), 648-660; Ömer L. Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Sürgünler", *İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* C. 15, 1-4, (1953-1954); Ömer L. Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler, I, İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler", *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2 (1942): 293.

¹⁴ Halil İnalçık, "Otman Baba ve Fatih Sultan Mehmed," *Doğu Batı Makalele I* (2005): 139-163; Halil İnalçık, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Uc (Serhad)lar," *Doğu Batı Makaleler II* (2009): 45-60.

¹⁵ Levent Kayapınar, "The Economic Growth of Kazanlak in the XVth and XVIth Centuries," *Proceedings of CEHR* 2 (2017): 227-247.

¹⁶ Rossitsa Gradeva, "Administrative System and Provincial Government in the Central Balkan Territories of the Ottoman Empire, 15th Century," H. C. Guzel, C. C. Oguz, and O. Karatay (eds), *The Turks, vol. 3, Ottomans*, 498-507.

¹⁷ Researches explain the migration process with growing population pressure related to economic shrinkage and growing poverty. Inalcik, Halil. "Empire and Population," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300 - 1914*. eds. Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 29-30; Leyla Erder, Suraiya Faroqhi. "Population Rise and Fall in Anatolia 1550 - 1620," *Middle Eastern Studies* 15 (1979):

military actions and the conquest of the territory were followed by the establishment of state control over the conquered lands implemented by the military, administrative and judicial representatives. The actual “demographic seizure” of the lands came after the migration of population – a process shown by the changes and/or the establishment of a settlement network. Massive *yörük* groups were located in various parts of the former Bulgarian lands – in the Maritsa valley between Haskovo and Pazardzhik, west of the rivers Mesta and Yantra, etc. Major part of the new comers to the territory of the kaza of Eskihisar zağra were the *yörüks* – well known with their pastoral life and practicing agriculture as a supplement to their economy.¹⁸

The data on the settlement network with predominantly *yörük* population in regions of Asia Minor, i.e. before they settled down in *Rumeli*, refers to small, unstable settlements which turned into small villages.¹⁹

It is the size of the village that is considered to show and determine the existence of a certain settlement over time. Prof. Ts. Georgieva suggests the following classification of the villages in accordance with the registered households: 0-5 and 6-20 households are considered as small and unstable villages; 21-40 households – middle sized villages and 41-80 households and over 80 are big, stable settlements, showing where the medieval settlement network was.²⁰ The tax registrations containing data on the settlement network of the *kaza* of *Eskihisar zağra* (detailed registers, *tapu tahrir defter*) of the second half of the 15th

3; Suraiya Faroqhi. “Rural Society in Anatolia and the Balkans during the Sixteenth Century,” *Turcica* 11 (1979): 136-141.

¹⁸ Halil İnalçık, “Empire and Population,” *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300 – 1914*. eds. Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 40; Aleksey Kalyonski. *Yurutcite [The Yörüks]* (Sofia: Prosveta), 23-89.

¹⁹ İnalçık, “Empire and Population,” 38.

²⁰ Tsvetana Georgieva. *Prostranstvo i prostranstva na balgarite prez XV-XVII vek [Space and Spaces of Bulgarians in the 15th – 17th Centuries]* (Sofia: Imir, 1999), 71; Maria Kalitsin, Krasimira Mutafova. “Introduction,” *Podbrani osmanski dokumenti za Tarnovo i Tarnovska kaza [Selected Ottoman Records on the City of Tarnovo and the Kaza of Tarnovo]* (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodiy”, 2003), 26; Vera Mutafchieva and Dushanka Boyanich-Lukach, “Vidin i Vidinsko prez XV-XVI vek. Uvod [Vidin and the Region of Vidin during 15th – 16th Centuries. Introduction],” *Vidin i Vidinskiat sancak prez XV-XVI vek [Vidin and the Sancak of Vidin during 15th-16th Centuries]*. (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1975), 30.

century²¹ provide information on small and unstable villages – 72.1% and 27.9 of the registered settlements could be considered old villages, most probably they have existed during the 14th century, i.e. before the Ottoman conquest of the territory. The ethno demographic structure of the registered taxpayers shows that the majority of them were Muslims (91 %). During the 15th and throughout the 16th century some of the villages on the territory of the *kaza* of Stara Zagora are part of *Niğbolu sancak* (6 settlements) and the majority of the villages are on the territory of *Paşa sancak*. All the settlements registered in *Niğbolu sancak* are old, stable villages where the majority of taxpayers are Non-Muslims. The history of the political and historical circumstances suggest that these settlements mark the south border line of the medieval kingdom of Bulgaria at the time when it was conquered by the ottomans.²² There's no doubt that the new comers participated in the establishment of a new settlement network for they were registered as taxpayers of the small and unstable settlements. The territory of the *kaza* of Stara Zagora along with other parts of the Thracian Valley was a place where the main and ongoing military conflicts between the Byzantine Empire and the Bulgarian kingdom had happened. Last resulted as destruction of the settlement network and only few villages were preserved until the time of the Ottoman conquest.²³ The data of the registrations shows that along with dervishes and other Muslims the majority of the new comers were *yörüks*, which in other regions in Anatolia and in the Balkans established the same settlement network with unstable, small villages. What the data also shows is that they paid the basic land tax (*resm-i chift*, *resm-i bennak*) etc. for their agricultural

²¹ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), TT, 26, ff. 1-57; Sts. Cyril and Methodius National Library, Oriental Department, Fond Hk 12/9, f. 39.

²² Milena Petkova-Encheva, "Registrations of Settlements in Eastern Upper Thrace during the 16th c. A Theory on the South Border Line of the Bulgarian Kingdom of Ivan Shishman Based on the Information of Ottoman Tax Registers of 16th c.," *Iz praktikata na osmanskata kantselariya [Practices of the Ottoman Chancellery]*. (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na narodnata biblioteka "sv. Sv. Kiril I Metodiy, 2011), 186-197.

²³ Petar Nikov, "Turskoto zavladyavane na Balgaria sadbata na poslednite Shishmanovtsi [The Turkish conquest of Bulgaria and the Destiny of the Last Representatives of the Shishman Dynasty]," *Izvestiya na Istoricheskoto Druzhestvo* 7-8 (1928): 41-112; Idem, "Balgari i tatari v Srednite vekove [Bulgarians and Tatars during the Middle Ages]," *Balgarska istoricheska biblioteka* 3 (1929):109; Ivan Duichev, "Ot Chernomen do Kosovo pole. Kam istoriyata na turskoto zavoevanie v Trakia prez poslednoto desetiletie na XV vek [From Chernomen to Kosovo. Toward History of the Turkish Conquest of Thrace during the Last Decade of the 15th c.]," *Izvestiya na Trakiyskiya nauchen institut* 2 (1970): 73-105; Krasimira Gagova, *Trakiya prez Balgarskoto Srednovekovie. Istoricheska geografiya [Thrace during the Bulgarian Medieval Period. Historical Geography.]* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 2002), 141-143.

activities.²⁴ The “empty” arable lands from the late medieval period seemed proper for the colonization and the environment suggested other possibilities for the new comers.

The travelers’ accounts and the Ottoman *sinurnames* describe these lands with forests, big areas of swamps and with pasturelands.²⁵ The problem with malaria and the swamps in Thrace was solved with the Sulfur containing in the wool – both clothes and sheep flocks. The environment seems to be perfect for the establishment of a new settlement network, providing plenty of space to be reclaimed and practice agricultural activities. On the other hand the pasturelands were also of great importance for the Semi-nomadic *yörüks* where they could settle with the sheep flocks.

The next registration of 1518²⁶ shows that the unstable villages were 77,1% and the registered Muslim households were 95,3% (2199 households). For 26% of them is mentioned that they were *yörük* households, for the rest of the villages the toponymical data provide information for the colonization of the *yörüks*. As we follow the data of the next registration of 1530²⁷ it shows that the 83,9% of the registered settlements were unstable villages. We could assume that during the first half of the 16th century there was an intensive, ongoing migration of Turcoman to the territory of the kaza of Stara Zagora, and the majority of them were *yörüks*. The last registration of the 16th century – in 1570, shows the increasing percent of the stable settlements – 59,8% and the unstable, small villages were only 40,2%.

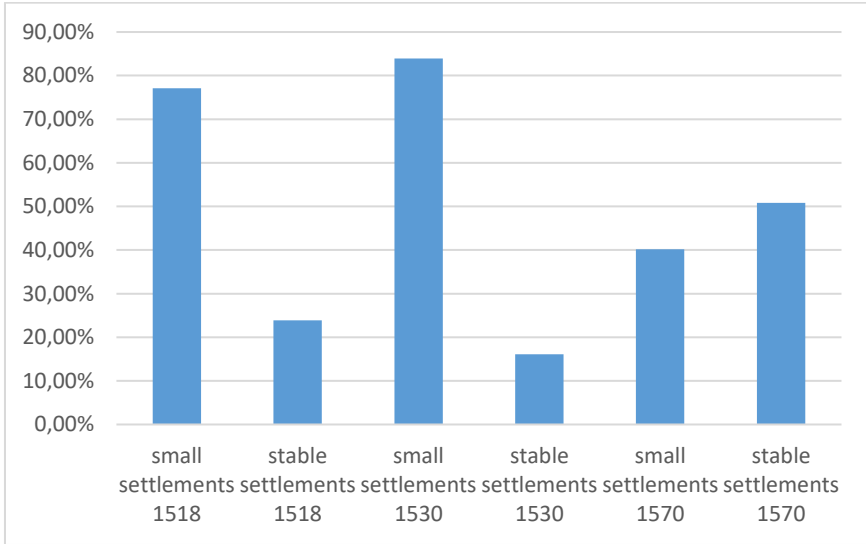
²⁴ Linda Darling, *Revenue –Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560 – 1660* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 15-34; Halil İnalçık. “A Case Study of the Village Microeconomy. Villages in the Bursa Sancak, 1520-1573,” *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire. Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1993), 162-173; Evangelia Balta, “Économie et espace rural en Eubée aux XV^e-XVI^e s.: du document fiscal à la construction d’un modèle,” *Problèmes et approches de l’histoire ottomane. Un itinéraire scientifique de Kayseri à Egriboz* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1997), 21-96.

²⁵ Milena Petkova-Encheva, “Land Property in Ottoman Rumeli – Case Study on Land Possession System in Parts of Paşa Sancak, Ottoman Rumeli (Copies of *Huccets* and *Sinurnames* Preserved in Ottoman Tapu Tahrir Defters of XVIth Century,” 2. *Uluslararası Osmanlı Coğrafyası Arşiv Kongresi. Bildiriler. Cilt 1.* eds. Hatice Oruç, Mehmet Yıldırım and Songül Kadıoğlu (Ankara: Ankara Medya Matbaa, 2019), 779-787.

²⁶ BOA, TT 77, ff. 459-542, BOA, TT 439, ff. 322-328.

²⁷ BOA, TT 370, ff. 67-77, ff. 327-330, ff. 335-342, ff. 358-359, f. 361, f. 523.

Table 1: Settlement network of the kaza of Eskihisar zağra during the 16th century



The data shows the increasing number of the stable settlements and at the same time the number of registered Muslim taxpayers (including the *yörüks*) remains stable. What could have affected the settlement network was the political situation. These lands were no longer battlefield as they were in the late middle Ages. Now, being an integral part of the imperial territories the war conflicts were far from this region. Another reason I assume that had a strong impact on the stabilization and affected the migrations was the tax policy implemented by the Ottoman officials, and more precisely the tax on agricultural activities.

The *yörüks* did know how to practice agriculture long before their migration to Rumeli. In parts of Anatolia they were engaged in agriculture, though their main economic activity remained sheep breeding. The Ottoman registrations of the 16th centuries and on show that once the *yörüks* were registered as taxpayers on the territory of the kaza of Eskihisar zağra and engaged with agrarian production, the Ottoman state introduced a new land tax – *resm-i boyundruk*. This tax is

evident only for the *yörük* settlements. It was levied in cash, included in the timar system and referred only to *yörüks* practicing agriculture. From one hand the different taxation from the rest of the taxpayers shows not only the financial importance of the income for the state but also might refer to the endeavors of the Ottoman state to interfere in the process that could lead to a sedentary life of the *yörüks* in Rumeli.

Agriculture was the most important economic activity in the Ottoman Empire, there for 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.²⁸

The detailed tax registers (*taputahrir defters*) of 1518 (TT 77) and 1570 (TT 494 и TT 498) provide interesting information on the changes in the taxation of the *yörüks* and more precisely on the *resm-i çift* tax which, only for the settlements with registered *yörüks* as taxpayers, is *resm-i boyundruk*. This tax is registered for 73 of total of 119 settlements on the territory of the *kaza* of Stara Zagora.²⁹ The last registration undertaken in 1570 refers to 139 settlements and the same tax is registered for 75 villages.³⁰ The rest of the Muslim *reaya* paid *resm-cift* tax.

The earliest information on the *resm-i boyundruk* tax can be found in the Code of Law (*kanunname*) issued under Mehmed II³¹. The Law states that: “anyone who uses one sickle for harvesting, has one granary and one cartful should pay *resm-boyundruk* equaled to 2 akçe.” Based on this part of the Code of Law Bistra Tsvetkova once suggested that the tax refers to agricultural activity on “rayet land” during the reign of Mehmed II. Further on, she suggested that it might refer to slavery as well.³²

²⁸ Halil İnalçık. “The Economic Mind,” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300 - 1914*. eds. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 158-161.

²⁹ BOA, TT 77, ff. 459-542.

³⁰ BOA TT 494, ff. 421-514; BOA TT 498, ff. 30-39, f. 260, ff. 355-362, ff. 625-639.

³¹ *Kanunnâme-i âli Osman - Fatih Kanunnamesi*, Abdülkadir Özcan (ed.), (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2003), 5-22.

³² See the glossary of terms by Bistra Tsvetkova, *Fontes Turcici Historiae Iuris Bulgarici*. Academia Litterarum Bulgarica. Institutum Iuris. V. 1, Sofia, p. 319.

On the other side M. Pakalın suggests several interpretations of the *resm-i boyundruk* tax. During the first centuries of the Ottoman rule on the Balkans this tax was on fruit and vegetable gardens. Later, the term was used for agricultural activities and was collected by the *timar* holder (*sahib-i arz*).³³

Other researchers assume that the term *resm-i boyundruk* was a synonym of the taxes *resm-i çift*, *resm-i bennak*.³⁴

The Code of Law of Mehmed II states that the size of *resm-i boyundruk* tax is different than the two other taxes on agricultural activities. As long as all these taxes were on agricultural activities we could assume that the terms were used as synonyms.

The information from the detailed registers under study refers to *yörük* settlements and show that the tax was levied only from *yörük* households.

The Code of Law of Suleiman the Magnificent states the following on the mentioned tax: "If a *yörük* practices agriculture on state-owned land (*miri*), the tithe and *salarlık* goes to the *timar*-holder. He should pay two *akçes resm-i boyundruk*."³⁵ Based on these parts of the Code of Law we could assume that the tax was specified only for *yörüks* engaged in agricultural activities within the boundaries of the village lands.³⁶

The tax registrations under study allow us to estimate the amount of the tax as registered. It was 12 *akçes* paid per household (*hane*) during the end of the 15th and first half of the 16th centuries. It did not match the mentioned sum in the Code of Law of Suleiman the Magnificent and equalled to *resm-i bennak* tax and less than the *resm-i çift* tax paid by the other Muslim households. I assume that this tax was implemented by the ottoman officials that had affected both – the settlement network in the region of the *kaza* of Eskihisar *zağra* where the settlements by the end of the 16th century became stable, big villages

³³ Mehmet Pakalın. *Osmanlı Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü. Cilt 1.* (İstanbul, 1946), 241.

³⁴ Aleksey Kalyonski. *Yurutsite [The Yoruks]* (Sofia: Prosveta, 2016), 34.

³⁵ *Fontes Turcici Historiae Iuris Bulgarici. Academia Litterarum Bulgarica. Institutum Iuris.* Vol. 1, Sofia, 53.

³⁶ Aleksey Kalyonski. *Yurutsite [The Yoruks]* (Sofia: Prosveta, 2016), 48-53.

with predominantly Muslim taxpayers; on the other hand it was an important step that led some of the *yörüks* to sedentary life.

The Ottoman sources – different tax registrations, surnames, the travelers' accounts of 15th and 16th centuries show the process of the establishment of a new settlement network in the region of modern Eastern Upper Thrace. The process of seizing the territory started with the military campaigns performed throughout the conquest, by different representatives of the group of *askeri*. What followed was the allocation of representatives of administrative and judicial power and the demographic seizure of the territory. The tax registrations evidence the colonization of Muslims a great part of whom were the semi-nomadic groups of the *yörüks* colonized in the Thracian valley, where they established new villages and a settlement network. The sources reveal that the migration of Muslim population continued in the 16th century and led to the establishment of more unstable settlements and a dense settlement network. On the other hand, part of the small villages of 15th century became big settlements also with registered *yörüks* as taxpayers. The tax policy had a major effect on the stabilization process of the settlement network.

What the *yörüks* did was not only the establishment of new villages, but also the "economic" seizure of the territory. As the data shows the *yörük* groups appeared to be a part of the sedentary society engaged with agriculture. They reclaimed land in forest or swamps to grow mainly wheat. The *yörük* groups reclaimed the lands that were once a battlefield for the Byzantino-Bulgarian conflicts. The case of the kaza of Stara Zagora resembles the situation with the arable land in Çukurova for example – flood plain with marshes, where lands were converted to regular exploitations under the *çift-hane* system by nomadic groups³⁷. The information from the sources reveals the process of adaptation to the conquered lands by adapting to the local environment and agricultural production. i.e. their adoption to the economic potential of the environment. The Ottoman state and the officials also took part in the process. At first they needed population to settle down in the newly conquered lands in modern Eastern Upper Thrace where they found a rare settlement network. The migration of the Muslim population meant migration of taxpayers which was important for the

³⁷ Halil İnalçık, "The Rural Landscape and the Settlement of Nomads," *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300 – 1914*. Eds. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 158-161.

implementation of the Ottoman taxation system and the governing of the territories. Once the dense settlement network was established the moving sheep locks of the *yörüks* could now longer follow their way from summer to winter pasture lands with which the Thracian valley was covered with. The Ottoman officials implemented a new tax - *resm-i boyundruk*, lower than the basic land tax paid by the rest of the Muslim reaya which in the documents under study referred only to the *yörüks* engaged in agricultural activities. Thus provoked the sedentarization of parts of the *yörüks* in the Thracian valley.

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